Iowa Department of Human Services
CHILD CARE CENTER EVALUATION AND RECOMMENDATION FOR LICENSE

Name of Center: Little Lambs Christian Preschool **Enrollment:** 62 **License ID No. (Reapplications)** 25089

Street: 201 First Avenue **City:** Hiawatha Iowa **Zip** 52233 **County:** Linn

Mailing Address: 201 First Avenue, Hiawatha, IA, 52233

Director's Name: Kari Boyle **Phone Number:** 319-393-8507

On-Site Supervisor(s): Kari Boyle **E-Mail:** littlelambs@zionhiawatha.org

Date(s) of Visit: 01-22-2025

Licensing Visit X **Unannounced Visit** X **Off Year Visit** **Administrative Change**

LICENSING VISITS

New Application **Re-Application** X **NA**

Signed Application (470-0722) Received **Yes** **No** X **NA** **Date Signed:**

FIRE INSPECTION **State** X **Local** **NA** **Is Fire Inspection Approved?** X **Yes** **No** **NA**

Date Inspected: 12-13-2023

Comments :

LICENSE TYPE: X **Child Care** **Preschool (ages 3-5 meets three hours or less per day)**

Financial Type: Profit X Non-Profit NA

Accredition: Accredited NAEYC NSACA Other X NA

Program Serves: Infants (0-23 mo.) 2 Years X Preschool-Age School-Age

Get-Well Evening Care Special Needs

SCHEDULE: Year-round X School-Year Summer Only

HOURS:	*Year-round*	*School-Year*	*Summer Only*

LICENSE CAPACITY	Infants	2 Years	Preschool	School-Age	Capacity
General			150		150
Summer					0

QRS Rating: N/A

RECOMMENDATION FOR LICENSE:	
X	**FULL** license from 02-01-2024 to 02-01-2026
	PROVISIONAL license from
	DENIAL of initial application
	SUSPENSION of license
	REVOCATION of license

Licensing Consultant: Amy Lyons **Date:** 02-06-2025

I. IF CURRENT LICENSE IS PROVISIONAL, IDENTIFY THE CORRECTIVE ACTIONS

Not applicable.

II. IDENTIFY THE AREAS OBSERVED ON THE VISIT:

Little Lambs Christian Preschool has been in operation since 1981. The non-profit program is located inside Zion Lutheran Church and is governed by Zion's Board of Education. Little Lambs Preschool operates school-year only and offers various preschool opportunities to children age 3, 4, and 5-years-old. Current enrollment is 62.

Ms. Boyle has been the program's director since spring, 2014. Mrs. Boyle graduated from Kaplan University and has taken many hours of Early Childhood classes. She worked at Little Lambs Christian Preschool for 10 years prior to becoming the director. Ms. Boyle is a member of the Iowa Association for the Education of Young Children (IAEYC) and the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC). She is also a member of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod (LCMS).

On 1/22/2025, program space was observed.

III. IDENTIFY THE OBSERVED STRENGTHS OF THE CENTER:

Little Lambs Christian Preschool offers a variety of preschool opportunities to children age 3, 4, and 5-years-old throughout the community.

Little Lambs Christian Preschool has been in operation since fall 1981. The 2024-2025 school-year marks this program's 43rd year of providing early learning to preschool-age children throughout the community. Congratulations!

Little Lambs Christian Preschool has the following website for families and the community: https://zionhiawatha.org/preschool/. The program also sponsors a private social media page specifically for enrolled families.

The purpose of Little Lambs Christian Preschool is to "...provide a well-rounded and nurturing pre-kindergarten experience for three, four, and five year olds in a Christian environment. Little Lambs Christian Preschool supports the home by providing a program of developmentally appropriate learning activities that will contribute to the child's mental, physical and spiritual development and further his/her social and emotional growth...."

Little Lambs Christian Preschool has a history of participation in local quality initiatives. The program has applied for and received grants including grants to fund family scholarships.

Staff are professional - organized, educated, and experienced. Ms. Boyle is celebrating her 10th year as director of Little Lambs Christian Preschool. Congratulations! Ms. Boyle is organized, and in turn, the program experiences smooth daily operations. Ms. Boyle has noteworthy systems of organization in place to help ensure administrative items to be completed as required and maintained in a confidential manner. Staff are aware of licensing rules as well as their own program's policies and procedures.

Little Lambs Christian Preschool continues to retain all seasoned employees. Staff reported celebrating 11 years, 10 years, 9 years and 5 years employment with this preschool. The staff longevity remains impressive! The staff's passion for early childhood is clearly evidenced throughout the curriculum and classrooms. During this monitoring visit, unique teacher created center play experiences observed included a greatly enjoyed pizzeria (e.g. cash register, cardboard brick style oven, teacher created pizza peel, felt pizza components) and ice cream parlor (e.g. kinetic sand ice cream creating, assorted mini sprinkle pom-poms). Ms. Boyle discussed great appreciation for her team of people who work closely together. Ms. Boyle also discussed how staff continue to be recognized, supported, and valued in all capacities.

The history of how Zion Lutheran Church and Little Lambs Christian Preschool came to fruition is impressive (e.g. began as a mission in 1949, started in a one room school house before moving to present location, congregation officially formed in 1954, ground breaking new house of worship 1956, renovation with addition in 1969). In August 2023, Zion Lutheran Church obtained a new pastor. Zion Lutheran Church has many ministries including children's ministries incorporating Sunday School, Children's Puppet Ministry, Vacation Bible School and preschool. Little Lambs Christian Preschool is a ministry of Zion Lutheran Church and governed by Zion's Board of Education. Church administration, church custodial staff, and the board help ensure the program space is sanitary and hazard free each day. The property is spacious, sanitary, and well-maintained. The space is ADA accessible and an AED machine is on-site. Ms. Boyle discussed how the preschool continues to greatly appreciate a church volunteer's passion for food and cooking which brings about freshly seasonal baked breads (e.g. zucchini, pumpkin, applesauce, banana) and produce as well as an additional grant opportunity to help offset the costs of preschool snack.

Little Lambs Christian Preschool has emergency plans, policies, and procedures in place which are annually reviewed and updated as needed. The preschool successfully navigated through the 2008 Linn County flood, 2019 winter Polar Vortex, 2019 health (covid-19) pandemic, 8/10/20 Derecho Storm, 2021 food supply issues, 2022 infant formula shortages, 2023 air quality alerts and 7/19/24 global technology outage.

Little Lambs Christian Preschool continues efforts at optimal communication between the program/staff and families. The program has organized parent-staff/program information centers, offers regular program newsletters, utilizes technological communication resources, and supports family programming activities. Registration for the 2025-2026 school-year is currently underway. Ms. Boyle discussed how many children and families who experience their program's 3yo preschool remain with them for their 4yo preschool program. Ms. Boyle indicated that since the last review, the preschool began accepting online payments and how there is a goal to offer some future fall-wrap care.

Classrooms continue to be arranged in a thoughtful manner with learning at the forefront. Children's accomplishments (e.g. celebrating families wall) were displayed in the program space. All classes follow age appropriate Creative Curriculum standards with units in Math, Science, Literacy, Creative Arts (Art and Music) and Social Skills. Curriculum also includes Teaching Strategies Gold, motor skill development, "One in Christ" Christian lessons, and teacher inspired ideas. Little Lambs Christian Preschool has a deep history of offering a variety of special program/family events throughout each school-year including preschool-family conferences, fall orientation, spring preschool graduation celebration, monthly chapels with Pastor or DCE, guest speaker events (e.g. community helpers, local bakers, area farmers), additional enrichment opportunities (e.g. Little Sports), walking trip experiences, "Muffins with Mom", "Donuts with Dad", and Christmas program.

Little Lambs Christian Preschool has a solid reputation in the community. During the 2019-2020 school-year, Little Lambs Christian Preschool began a partnership with the Cedar Rapids Community School District (CRCSD) to provide a statewide voluntary 4-year-old preschool program. This is their 6th year in partnership. Ms. Boyle discussed continued opportunities for monthly collaboration with the CRCSD as well as trainings through AEA and the district. Little Lambs Christian Preschool collaborates well with many community agencies including area access services, local colleges and local health professionals. Little Lambs Christian Preschool has well-established partnerships with local businesses including the library, post office, local mission/charity, and police station.

Each child is engaged in a daily health check upon arrival for early detection of apparent illness, communicable disease, or unusual condition or behavior which may adversely affect the child or the group. The program has policies and procedures in place for hand washing, cleaning, sanitizing and disinfecting.

On the day of the monitoring visit, staff were nurturing and attentive to the children's needs. Freshly baked cinnamons rolls could be smelled throughout the building as the 3yo preschool children were engaged in a hands-on cooking project! Activities observed included clever center play experiences (e.g. ice cream parlor, ice fishing, block building, kinetic sand, dollhouse, winter animal and snowman puzzles, scissors and hole punch work, colored stick linking, sensory rice with polar animals) and group discussion (e.g. book reading, music with movement). Children had access to an array of materials (e.g. books, imaginative play options, building materials, sensory, crafts) that encourage innovative play. Staff provided a companionable presence allowing children to have many choices in their play experiences. Routine transitions (e.g. clean up activities, snack rituals) worked smoothly into the program's welcoming and cooperative play environment. Staff were nurturing, attentive to the children's needs and encouraged social graces. Children responded well to staff and appeared to be truly enjoying their day as evidenced by laughter and level of engagement in the preschool experiences!

IV. IDENTIFY THE ASPECTS OF OPERATION THAT FALL BELOW THE STANDARDS REVIEWED:

None noted.

V. SPECIAL NOTES/RECOMMENDATIONS:

The program's license remains in full status. Thank you for the visit.

*Note: If you are the Child Care Center Director and you feel something is unclear or unjustly cited, please contact your DHS Licensing Consultant to discuss the issue. The child care director may also send a response which will be placed in the licensing file.

*Note: If you are a member of the general public, there may be additional information contained in the public file. You may contact the DHS Licensing Consultant to inquire.