
PARENTS' POST

The Early Learning Program of The Woodlands Community Presbyterian Church

November 2011

From the Director

In most of our homes, Thanksgiving marks the beginning of the holiday season and the happy gathering of family and friends. With the busy planning of the celebration, we many times focus on the product and not on the process of getting ready for the occasion. The children are many times left out of the preparation, which can leave them bored and frustrated. A lot of enjoyment can be found in having your children help prepare the decorations or part of our Thanksgiving dinner. A traditional fruit salad is always a hit and is simple for all ages to prepare.

Remember, you are building memories.

Although this season is a fun time and many memories are formed, families often become overwhelmed with activities and children can especially feel the stress of shopping and anticipation of events to come. We have included a special article in this issue of our newsletter discussing ways parents can deal with holiday stress.

Always remember, we are only a phone call away. Your child's teacher needs to know if you can sense extra stress in your child. Open communication between home and school is one of our major goals. Ask us when you need our help. We will ask you for yours as well. That's why we're here.

Our focus for the month will be thanking God for the many blessings He has so richly given each of us. We are asking parents to reiterate this by speaking often to your child of things for which you are thankful. Words like, "I'm so thankful God gave you to me!" go a long way in building a child's self esteem as well as emphasizing the goodness of our Creator. Rita

Mark Your Calendar

PreK Vision & Hearing Screening
November 8, 9

Photos
November 1-4

Big Picnic
November 15,16,17

Holiday, No School
November 21-25

Mess With Purpose

ELP is known for its sensory loaded curriculum. Researches for brain development in young children prove that children learn best through the use of their senses. Children use all their senses to make discoveries: how heavy is it? does it smell? can I find another one that feels the same? what does it sound like when I drop it? how is it different from the other items? What does paint, shaving cream, water, bubbles, sand, etc. feel like on my hands, feet, etc?"

As they interact directly with the environment, children not only gather sensory information, they also refine their senses and motor skills. For example, it takes very refined movement of the hands and fingers to produce writing skills. Squeezing clay, painting with assorted objects, finger painting, lacing threads through beads, and many more are all ways for young children to practice using hands and fingers. This is just one skill that these activities help to develop.

Sorry to say that this type of learning also leads to mess and many times soiled clothing. Please send your child to school in his ELP T shirt or washable play clothes. We are learning through play and mess is just a part of the process. Thanks for being so supportive.

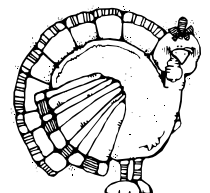


Book Fair— THANK YOU!

Thank you to all parents who joined us in our Book fair this year. Your time as a volunteer and the donated books were greatly appreciated!

THANK YOU!!!!

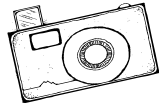
Give thanks to
the Lord
for He is Good
Psalms 136:1



Smile!! Photo Days are here!

Teddy Bear Portraits will be at ELP to take photos of all students and siblings Tuesday-Friday, November 1-4. No prepayment required. Packages should arrive 2-3 weeks later. Teddy Bear will have a table set up at ELP to purchase photos.

The photos are sure to make great Christmas gifts! So...smile!



PVO News

All ELP Parents are members of PVO and it is FREE! :) PVO stands for Parent Volunteer Organization. Our Parent Volunteer Coordinators are Tera Turnbull and Jacklyn Smejkal.

Thank you for your help with the Book Fair and Fall Festival in October!

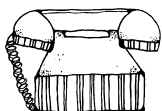
Some opportunities for November are escorting children to Screenings on Nov. 8, 9, and The Big Picnic, Nov. 15, 16 & 17.

Thanks for your help and support!!!

ELP Office Hours

Please keep in mind that the ELP office closes at 12:30 on Mondays and Tuesday-Friday at 3:30. Fran is off on Mondays.

We are not ignoring your phone messages, we are just catching up on Tuesday mornings.



Sorry, No Breakfast with St. Nick this year!!

Due to the construction here at The Woodlands Community Presbyterian Church, we are not able to host the Breakfast with Santa this year. The new building is due to be completed in January. St. Nick will be joining us for breakfast next year.



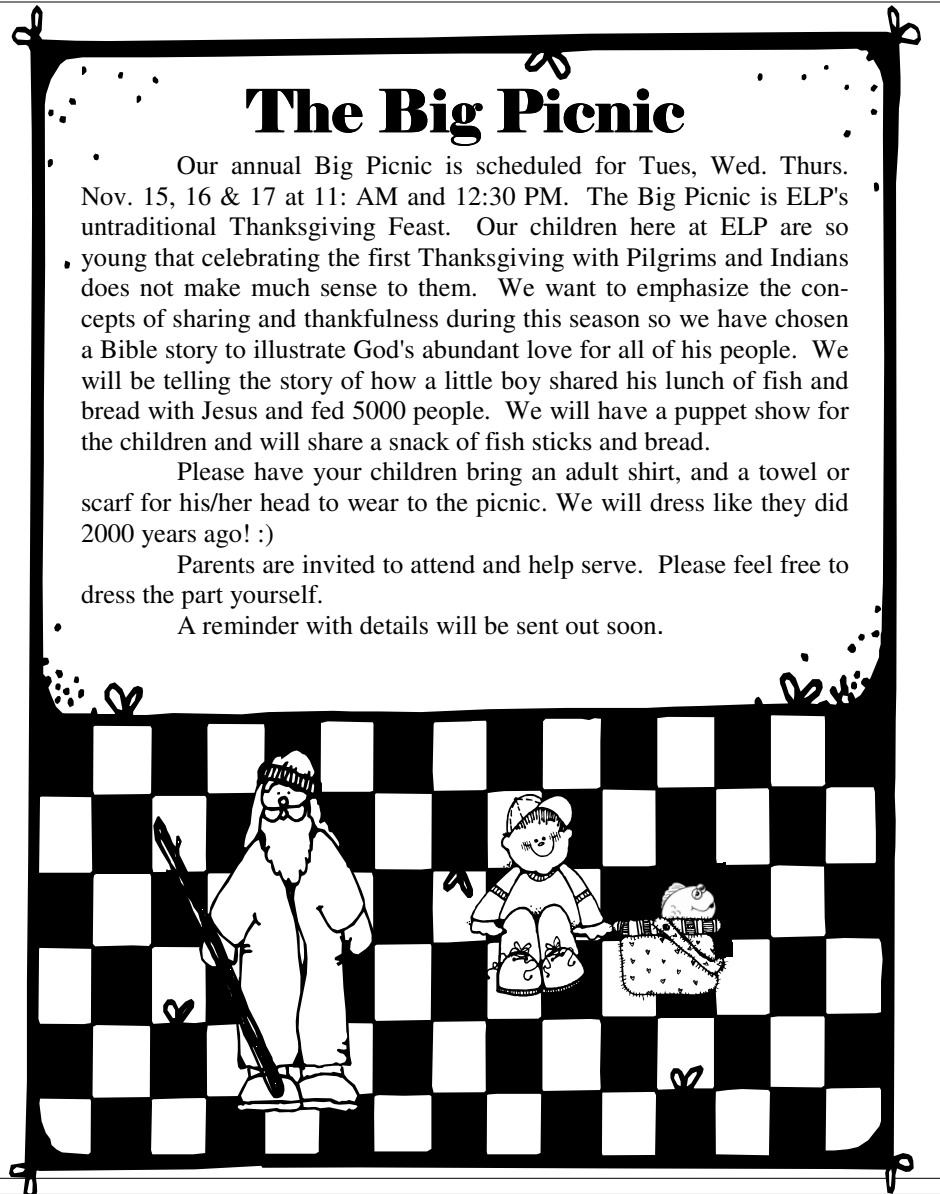
The Big Picnic

Our annual Big Picnic is scheduled for Tues, Wed, Thurs. Nov. 15, 16 & 17 at 11: AM and 12:30 PM. The Big Picnic is ELP's untraditional Thanksgiving Feast. Our children here at ELP are so young that celebrating the first Thanksgiving with Pilgrims and Indians does not make much sense to them. We want to emphasize the concepts of sharing and thankfulness during this season so we have chosen a Bible story to illustrate God's abundant love for all of his people. We will be telling the story of how a little boy shared his lunch of fish and bread with Jesus and fed 5000 people. We will have a puppet show for the children and will share a snack of fish sticks and bread.

Please have your children bring an adult shirt, and a towel or scarf for his/her head to wear to the picnic. We will dress like they did 2000 years ago! :)

Parents are invited to attend and help serve. Please feel free to dress the part yourself.

A reminder with details will be sent out soon.



ELP Helping to Build Food Pantry



Yes the holidays are just around the corner and ELP will be collecting canned good for the Interfaith Food Pantry. Canned meats, vegetables, fruit, soup, powered milk, instant rice, potatoes, peanut butter would all be greatly appreciated.

We will talk about this with your children during chapel as we stress the importance of sharing with our friends and being thankful. This is the perfect age to begin fostering a spirit of giving in our children. It will mean as much to them as it does to the families we help. A Thankful Box will be placed in the entrance to school.

All collected food will be taken to Interfaith. Thank you for your generosity!

We'd love to talk but...

please, no conferences when bringing your child in or picking them up after school. Time is precious with your little ones and we have lots of fun things planned for the class. Please feel free to call, email or schedule a time to conference with no children and we will be glad to spend the time with you to discuss your child without interruptions. Thanks for understanding.



Attention all drivers!

PLEASE NO CELL PHONE USEAGE in the carline. We appreciate your mindfulness for safety for all of our parents and children. Your children are excited to talk to you too. THANKS!!!!

The Magic Rainbow Toilet

Are you trying to teach colors or the magic of mixing two or more colors to make another one? Well why not try the toilet? Just add a few drops of food coloring in a couple of colors to the toilet bowl, brush to swish and mix the colors and "dwella" a new color! Just like magic! Then just flush and start again. Easy clean up and really FUN!!!



ELP will be participating along with WCPC again this year in the Angel Tree project. You can brighten up your holidays by providing a Christmas present for the Child and Family program run by the Presbyterian Children's Homes & Services. Beginning Sunday, Nov. 28th, an angel tree filled with ornament tags will be set up in the ELP entry. Each tag will contain a brief description of a needy child or parent and a gift idea. If you would like to participate,...

- Take an ornament tag from the tree.
- Purchase a gift for the child or parent listed. There are no requirements regarding how much money must be spent on a gift.
- Wrap the gift and **attach the ornament tag** before returning it by **Friday, December 9th.**

Thank you for your generosity!!

Quoteworthy

The new phrase in ELP's vocabulary was introduced by Jack Klimas in the Science Fun Class. It is "I fortotallygot it!" How many times does this phrase apply in our lives? Too many than I like to admit. :) From the mouths of babes. Thanks Jack!!!

The Best Learning Is Active Learning

Active Learning takes advantage of children's natural desire move and touch. Young children love to manipulate items and explore new ideas. They enjoy the opportunity to see how things work and to test their own theories,

Active learning takes advantage of children's natural motivations, abilities, and interests. Kids get lots of opportunities to investigate what interests them – to solve problems, discover relationships, and make comparisons.

Children use all their senses to make discoveries: How heavy is it? Does it smell? Can I find What does it sound like when I drop it? Using their hands, eyes, nose ears, and mouth to explore an item, children gather more information and remember what they learn.

As they interact directly with the environment, children not only gather sensory information they also refine their senses and motor skills. For example, it takes very refined movement of the hands and fingers to produce the penmanship required for writing. Squeezing clay, picking up puzzle pieces, and lacing threads through beads are ways for young children to practice using hands and fingers to produce the penmanship required for writing. Squeezing clay, picking up puzzle pieces, and lacing threads through beads are ways for young children to practice using hands and fingers.

We organize the classroom to promote active learning, and we do lots of things to encourage children to think and talk about their discoveries and creations., The next time you want your child to learn about something, provide the materials, space and time. Then step back and watch. You will be surprised at how much more the child will discover through active involvement.

Early Years are Priceless

We all have a small window of time where we can build good education at home. It begins in infancy. Brain studies show that children's ability to learn depends largely on their experiences in the first years of life. In short, the more you talk and read to your children, the better they can learn.

Read to your children every day. Check out children's books from the public library, the ELP library, and buy books at yard sales and thrift shops. Spend less time watching TV and more time reading. Avoid putting TV sets in your children's bedrooms. Many TV programs contain adult content and violence, and watching TV can become a hard habit to break once children are old enough to have homework.

Limit time with computer games. There is no reason to introduce the computer to your child before the age of five. How many of us were computer literate before the age of five and we all know how to operate one now. There is plenty of time to teach those skills after other, more important life skills have begun developing. There are absolutely no social skills being developed through the use of the computer. Time is too short during these early years, so please use it wisely.

Talk with your children. Talk about what you're doing – diapering, eating, bathing, all the ordinary things you do every day. Talking to babies stimulates their brain connections. As children listen and respond, they learn words. More talk means children learn more words, and more words means children can think faster and better.

Respond to your children. Crying is the only way a baby can communicate at first. Respond with tenderness and care. Your responses help the baby build trust and feel secure.

Look into your baby's eyes, listen to the coos and babbles, repeat them, and encourage more talk.

"Children should be seen and not heard" is an old notion and adhering to it can actually harm your child's ability to learn.

As your child gets older, encourage questions. If you don't know the answers, look for them together. Invite your child to share feelings and opinions. This teaches children they have a right to be heard and that what they think and feel is important.

Give encouragement. Everything a child does starting at birth is about learning. Grasping objects, sleeping, rolling over, crawling, and walking are a child's way of exploring the world.

Get involved in the child's activity. Show delight and joy as your child learns to do new things. Provide a safe and orderly place to eat, sleep, and play.

Demand proper behavior. Teach rules of behavior by setting the example. Children imitate what you do. If you yell and hit, they will too. Set rules and explain the reasons for them.

Teach children to be responsible for their actions. Demand honesty and concern for others. Set routines for eating, sleeping, chores, and play so children know what to expect, Have high expectations: Say that you expect children to do well in school, go to college, and get a good job.

Remember, think long term. Training today gives long term success.



Raising responsible kids

Children need adults to care for them. In the beginning, parents must do everything for them. But as they grow, adults need to teach them, and then let go so they can grow. Allowing children to try, perhaps to fail, and then try again is one way to help them grow. Here are some others:

1. Experiment a little. Much of a child's self-esteem comes from her belief that a parent values her ideas and goals. Allow your child to experiment-with blocks, playthings, arts and crafts, recyclables-even if it means making a mess every now and then. Little fingers learn to manipulate items, turning whims into reality. What a great start for creativity and an I-can-do-it attitude.
2. Answer questions. Children who can do many tasks well usually understand the workings of the tools they use. Someone has answered their questions along the way. Be a parent who answers a child's countless questions. Explain, explain, explain. If she knows how the toilet works, for instance, she'll be more likely to use it correctly.
3. Let her try. As you work with your child on a task, stop and ask yourself: "Could she try this?" For instance, as you wrap a gift for a friend's party, allow your child to choose the gift tag, peel off the price label, or hold the paper down as you tape. Monitor yourself. Could your child be helping here instead of just watching you do it?
4. Don't interfere. When your child is trying to plant a seed in the backyard and all appears to be a disaster, don't take over the project. More important than a perfectly planted seed is the feeling of accomplishment of having done a task on her own.
5. Admit mistakes. When a parent admits his or her own failures, a child realizes that everyone struggles to do things correctly. Adults know failure is a part of success. Teach your child to overcome frustration by acknowledging setbacks as you encounter them.

"Uh-oh, I put three cups of sugar in this cake." Now you have a chance to show calm in the face of adversity. Show her how you try to solve the problem by talking about your problem-solving technique. "Maybe I should just increase the recipe." While children mature at different rates, most are helped (or harmed) by what parents do and say. By our very words and actions, we may encourage or discourage our children to take on increasing responsibilities.

A Firm Foundation

There is a song that says when you can't sleep, don't count sheep, count your blessings. What a good idea!

Think about some of your blessings!

1. Someone to love.
2. Someone who loves and needs you.
3. A Heavenly Father who loves you more than any human can.
4. A God who hears you when you pray.
5. The warmth and security of home.

*The best times
are always found
when friends & family
gather round...*

The Joy of Small Outings

If you have to make a choice and you usually do -- it's much better to sing "Tea for Two" to your baby than to scrub the bathtub. Bathtubs don't grow up and leave home.

A leisurely walk will give your child time to admire a neighbor's garden, to watch a butterfly and listen for birds, and to revel in these sensual joys. They may be minor moments to a parent, but they are small miracles to the baby who has never smelled a rose.

The more you open a child's world, the more he will learn. He would of course, still learn if you invited him to help you when you clean house, but a stroll around the neighborhood is more fun and it will make you feel more virtuous. Besides, the baby won't be rubbing more Zwieback on the baseboard, and you can ignore the baseboards he's already rubbed. From: Marguerite Kelly's Family Almanac 389

Meal time at home

By the time your child turns three, mealtime should be a family social occasion at which she begins to learn table manners and to participate in the enjoyment of sharing good food. To help your child develop an interest in food and diet, you can begin to let her help in meal planning, shopping, the preparation of meals, table setting and cleaning up. Talk to your child about why certain foods are good for us and others not so good, and about the relationship between good health and diet.



Reducing Holiday Stress

Karen Curry

As the traditional holiday season approaches, family stress begins to build. Parties, shopping, family commitments, activities, presentations, and anticipation all take their toll on adults. What happens to children at this time of year? Often adults can use words to express their over stimulation, while children resort to the most basic level: their body language. Whining, crying, hitting, sibling rivalry, lack of cooperation can peak as the holidays come closer. Parents can take action before the season swings into gear. With family plans, thoughtful consideration in the forefront, holiday stress can be reduced and family time can become more relaxed and productive. Some ideas worth trying include:

1. Delay talking about the approaching holiday until a few days before it will occur. The concept of time is quite abstract and beyond the cognitive abilities of most preschoolers. Waiting is very hard for most children and almost impossible for some. Make it easy on yourself and your children by choosing to save anticipation for the very last moment!
2. Let your child know clearly that gifts are NOT rewards for good behavior. Gifts are given because someone loves you and cares about you. Children can become very worried that their behavior will never be "good enough". Your LOVE is your greatest gift to your child.
3. Be sensitive to your personal reactions to the busy holiday season. Children sense their parent's every mood. Your personal stress can be communicated to your child without saying anything!
4. Your child may ask specific and often value-laden questions about holiday time. Take time to answer each question thoughtfully. "Is Santa real?" "What is Jesus' birthday?"
5. Provide opportunities for your child to relax. A pile of soft pillows, a quilt over a card table, a sleeping bag may give your child a safe refuge from too much stimulation. Books and quiet music on a tape player are additional modes of relaxation.
6. Paper and drawing material can offer a means of expressing a child's feelings. Asking your child to draw how he/she is feeling can be therapeutic.
7. Aggressive and over stimulated children can find relief in a warm bath tub. Bubbles, soap crayons, and containers for pouring assist in stress reduction. Adults may find they need these outlets too. Having children bathe before dinner can turn conflict into fun!
8. An outdoor easel on the deck, in the yard, hooked to the fence, or located on the driveway can give an overly-stressed child a creative release. Mix tempera paint with liquid dish detergent for easier clean-up.
9. Dough or clay offers a way to air frustrations. A simple recipe for homemade play dough follows. Cookie cutters and round blocks are all that is needed for uninterrupted play. In our climate, try this outdoors!
10. Limit sugary foods. Many children become more active or aggressive when high sugar levels are present in their bodies. This can be a challenge to parents at holiday time. Sugar is best offered in small amounts and on infrequent occasions. Alternatives include fresh fruit. Texas is famous for wonderful citrus products.
11. Set aside time for family. Even in the busy holiday season, take one night each week for an at-home family time. Concentrate on each other. Sing, play special music, read meaningful stories, play family games, hug, kiss and tell each other, "I love you".

Home-made Butter

A good way for your child to contribute to the Thanksgiving Dinner is to make butter for the family. Here is an easy, childproof method.

Fill a clean baby food jar about 1/3 full of heavy whipping cream. Screw on the lid tightly (tape it if it makes you feel more comfortable) and let your children shake it until it separates and thickens. This usually takes a few minutes. You might want to take turns so that they don't tire before the butter is ready. This is a fun activity and a delicious treat for the whole family.

Happy Thanksgiving.
YUM!!



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		Life Touch Photography				
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		Thanksgiving Big Picnic				
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		HOLIDAY				
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