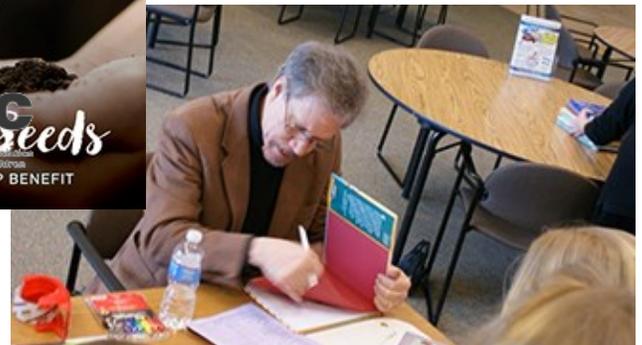


20 Questions for Bloom

A passion to nurture each child, a mission to make it affordable.



Answers to help **Plymouth Presbyterian Church** envision how a Bloom satellite, housed in our building, will fit into our church

1. Tell us about Bloom.

Our mission: *passionately strive to break the cycle of poverty at the start through nurturing care and an exceptional early learning program. We prepare young children for success in school and enable their parents to pursue educational and employment opportunities.*

Our vision: *Transform the lives of economically disadvantaged families and alleviate the unmet need for early learning and care.*

Our tagline: *A passion to nurture each child, a mission to make it affordable.*

We passionately believe:

- All children deserve a loving and nurturing start in life
- Applying proven best practices in early childhood development and kindergarten readiness are the keys to exceptional outcomes for children.
- Empowering low-income parents to work or go back to school to become qualified for a career path can transform families and give them the chance to climb out of poverty.
- Low-income families become stronger, healthier and more self-sufficient with extended support services through our partnership with other community organizations, government agencies, and local school districts.
- We can and do make a difference in the lives of children, their families and our community – both today and in the future.

We make it work with:

- High quality infant through pre-K curriculum and care, exceptional teachers and staff, low child-to-adult ratios and an intimate, loving environment.
- Half our capacity dedicated to children from low-income families, resulting in a unique, diverse mix of social and economic backgrounds that benefits all the children and strengthens our entire community.
- Committed Bloom families who support each other.
- Our scholarship fund that provides tuition assistance to families who are struggling financially.
- Support from Messiah United Methodist Church members, gifts from individual donors and contributions from corporations and foundations.
- Community partners like Interfaith Outreach, Caring for Kids, and Wayzata Public Schools.

Bloom is a successful program with a 17-year track record of nurturing and educating children and empowering their parents. In addition to Department of Human Services licensing, Bloom has voluntarily pursued and earned accreditation from the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), the gold standard for early childhood programs across the country. Bloom also has attained the highest rating (4 stars) from Parent Aware. Ratings allow Minnesota families to identify programs that use research-based best practices to prepare children for kindergarten.

Our programs are vibrant, engaging, individualized and tailored to each age group. To promote school readiness, we have adopted the Creative Curriculum, based on 38 objectives for development and learning, which are aligned with state early learning standards. In addition, we use Second Step curriculum, a social-emotional program to teach children concepts such as empathy, friendship skills, and problem solving. This curriculum is boosted by our Virtues program, a character building curriculum in which we teach and model values such as patience, kindness, and celebrating differences. We also incorporate the Minnesota Department of Health's Learning About Nutrition through Activities (LANA) program; its goal is to help young children learn to taste, eat and enjoy more fruits and vegetables to promote good health. Finally, through enrichment programs, our children are exposed to music and art. For example, we had an artist-in-residence from the Minnetonka Center for the Arts work with the children to develop a clay mural.

2. When did you start working with Bloom and why?

I started working at Bloom in June 2015. Just before I arrived, the Board of Directors created the position of Executive Director. They had been working on a five-year strategic plan to meet the needs in our community. The ultimate goal of this plan was to serve 150 children by the year 2020. At the time, they were serving 52 children. Knowing that this ambitious plan would require greater community involvement and financial support, the Executive Director position was tasked with creating community awareness and building Bloom's fundraising capacity. I was hired because of my past experiences as Director of Development (fundraising) and Executive Director of area nonprofits serving children, families and adults experiencing poverty, as well as my experience fundraising for St. David's Center for Child & Family Development in Minnetonka and my work as a fundraising consultant.

I excitedly took the job for a variety of reasons. I am passionate about children and education. I firmly believe that education helps to level the playing field and is key to opening doors to opportunities for fulfillment and self-reliance. I believe it is important to provide resources to people in need to help them through crises and ultimately better their circumstances. Additionally, I have lived in the neighborhood for 20 years and knew of Bloom's excellent reputation and strong partnership with IOCP and the Wayzata School District. And, I had great respect for the people I knew who were involved with Bloom as board members.

3. How long has Bloom been in operation?

Since June 2000.

4. How did it start?

Bloom Early Learning, formerly Kids' Care Connection, began with a Lenten sermon in 1997, delivered by Pastor Rolland Robinson. He challenged his congregation of Messiah United Methodist Church to help with one of the more troubling side effects of the "welfare-to-work" reform that had just been initiated: as the adults return to work, who will take care of their children? Messiah responded by expanding their building program to meet the requirements for use as a childcare and education center. Bloom was created as an independent non-profit organization in May 1999 and opened its doors in June 2000. Since then, we have served 477 children, 208 of whom received financial assistance.

5. Who do you serve?

We serve children (6 weeks to age 5) and their families. We serve a mix of private pay families and families requiring financial assistance. Because many of our families rely on the services of Interfaith Outreach (food shelf, employment assistance, housing) and we partner with the Wayzata School District for program evaluation and special services, as needed, at least 80% of our families in need reside within the boundaries of the school district (also served by IOCP).

More than 600 families live in poverty in the Plymouth/Wayzata area. IOCP estimates that 530 children from low-income families in our community are in need of access to quality programming.

Most of our private pay families live locally as well. Several teachers from the Wayzata and Eden Prairie districts and Breck send their children to Bloom, which speaks to our high quality.

6. What is Bloom proposing to the members of Plymouth Presbyterian Church (PPC)?

Building toward our goal of serving 150 children by 2020, we added an extra classroom at our current location of Messiah Church in the fall of 2015, bringing our total capacity to 70. We are now out of physical space at Messiah to expand. As such, we would like to create a second Bloom center at Plymouth Presbyterian Church to add 48 more students. We propose the members of PPC embrace Bloom as a mission, to serve children and families in need in our community.

PPC would require relatively little remodeling to meet the licensing requirements for a child care and early learning center.

7. How is the Bloom program funded?

We have a number of funding streams. Our private pay families pay full tuition for their children. This provides at least 50% of our income. We raise funds for our scholarship program to cover the costs of tuition for half of our children in need. The other half of tuition for our children in need is supported by State early learning scholarships, County child care assistance, and monies from Interfaith Outreach. We also receive monies from the USDA food program. (We provide breakfast, lunch and a significant afternoon snack to our students.)

8. How many employees are currently working with Bloom?

On a given day, we have 18 employees at Bloom – teachers, assistants, aides, executive director, center director and business manager.

Our teachers have exceptional credentials: two have Master's degrees, four have Bachelor's degrees in Early or Elementary Education, two have Bachelor of Science degrees, and two have Associate degrees in Early Education. Because our staff are dedicated to the mission, turnover is low.

9. How many additional employees do you foresee at PPC?

Approximately 12 additional teachers, assistants and aides plus a director and assistant director.

10. How many children in the program do you foresee at PPC?

Approximately 46 to 50 children

11. Approximately how many children in each age group will be participating in the program at PPC?

Approximately 8 infants, 14 toddlers, 24 preschoolers.

12. Are you asking for a financial commitment from PPC or its members?

Yes. We hope to create a relationship similar to the one we have with Messiah and its members. For example, Messiah contributes our rent. Messiah typically dedicates one or more of its holiday collections to Bloom. Individual members of Messiah make charitable donations to Bloom, primarily to our Shirley Robinson Scholarship Fund, names in memory of our founder's wife. PPC may want to create its own named scholarship fund.

13. Will there be any compensation for the use of PPC by Bloom?

We are hoping to replicate the model we have at Messiah Church. Essentially, they provide the space for us rent free.

14. Who will be covering the extra cost of utilities, insurance and wear and tear on the building?

Again, we hope to create an agreement similar to the one we have with Messiah. For instance, Messiah covers the costs of our electricity, water, heat and gas. We share the cost of the telephone system/ internet provider. We cover the costs of paper products (copy paper, paper hand towels, toilet paper), printer toner (tracked by codes on the copier), and postage. We pay for any ongoing improvements made to the rooms (painting, flooring, care of the floor cover). We pay for our own janitorial services. We maintain our own liability and workmen's comp insurances and provide proof of insurance to the church.

15. Who will be paying for the modifications required to this building?

We anticipate that the funds will be raised through a capital fundraising campaign. Once we have decided to expand to PPC, we will engage (at our expense) a consultant to conduct a capital campaign feasibility study to determine the will of the community (current individual, faith community, corporate and foundation donors; prospective donors; government sources) to fund modifications to the building, as well as start-up expenses such as furnishings, materials, staffing and training. If the study suggests that there will be sufficient funding, we will proceed with a capital campaign, and anticipate PPC involvement in the campaign (e.g., helping to identify sources of funding, participating in making asks).

16. How has this program changed the membership at Messiah Methodist?

The most significant change has been the members' commitment to the Bloom mission and involvement in the program. A few families and staff have joined Messiah as a result of coming to know the church through their affiliation with Bloom. A few Messiah families have sent their children to Bloom (both private pay and scholarship). We encourage our families to attend Messiah events (e.g., Taste of Messiah, Living Nativity) and we invite Messiah families to Bloom events (e.g., Literacy Day).

17. What opportunities are there for members of PPC to be more actively involved in the program with the children?

Members of Messiah currently connect with the children in a variety of ways, which we expect can be duplicated at PPC. Volunteers:

- read weekly with preschool students.
- visit the infant room weekly to hold and interact with the babies.
- put on a monthly puppet show, highlighting the "Virtue of the Month" (kindness, patience, respect, etc.).
- make quilts for each child.
- knit hats, scarves and mittens.

A couple of groups sponsor a child (supporting their tuition and doing extras, such as providing backpacks, birthday and holiday gifts, etc.). Some volunteers sponsor a family at the holidays and provide gifts.

There are other ways to volunteer with the program:

- Plan our annual fundraising Gala.
- Coordinate Bloom Sunday to highlight the mission to the congregation at services one Sunday during the year.
- Plan our literacy day event. We host a children's author annually and invite Bloom families, church families, and the community. Past authors include Nancy Carlson and Doug Wood. In 2018, David LaRochelle will join us.
- Coordinate inter-generational field trips (e.g., Valentine's Day party at RidgePoint and Halloween party at Folkestone).
- Help with one-time projects (e.g., mailings, making decorations)

We are open to other suggestions.

18. When are you hoping to start a new location?

Realistically, we anticipate that we would open a new center in May or September 2019 (September 2018 at the earliest).

19. How do you propose to handle a situation if the church needs the facility for a service such as a funeral during scheduled class time?

We do this now with Messiah. Communication is key. They let us know when there will be a funeral or other event and we make alternative arrangements. Given that this is a new space, we will have to work together to identify alternatives.

20. How is this relationship different from the relationship with the Wayzata Public Schools Bright Start program?

I cannot speak to your experience with Bright Start

However, I can describe one difference between our programs. Bright Start provides care and learning for 4- and 5-year-olds the year before entering kindergarten. We provide care to children from six weeks of age to 5.