

Preparing the way for Jesus

As we returned from Thanksgiving break we began learning songs for about Jesus' birthday. It was amazing how many of us already have Christmas items up in our homes. This is a change from a few years ago. Most people often put up trees about a week or two after Thanksgiving. I talked with the children about this time until Christmas. In the church it is called the Advent season. It is a time to prepare for the coming of the savior. Prepare our homes and churches, yes, but most importantly to prepare our hearts and minds. I am always so excited to begin singing the songs we will share with you during the Christmas worship. That is definitely a way to prepare my heart for the true reason for Christmas.

How then do we do that in our homes? Here are a few traditions you may want to add to your family's routine to encourage thinking beyond presents and Santa:

- Make an Advent prayer jar. Put names of people, or groups of people such as the troops serving out country, onto individual slips of paper. Roll or fold these and place them into a jar, can or box. Each night at dinner (hopefully a family sit down meal) one person can pull a slip from the jar and the whole family can say a prayer for that person or those people.
- Make the nativity a major part of your décor and celebration. Place it in a prominent spot—maybe even under the tree. Have the children help place the wisemen or even Mary, Joseph and Jesus far away from the stable—even in other rooms. Each day have a special time to move them closer and closer to the stable. On Christmas morning set a new tradition of reading the Christmas story from Luke, Chapter 2 before you open any presents
- Have a nativity scene the children can play with. Encourage them to act out the story. There are many children's books that give the story in a child appropriate way.
- The day before Christmas, take cookies or a meat and cheese tray to those people who will be working during the holiday - hospitals, firefighters, police station, etc.
- Encourage your kids to act out the Christmas story each year. After you read the story to them let them tell it again in their own words. Record this to watch again in future years.
- Write letters to yourself. Store them in your stockings to discover next Christmas.
- Write a special admiration letter. Perhaps every Sunday throughout December your whole family could write a letter to someone they love and/or admire. Share with them how much they mean to you, how they inspire you or how different your life is with them in it.
- Surround yourself with Christian Christmas music. It is said that music feeds the soul and the message of Christ at Christmas is a wonderfully filling morsel. I pray each of you feel the blessing of the gift of Jesus this Christmas and throughout the year.

Miss Cyndi

Dates worth noting!

December 10

Christmas Worship
10-11:30am

Join us for worship at 10am and activities afterward. Bring the whole family!

Dec 19 - Jan 3

Closed

for Christmas Break

January 4

OPEN

even though Olathe school are closed

January 16

OPEN

even though Olathe school are closed

We will celebrate the teachings of Martin Luther King with a Devotion worship at 9:00am Everyone is welcome to join us!

January 24

Current Family enrollment
5:00pm





Did You Know?

- Enrollment for next year will begin for our current church and preschool families on Tuesday, January 24th at 5pm. Watch for information to come home with your child when we return from Christmas break.
- We continue to collect Olathe HyVee receipts. Please send in your receipts from Olathe HyVees. We usually collect over \$500 each year from this program.
- REMINDER—in the case of inclement weather, we will be closed if Olathe Schools are closed.
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The “Academics” at Preschool

At Aldersgate, we strongly believe in the philosophy that “children learn through play.” In previous articles, I hit on how children learn as they play and last month’s included the importance of those “soft skills.” Many would begin to wonder, then, how and when are the preschoolers learning academics? In a time when we hear so much about public schools’ test scores, the new National Common Core Standards, and higher expectations in kindergarten, shouldn’t we be raising our standards in preschool?

What does it mean to be academic? Academic preschools have been viewed as ones with formal instruction from teachers with children at desks completing worksheets. While this is often how children may learn when they are older, it is not developmentally appropriate for preschoolers. But, with a play-based philosophy, how do children learn? In a recent article on the blog, “Not Just Cute,” the author states, “...when **academic** is (instead) viewed as scholarly and giving rise to study and learning, it easily goes hand in hand with a play-based education structure.” So, while we know that preschoolers learn best through hands-on experiences, we also know that they are learning in the absolute most effective way.

For example, while we do not do “letter of the week” at preschool because teaching letters in isolation has been proven to be ineffective, we are always immersed in letters and words around us. As the teachers divide children for small group time, it’s fun to watch them as they hold up the name cards for dismissing. Sometimes, they’ll cover up the name only to reveal the last letter. As they slowly show the letters in the name backwards, the children name the letters they see and are problem solving as they try to figure out whose name ends in those letters. Imagine the learning that is taking place in just a transition activity like this! It doesn’t take long for the children to soon be able to identify and then even spell all of their classmate’s names!

I recently taught an in-service to our staff regarding child development. During the in-service, we reviewed some of the most influential child development theorists. It was pretty interesting to analyze their beliefs based on research they conducted for the past hundred years. From Piaget to Vygotsky, Montessori to Dewey, the same principles were repeated over and over, “playing is learning and learning is playing, the importance of real experiences, teachers acting as guides.” So, while the type of activities our preschoolers are doing don’t seem academic, they are actually very much so.

What we know, then, is that there doesn’t need to be a division of play and academics. Play and academics are very much interrelated and work extremely well together. We strongly believe in what we do here at Aldersgate. Every activity, book, song, game we plan is done intentionally because while the children are just having fun, we know the academic benefits that come from doing them. Your children are getting a strong foundation built that will prepare them for the future in the best possible way.

Shelly Todd—Staff and Curriculum Development Coordinator

work cited: <http://notjustcute.com/2011/11/08/repost-play-vs-academics-a-false-dichotomy/>



Rise Up Shepherd

Author unknown

There's a star in the East on Christmas morn,
Rise up, shepherd, and follow.
It will lead to the place where the Christ was born,
Rise up, shepherd, and follow.



The Animals in the Stable

Written By: J.P.A. Schulz

O come, little children, O come, one and all,
O come to the manger in Bethlehem's stall;
And see what our Father on this holy night,

Academic Benefits of Our Classrooms

When the children are in the art area, they are practicing:

- Fine motor skills as they color, glue, and create.
- Hand-eye coordination in placing pieces on the paper.
- Oral language skills in sharing about what they have created.
- Learning about patterns, shapes and sizes.
- Creative expression as they use their imaginations to express themselves.

When the children are in the dramatic play area, they are practicing:

- Coordination as they set the table or dress up.
- Role identification as they act out roles and what they know about them.
- Social negotiation as they work out situations with others in play.

When the children are in the block area, they are practicing:

- Science as they learn about gravity and balance.
- Cooperation as they work with other children to build and create.
- Identifying common shapes and geometric objects.
- Comparing length and width of objects noticing which is shorter, taller, higher, longer, etc.

When the children are in circle time, they are practicing:

- Sitting and listening.
- Literacy skills with the book read to them as they predict events in the story, retell, identify words, observe how text is read (left to right), sequence events.
- Public speaking as they share thoughts in front of the class.
- Number recognition in counting out the numbers on the calendar.
- Learning days of the week.



Christmas Worship

Join us on Saturday, December 10th! We will have a worship at 10:00am.

The kids are busy learning some new songs to share during the worship. We will have Christ centered activities after the worship.

We will also be collecting baby items Angel Babies—a local organization that supports teen mothers. Each mother receives the following items:

A warm sleeper, A winter outfit, A blanket, An educational toy, Diapers, Wipes, A Bible

Please bring something from this list to share at offering during worship.

It is right and good to give thanks!

We express our appreciation to:

- Everyone who helped the worker from Blackbob Pet Hospital. What a wonderful witness of compassion and love!
- Everyone helping others this Christmas season. Gifts for adopted children, hats and mittens, baby items!

I thank my God every time I remember you. Philippians 1:3

Giggles & Grins

Enjoy actual anecdotes from our Aldersgate kids.

- Three year old to another child, "That picture is handsome."
- A child burped rather loudly. A teacher asked, "What do you say?" The child responded, "That was AWESOME!"



Here's a
FUN

way to sign in for the day in Red Class!

He took a little child and had him stand among them. Taking him in his arms, he said to them, "Whoever welcomes one of these little children in my name welcomes me; and whoever welcomes me does not welcome me but the one who sent me."

Matthew 9:36-37

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Mission Statement:

The purpose of establishing a preschool at Aldersgate United Methodist Church is to provide opportunities within a Christian atmosphere to meet the educational and social needs of young children in both the congregation and the community.

Program Goal:

To provide a safe, nurturing, Christian environment where young children can explore and discover, through age appropriate activities, the wonders of God's world.

Worship at Aldersgate United Methodist Church:

Every person is invited to join our worship and Christian education experiences of Aldersgate United Methodist Church. There are greeters each Sunday morning that will assist you in finding Sunday School classrooms or the Worship Center. Please note the following times and schedules:

- 8:30 am Worship and a children's activity time for children ages 3 through 10 years. Nursery care is available.
- 9:45 am Sunday School classes are offered for ages 1 through adult. A greeter will be glad to assist you in finding a class that may interest you and or our children.
- 11:00am Worship and Kidz Worship—a children's worship experience.
- 6:30pm Join this more contemporary service. Child care is provided for children ages 2 and under. This is a casual worship experience with tables of activities children can participate in while worshipping with the family.

