

# Messiah Lutheran Child Care Center's Director Report

*54 years of Excellence in Christian Education*

January 2021

To begin with: This year has been like no other. We all have persevered through incredible stress and challenges in our personal and professional lives to get to today. At Messiah Child Care, the support of our Staff, our families, and our Board, as well as, Messiah Lutheran Church's staff and families has been overwhelming. We could not have done all that we have accomplished without everyone's hard work, thoughtful words and prayers. Messiah Lutheran Child Care Center has been full of activity and energy throughout 2020, with the exception of March 18<sup>th</sup>-June 15<sup>th</sup> when we were closed due to the covid-19 pandemic. With all that has happened, we are especially proud to add another year to Messiah Lutheran Child Care Center's pre-school/Kindergarten/child care excellence.

Messiah Child Care Center is open from 6:30am-5:30pm. Pre -school hours are 9:00am-11:30am. During the school year, the hours for the older 4's class (Pre K-2/3) and our Kindergarten and Jr. Kdgn. are minimally from 9am-noon. Summer programs are available to children 3-10 years old and include a wide variety of indoor and outdoor activities, as well as fieldtrips (usually).

During the first 3 months of 2020 (pre-covid), Messiah had 3 pre-school classes for 3 year olds, 3 classes for 4 year olds and a Jr. Kdgn./Kindergarten for children who are 5 by September 1<sup>st</sup> (or by November 1<sup>st</sup> for Jr. Kdgn.). Additionally, we had a 10 week, 1 hour, Parent-Tot class. Classes were arranged by age and children in any classroom could extend their pre-school hours to 4 ½ or to full day extended care.

From June through December, many DCFS, city, county and state mandates were in place that changed much of our class alignment and our staffing needs. Children needed to be with their own classroom group and groups could not combine. This eliminated many of our usual activities like our Wednesday chapel service in the church, group music class with our music teacher and getting together for play outdoors. Our classes were distinguished not only by age, but also by the length of the children's days. Fortunately we have a wonderful group of dedicated, loving teachers and support staff who reliably care for and educate our children during the 9 month school year and in the summer months and who have been amazingly resilient with all the required changes.

Messiah Lutheran Child Care Center children receive a traditional, play-based pre-school education. Their days include stories, music, art, indoor and/or outdoor large and small motor activities. They follow a curriculum, based on the Illinois State Standards for pre-school education, of language arts, math, science, art, music and social sciences, in addition to a Christian education with their classroom teachers and our pastor. Teachers have received recent inservice training on STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering , Math)... including art the acronym is 'STEAM' and including religion it becomes 'STREAM'. Conferences are generally held in person with parents in October/November and in April/May. Conferences this year were held either outdoors or by phone.

The weekly calendar at Messiah Child Care also includes diverse enrichment opportunities. In addition to the large assortment of classroom activities (social, academic, physical, etc.), children at Messiah experience weekly Thursday classroom Bible story visits with Miss Karen.

Messiah generally offers an optional program, as well. Miss Pat (Doyle), of Kid's Dance Express, leads a 45 minute class of dance and movement on Mondays, Tuesdays and Wednesdays. The Kid's Dance Express children usually perform in 2 dance recitals at Messiah: the 'P'Nut Cracker' dance recital in December, as well as, the end of the year recital, in May, which is also performed on stage at Yacktman/LGH. Both of these programs were covid-cancelled in 2020. Miss Pat's classes have been a part of Messiah programming for over 20 years and will resume, on a limited basis, in January 2021.

Throughout the year, the children of Messiah participate in projects that extend beyond the school's walls. During each Wednesday chapel service, children have been invited to donate an offering of canned food. The children walk the food, which is donated to the Maine Township Food Pantry or used for other families in need through Messiah Church's assistance program, to the front of the church and place it on the altar. Although we no longer do chapel in the church, the children have continued to donate food to the food pantry during Miss Karen's classroom Bible visits. During Lent, each classroom collects pennies (nickels, dimes, etc.) which are then donated to the food pantry, as well. Our 2020 Lenten collection period was cut short because of the school covid closure, but the children had already donated \$269.96!! This puts our donations of the past 16 years, at nearly \$12,300.

Our school's PTO supports our school's extra projects by sponsoring many fund raisers throughout the year.

Included in these 2020 fund raisers were the monthly manna/Script card orders (manna/Script cards are gift cards

that can be purchased for your own shopping needs or to give as gifts), monthly Scholastic book orders, We were unable to do our usual Scholastic Book Fair, our ice cream social or, our largest fund raising event, the Annual Fun Fair, usually held in May. (At our fun fairs, we have a large silent auction, carnival games in the classrooms, a bouncy house, a trackless train, ponies and food.) We had 'restaurant fund-raisers' as well- at Morettis in Edison Park and at **Yogli Mogli (Park Ridge) and Potbellys (Park Ridge)**. We appreciate the huge support of our school by families of both the church and the child care.

During the early covid months Messiah Child Care and Messiah Lutheran Church receive Payroll Protection Funds which paid our staff's wages for 8 weeks during April, May and June. During the months of July, August, September, October, November and December, Messiah Child Care received a Child Care Restoration Grant (CCRG) through INCCRRA which has also helped with the child care payroll and extra covid expenses. Sincerely enormous thanks to Miss Rita for working so very hard to get all of the required communication, paperwork and follow-up needed to make these extra funding opportunities happen for us. Messiah families were also EXTREMELY generous in their financial and emotional support of our school. A group of families organized 3 fun fall fund raisers: a Yoga class, a dance class and a Bottle and Bottega painting class. Many families donated to Messiah's Go Fund Me page, which was arranged on our behalf by a Messiah parent, as well as, making donations directly to our school. We also received many covid protection donations of hand sanitizer, face masks, paper towels, etc. We have been INCREDIBLY BLESSED with the generosity and emotional support of SO many people.

Past school improvements made with fund raising money include playground equipment and maintenance, the PK2 loft, computers, ipads, library, AV equipment, and the brick patios that are used for picnicking and as a reading garden. In August, 2012, using money raised by the PTO, we installed a 5' decorative iron fence around the church/school playground/park and secured the area with an electronic gate across the driveway. The children have enjoyed the expanded play area and parents, staff and children appreciate the added security. We used our fund raising monies in 2016 to improve our outdoor play area (new wood chips, new storage units for large motor and sand toys). We added a stunning piece of kinetic art to our patio (Thank you-Mr. Dave for installing it). Our largest purchase of our fund raising money was to purchase new Mitsubishi duct-less, QUIET, energy efficient, air-conditioning (with heating as well) units for all of the classrooms, the lunchroom, and the business office. The child care PTO fund raising monies paid for half of the ACs and their installation, while the child care center paid for the other half. Mr. Dave removed the window air conditioners giving a cleaner look to the exterior of the building as well as creating sunnier, less drafty classrooms. In 2018, the child care and church worked together to remove and replace large areas of concrete sidewalks around the campus. Additionally a drainage area was added to the east edge of the north parking lot to alleviate the water collection problems in the south east corner of that lot as well as raising the sidewalk to provide a safe and dry entrance into the school playground. In 2018, laptop computers were purchased for each of the classrooms to enhance the children's learning experiences and for classroom teachers to send their daily messages to parents from their own rooms.

This year's fund raisers went towards purchasing PPE (soap, paper towels, masks, sanitizer, etc.) and classroom air purifiers (2 or 3 in each classroom). The major purchase was 2 or 3 air purifiers for each classroom to help remove bacteria, viruses, dust, etc. from the air.

Other activities that took place at Messiah Child Care Center during the 2020 year are:

**January:**

- Winter Parent-Tot classes begin
- Inservice day for staff on MLK birthday
- Participation in the Niles Library Pre-School Fair
- Participation in the Park Ridge Library Pre-School Fair
- Participation in the Des Plaines Library Pre-School Fair
- Kindergarten Open House for prospective Kindergarten and Junior Kindergarten students
- Summer and fall registration forms are distributed to current families
- Fund raiser at Pot Belly's in Park Ridge
- Children draw self-portraits for annual Messiah t-shirt

**February:**

- 'Be My Valentine' Pizza dinner and Valentine making party
- Valentine Open House for new and current families
- Registration for summer and fall classes
- 'People in our Neighborhood' class rotation week and classroom visits from librarians, firefighters, doctors, etc.

**March:**

- Collected \$269.96 in pennies (nickels, dimes, dollars, etc.) during Lent for Messiah Lutheran Church's Assistance Program
- Culvers Fund Raiser
- MESSIAH CLOSED BY THE COVID-19 VIRUS PANDEMIC-our last day that students attended was Wednesday, March 18th
- Teachers and office continue to make regular contact with child care families through emails, phone calls, front porch drop-off, mailings, etc. etc.
- Cancelled-spring field trips and spring restaurant fund raiser
- Cancelled-Spring Parent-tot

**April:**

- Teachers and office continue to make regular contact with child care families through emails, phone calls, front porch drop-off, mailings, etc. etc.
- Cancelled-Children singing at Messiah's Sunday Lenten Church Service (Child Care provided refreshments!!)
- Cancelled -Neighborhood Easter Egg Hunt held at Messiah Church
- Easter story recorded by Pastor David and emailed to all child care students
- Cancelled- Weeklong Scholastic Book fair
- Cancelled- Two nights of Ice Cream social parties including the book fair and entertainment by magician, Mr. Ash
- Cancelled- Miss Pat's end of the year dance show at Yacktman (LGH) and at Messiah for 3 programs

**May:**

- Teachers and office continue to make regular contact with child care families through emails, phone calls, front porch drop-off, mailings, etc. etc.
- Cancelled- Fun Fair and Silent Auction-complete with ponies, bouncy house, trackless train, games, prizes, and food!!
- Cancelled- Parent-Teacher Conferences
- Cancelled- Spring visit from the Park Ridge Librarians
- Cancelled- March in the Park Ridge Memorial Day parade

**June:**

- Teachers and office continue to make regular contact with child care families through emails, phone calls, front porch drop-off, mailings, etc. etc.
- Drive-by pick up for 2019-2010 students (picked up end-of- year binders, supplies and clothes left behind)
- Cancelled- Kindergarten luncheon and Graduation
- Cancelled- End of school family picnic
- Staff inservicing-introducing covid restrictions, classroom organization, etc
- June 15<sup>th</sup> - MESSIAH REOPENS-masked and sanitized –FOLLOWING NEW COVID-19 VIRUS PANDEMIC PROTOCOL-  
Beginning of summer classes for pre-schoolers and school aged children

**June, July August:**

- Summer programs for children aged 3-10 years old
- Weekly on campus virtual field trips planned by the day campers and enjoyed by all
- Cancelled- Summer Parent-tot program for 7 weeks
- Cancelled- Bible School for Child Care students
- DCFS licensing
- Cancelled- Weekly field trips to local attractions: Pirates Cove, Elk Grove Bowl, Barnaby's Pizza, , Mountain View Mini-Golf, the Exploratorium, Marriott Lincolnshire (Elephants and Piggies), the Des Plaines Splash Pad (2x), Wildwood Nature Center, Pump It Up, Portillos, etc.

**August:**

- Staff inservicing-introducing covid restrictions, classroom organization, etc.
- Purchased 2 or 3 air purifiers for each classroom
- Cancelled- Open House
- Beginning of fall school session, including younger 3's class

**September:**

- Cancelled- Fall Parent-Tot
- Cancelled- Miss Pat's 'Kid's Dance Express' Begins

**October:**

- Cancelled- All school field trip to Didier's Pumpkin Farm
- Vision and hearing screening for all Messiah students
- CPR classes for all staff (Pizza dinner with Child Care Board cancelled)
- Parent-Teacher conferences – held by phone or outdoors
- Cancelled- Harvest Festival/Trunk or Treat/ Bouncy House/Food/Child Care Open House
- Fund raiser at Moretti's in Edison Park
- Cancelled- Cookie Dough and Popcorn sale
- Classroom Halloween Parties

**November:**

- Cancelled- Fall visit from the Park Ridge Librarians
- Class Photos
- 'The Food Plate' Food and Nutrition classroom rotation week
- Cancelled- Thanksgiving luncheon for children and their families (105 guests)
- Cancelled- Family week
- Weekly video Advent Bible stories with Pastor David recorded and emailed to all child care families
- Reverse Advent food and necessity collection donations from child care, church and neighborhood families

**December:**

- Cancelled- Family Gingerbread House decorating party
- Cancelled- Children sang at Messiah's Sunday Advent Church Service (Child Care provided refreshments!!)
- Cancelled- Silent auction for the Christmas programs' front row seats
- Cancelled- Three P-nutcracker dance programs performed by Miss Pat's classes
- Cancelled- Pre K-3 and Kdgn./Jr. Kdgn. collect and deliver gifts for children at Yacktman (LGH) Childrens
- Cancelled- Three classroom Christmas programs (live-streamed) and family Christmas parties
- Staff holiday luncheon with child care board (board zoomed in this year)
- Messiah CCC closed for 2 weeks for Christmas and New Year's holidays

We have an amazing staff, dedicated to daily providing the children with new challenges and an exciting, varied curriculum. They provide a loving, nurturing environment where the physical, social, emotional, cognitive and spiritual development of each child is encouraged and celebrated. This year our staff has remained flexible, loving and incredibly brave to meet the challenges of an unpredictable year. The children and their families have benefitted from the opportunities our school has safely provided them. I would like mention that we are honored to be able to offer a consistent staff to parents each year. Many schools face a high annual turnover of teachers, but thanks to our outstanding and dedicated staff, we are proud to welcome them back consistently each year.

Our lead classroom teachers during part or all of the year have been: Cindy Decker, Cristina Krueger, Jennifer Paulus-Krueger, Kirstin Kida, Laurie Bachmann (now retired), Sue Johanson (now retired), Suzanne Priore, and Terri Hogan. Our assistant teachers have been: Becca Zuckerman-Krueger, Bette Hagstrom, Diane Wojda, Eilis King, Karen Tompkins, Kelly Brown, Laura Decker, Laura Hauser, Lavonne Boch, Maggie Kicmal (covid-retired), RoseMarie DiVito. Miss Cristina was our Parent-Tot teacher and our Spanish teacher. Our support and office staff include: Bob Black, our lunchroom manager, Cathy Shaughnessy our office manager/director's assistant, Rita Kotowski our bookkeeper and school resource manager, and Pat Doyle our dance and movement instructor.

Our substitutes include Cristina Krueger, Janelle Wendling, Laura Decker, Laura Hauser and Laurie Bachmann.

We also had several Maine East and Maine South high school interns working with us during the afternoons at the beginning of the year, but have not been able to since covid-19. These students have an interest in early childhood careers and are recommended to Messiah by their school advisors.

We thank our Child Care Board, Eric Grove, Pat Kovach and Sue Kopij, who have met with me twice a month via ZOOM meetings to support our efforts throughout this most challenging year. We thank the Church's EC who worked with us to receive the vital PPP funding for the school and the church. And we thank the parishioners of Messiah for their kind words of encouragement, for their support of our school's mission to share God's word with the children and for their continuous support (especially fund raisers) of our Center.

Through this entire year, Messiah CCC is proud to have retained a dedicated, resourceful, flexible, brave staff. We are proud that with tuition, outside funding and fund raisers, we have been able to meet every payroll, for every staff member, throughout the entire year

We thank Pastor David for his support of our school activities, his chapel talks and his video messages at Easter and Advent.

We thank Alaine Wong for her dedicated and generous work in the church office and for organizing this year's "Reverse Advent" giving program. She has been a strong connection between the church and the child care. Her assistance and her interest in the child care center's activities have been extremely helpful and supportive.

We thank Dave Hanson, who is instrumental in maintaining the property. Mr. Dave is always ready and able to help the child care with a wide variety of needs, ensuring a safe and clean environment for our children.

We thank the families of Messiah Child Care Center for their enormous support, their unwavering trust and generous spirits. Our families are the BEST!! They are always available to assist and participate in our classroom and school activities, as well as fund raisers. They support us with their enthusiastically kind words and their generous recommendations to prospective families. Their trust in Messiah CCC to provide a safe, healthy, loving, fun, environment for their children to learn and grow is humbling.

Those of us who work throughout the year at Messiah Lutheran Child Care Center are privileged to share God's Word with the children and to play a vital role in each child's growth and development. It is a job that we respect and embrace. Our thanks to all who are on this journey with us.

Yours in Christ, Karen Black  
Messiah Lutheran Child Care Center Director

*"Train up a child in the way he should go; and when he is old, he will not depart from it." Proverbs 22:6*