

First Baptist **GULFPORT**
WORSHIP ARTS
ACADEMY
2026-2027



Student Handbook

First Baptist Church Gulfport

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Worship Arts Academy

Welcome to the Worship Arts Academy (WAA) of First Baptist Gulfport (FBG). In the WAA, you will find instruction in piano, voice, guitar, drums, and a growing repertoire of instruments. The WAA is part of the Worship Ministries of First Baptist Gulfport, meaning that this academy shares in the mission and values of FBG, including a desire for Christ-Centered Worship and Generational-Focused Equipping. Through professional instruction from Bible-believing teachers, we believe that students will see the value their artistry can bring to their lives and surrounding communities.

Classes are structured in 15-week semesters, and we ask that students invest time in themselves by fully committing to each semester. This commitment allows both the instructors and students to realize true improvement from the student's investment of time.

All students enrolled in the WAA will be taught music theory, music method (pertaining to their instrument), and practical application of their instrument. Students have the opportunity and are encouraged to participate in recitals held at the end of each semester. Additionally, once a student reaches the appropriate skill level, they will have ongoing opportunities to participate in services held at First Baptist Gulfport. These opportunities will provide students with the invaluable experience of live performance in both solo and group settings.

Thank you for being a part of the Worship Arts Academy of First Baptist Gulfport.

1. Semester Format

The WAA is scheduled for two semesters (Fall and Spring) and a Summer Program, following a local school calendar.

The Fall 2026 semester will be scheduled for 15 weeks, from August through November, with an open enrollment.

The Spring 2027 semester is scheduled for 15 weeks, from January through May, with an open enrollment.

The Summer Program will be scheduled based on the availability of WAA faculty.

Calendar 2026-27

Fall 2026

15 Week Semester

Fall Tuition Due (50% of full tuition)	July 20, 2026
Classes begin	July 27, 2026
Remaining Tuition Balance Due	September 14, 2026
Fall Break	October 5-9, 2026
End of Fall Semester	November 13, 2026
Fall Semester Recital	November 14, 2026, 10 AM

Spring 2027

15 Week Semester

Spring Tuition Due (50% of full tuition)	January 4, 2027
Classes Begin	January 11, 2027
Mid-Winter Break	February 8-12, 2027
Remaining Tuition Balance Due	March 8, 2027
Spring Break	March 29-April 2, 2027
End of Spring Semester	May 7, 2027
Spring Semester Recital	May 8, 2027, 10 AM

2. Registering/Paying for Lessons:

New Students:

1. Visit the WAA website (www.fbcgulfport.org/WAA) and submit the Worship Arts Academy Application. When asked for the name of the instructor, please select "New Student - Need Instructor Assigned." Please refer to *Tuition* for payment information.

2. The WAA staff will pair you with an Instructor who will typically contact you within 48 hours. Your Instructor will schedule a weekly lesson time. If the WAA is unable to pair you with an Instructor, or if an Instructor does not have a compatible schedule, your tuition payment will be refunded.

If you have any questions before you apply, contact the church office (228-831-3400) to discuss your needs.

Returning Students:

As long as you and your Instructor are in agreement about continuing lessons together, you can apply for the next semester via the WAA Application (www.fbcgulfport.org/WAA) or by filling out the *Semester Enrollment Agreement*, made available at the end of every semester. Applications for the upcoming term must be submitted by the returning student, not the instructor. Returning students must apply for the next term by the end of the current term and pay 50% of the tuition by the published deadline to hold his/her lesson time. The lesson time may change if payment is not received by the due date. *Refer to the Calendar for payment deadlines.*

3. Recitals

Every student is given the opportunity to participate in at least one recital per year, and we highly recommend that each student do so. The WAA director will schedule recital dates.

4. Changing Instructors

Once the semester begins, students cannot change instructors unless it is approved by the WAA Director. Changes will only be approved due to extreme circumstances. If, at the end of a semester, you believe another instructor would be better suited, you must follow the procedures listed below:

1. Contact the WAA Director to share your desire to change Instructors. The director will notify you of other Instructor options.
2. If the WAA Director is able to find a new instructor, the office and/or the new instructor will contact you about setting up a lesson time for the upcoming term.
3. The WAA office will inform your previous Instructor about the change.

5. Changing Lessons

Lesson times are scheduled directly between the Instructor and the student, subject to the facility's availability, established by the WAA Director. While lessons are not required to meet on the same day and at the same time each week, maintaining a consistent schedule is strongly encouraged. All lessons, excluding approved make-up lessons, must be scheduled prior to the start of the semester.

6. Missed Lessons

Instructors may, but are not required to, make up lessons missed by students. Missed lessons will not be rolled over to the next semester, and tuition will not be refunded for student absences.

The Instructor will make up lessons that are canceled due to a conflict with the Instructor. Instructors will make up all lessons they miss before the beginning of the next term unless extenuating circumstances occur, in which case the lesson will be made up at the next possible opportunity.

7. Withdrawing from the WAA or dropping a class

Students pay tuition for a full semester instead of individual lessons. Instructors are compensated for the time scheduled for the full semester. Tuition is non-refundable once the semester begins. Additionally, the balance of tuition is due regardless of attendance in the WAA. Refunds and tuition credits will not be issued unless approved by the WAA Director.

8. Bad Weather

In the event of inclement weather, the WAA will follow the church's policies. If the church is closed, the WAA will also be closed.

The WAA staff will inform students about closures via email/text. If weather conditions improve during the day and the church reopens, Instructors may contact students to reschedule their classes. Lessons missed due to weather conditions when the church is closed will be rescheduled. If the church remains open, and you choose to skip the lesson due to the weather, Instructors are not obligated to make up the lesson.

9. Holidays

The WAA follows the church office holiday schedule. If the church is closed for a holiday, then the WAA is closed. WAA-observed holidays will be listed on the official WAA calendar at www.fbcgulfport.org/WAA.

10. Sickness

Students should not attend a lesson if they have had any of the following symptoms in the previous 24 hours: vomiting, diarrhea, elevated temperature, discolored mucus, rash, or other contagious symptoms. Once cleared by your doctor, please provide documentation to the Instructor. Refer to the “Missed Lesson Policy” for make-up questions.

11. The Christian Faith

Students are not required to attend First Baptist Gulfport to participate in lessons at the WAA. The WAA staff and Instructors will seek to live out and promote faith in Jesus in every way possible. We will pray with our students, share the gospel of Jesus with them, and seek to live in a way that points others to Him.

12. Tuition

Tuition is \$499.00 per semester, which includes the \$25.00 non-refundable application fee.

The WAA offers two options for payment of tuition:

- Payment in full prior to the beginning of the term;
- A payment plan where 50% of the tuition is due one week before the beginning of the semester and the remainder paid in full no later than the 8th week of the term. Students should refer to the term calendar for payment due dates.
- Returning students must pay 50% of the tuition by the published deadline to hold their lesson time. If payment is not received by the due date, the lesson time may change.

Student tuition dollars pay for the cost of instruction, a theory book, a T-shirt, and all recital fees.

Payment Schedule

Tuition for the fall semester is due on Monday, the week before the first class meeting. Students may pay 100% of the tuition due or agree to a payment plan paying 50% of the tuition by this same deadline. Invoices for students utilizing the payment plan will be delivered the 6th week of the semester. Students must pay the remaining balance no later than Monday of the 8th week of class.

Students should refer to the term calendar for actual payment due dates.

Payment Plan Guidelines:

- If payment is missed, the Instructor will be notified. Additional lessons will not be available until the church office receives payment.

- If lessons are missed due to late payment, the Instructor is not obligated to make up the missed lessons.
- If no payment or contact has been made to the church office for two consecutive weeks, the Instructor has permission to fill your time slot with another student.
- The balance of tuition is due regardless of attendance in the WAA.

12. Multi-lesson Discounts

Please contact the WAA office before you apply to discuss payment if there are multiple individuals in a family who desire to take lessons, or students who desire to enroll in multiple lessons. Discounts cannot be given retroactively after students are registered and tuition has been paid.

13. Church Staff Discounts

If the student or parent is a full-time employee at First Baptist Gulfport, please contact the WAA office before you apply to receive a discount on all lessons. Discounts cannot be given retroactively after students are registered and tuition has been paid.

14. Minors

First Baptist Church Gulfport seeks to provide a safe and secure environment for the minors who participate in our programs and activities. Our goal is to protect minors from incidents of misconduct or inappropriate behavior while also protecting our staff and workers.

To support this safe environment, cameras are placed in classrooms, and *parents or guardians of minor children are required to remain in or adjacent to his/her child's classroom while lessons are being conducted.*

Parents/Guardians who want to review the First Baptist Church Gulfport Minor policy may contact the church office.

15. Access to First Baptist Gulfport

Students participating in the Worship Arts Academy will be issued a key fob to gain access through the office entrance of the building. The fob is active 30 minutes prior to and following the lesson time during the current semester. Parents/adult students are responsible for maintaining the fob. It will be issued at the student's first lesson and must be returned at the end of the term.

17. Check In

Students are required to check in each week using the iPad located in the North Commons.

18. Frequently Asked Questions

Q: Can I start at any time, or do I have to start at the beginning of the semester?

A: Most lessons start at the beginning of the semester. However, you can contact the WAA office to discuss an alternate schedule. Call us at (228) 831-3400.

Q: Are there any additional fees?

A: Music or method books are assigned by the Instructor and at the cost of the student. This is because the use and cost of music and method books vary by instrument type, Instructor, and level of the student.

Q: Who do I call when I have questions about the WAA Program?

A: Contact the WAA Director at First Baptist Gulfport at (228) 831-3400.

Q: How do I know what classroom I'll be in?

A: Room assignments will be made at the beginning of the semester, and students will be notified by the church staff upon arrival at the first lesson.

Q: How do I make payments?

A: Payments can be made online at fbcgulfport.org/WAA, or at the church office if you prefer to pay with cash or check

Q: If I have to miss a lesson, who should I contact?

A: You should contact your instructor if you miss a lesson. If you cannot reach them, then you can call the Church Office at (228) 831-3400.

Q: Are there excused absences?

A: The WAA does not acknowledge excused absences. Instructors will only make up lessons if they are missed because of the Instructor.

Q: If I call to cancel a lesson in advance, can I make up the lesson?

A: Instructors are not required to make up missed lessons.

Q: Are scholarships available for lessons or classes?

A: Contact the church office to inquire about available scholarships. If a scholarship is available, you will be given a Scholarship Request Application. The WAA Director and Scholarship Review Committee will review the application.