

# Church of the Holy Family and St. Columba Church

## Faith Formation Program

### Parent/Student/Teacher Handbook

August 2022 Revision

#### **Mission:**

The goal of the Faith Formation Program is to provide quality spiritual education for the entire parish in order that all individuals may have the resources to obtain the knowledge necessary to live the mission of Christ.

#### **Objective:**

The Faith Formation Program objectives of the Church of the Holy Family and St. Columba Church are to train, teach, and educate, within the scope of the parish community, the teachings of the Life of Christ and the beliefs of the Roman Catholic Church through the gospel, dogma, and Tradition in such a way as to assist the parishioners in developing a community of believers and examples of Christ's love in our lives and throughout the world.

FAITH FORMATION

DIRECTOR of RELIGIOUS EDUCATION:

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[www.holyfamilyhebron.org](http://www.holyfamilyhebron.org)

or

[www.saintcolumbacatholicchurch.org](http://www.saintcolumbacatholicchurch.org)

Calendars, curriculum, documents and more online.

# Faith Formation Registration

Faith Formation is available to all children in grades K - 9 of families who are registered and active parishioners at the Church of the Holy Family and St. Columba Church respectively. Families can register to become parishioners by contacting the respective Parish Office.

Registration for Faith Formation is held during a limited window of dates that are on the church's web site and in the church bulletin.

A late fee is charged after the announced registration period has passed.

Registration fees are used for purchasing student textbooks, classroom materials, hall maintenance, and retreats, as well as fixed and indirect costs associated with running our Faith Formation program throughout the year.

Fees may be waived due to financial hardships, with the approval of the DRE and the pastor. Requests and approvals are handled in the strictest confidence. If you have any financial concerns please contact the Director of Religious Education.

Per the Diocese of Norwich, homeschooling is not allowed. Students are expected to attend in person classes.

## Safe Environment

The Church of the Holy Family and St. Columba Church Safe Environment Program's mandate is to provide members, young and old, strong and vulnerable, with information to ensure all people are aware and empowered to create and maintain a "safe environment" for all individuals to practice their faith.

In compliance with the Pastoral Code of Conduct set forth by the Diocese of Norwich and the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, the Norwich Diocese and this parish provide training and background checks of all employees, teachers, assistants, child advocates and any volunteers who are working with children. All Faith Formation teachers and assistants are required to participate in a one-time training session and consent to periodic background checks.

Please be assured that every volunteer working with our children is expected to follow these mandates. In the event that a concern regarding an individual's conduct arises associated with the parish, please contact the Pastor or Director of Religious Education immediately.

As a part of your child's religious education, the Faith Formation teacher or designee will discuss age appropriate topics that children commonly encounter such as bullying, teasing, peer pressure, inappropriate comments by peers and/or adults, disrespectful behavior, uncomfortable situations at home, school and/or the community; and reinforce appropriate conduct and discuss who to go to for help, when necessary. Please contact the Director of Religious Education with any questions or concerns.

As part of the Safe Environment Program in our parish, authorized individuals only must sign out students at the end of each class. Students will not be released to anyone except a parent or authorized individual (indicated on the registration form) and all students must be signed out of class. Should there be an emergency situation the Director of Religious Education is to be contacted.

**The Faith Formation Program or Youth Ministry events and all online communications, class times, programs, etc. will be monitored at all times by at least two safe environment approved adults.**

# **Attendance**

**Our Pastor and DRE expect that each student and family attend weekly Mass as it is a primary tenet of our faith. There are two crucial elements to a comprehensive faith formation program for children: Mass and class attendances and both are accompanied by ongoing parental support and guidance.**

## **MASS ATTENDANCE:**

Attending Mass is essential to a child's understanding of his/her religion and development of faith. The fundamentals of our faith, the Roman Catholic Church, mandate our presence at liturgy weekly. Our faith is centered on the Eucharist; the gift Christ gave us as strength in this world. If we do not partake of the food at the table of Jesus, we are void of the gift of grace given to us to live a Christ-like life.

## **CLASS ATTENDANCE:**

Attendance at class is also extremely important. Our program partners with parents to bring the knowledge and understanding of our faith to students to help them develop into strong adult Christians.

**Once a child has missed 3 classes, parents will be contacted. Students missing more than 3 classes may be required to repeat the year.**

**Attendance is recorded on the class sign in and sign out attendance sheet.** These records will be monitored, and the Director of Religious Education will contact parents to ask if there is a situation we can assist with should there be an attendance issue.

# **The Golden Rules**

## **(Expectations)**

### **STUDENTS' EXPECTATIONS**

All the children of the parish are invited and welcome to attend Faith Formation Program. A large part of our parish mission is to share our faith with our children through parent's home instruction of children, attendance at Mass and participation in the Faith Formation Program.

**Our expectations for our students in our Faith Formation Program are:**

- Everyone (teachers, volunteers, parents and students) is to be treated courteously and with respect.
- Students are expected to arrive on time, dress appropriately, be prepared for class and ready to participate and learn.
- Students are expected to respect church property, classroom materials and the property of others.
- Restrooms should be used prior to the start of class or after class. If necessary only one child should leave the classroom at a time.
- No hats are to be worn in the classrooms.

- Eating, drinking or chewing gum is not allowed in classrooms or the church hall during Faith Formation classes.
- Any item that can be used as a weapon is prohibited.
- Possession or use of drugs, alcohol or tobacco is prohibited.
- School-appropriate behavior is expected during instruction. No fighting, inappropriate language, pushing, roughhousing or talking out of turn.
- Use of cell phones is not permitted during class. Cell phones must be turned off. If used during class they will be confiscated by the teacher and returned only to the parent.

## **PARENTS' EXPECTATIONS**

Parents are asked to make attending Mass and Faith Formation classes a priority for their family. Each class is important and regular attendance is expected. Our teachers are parishioner volunteers who share their time, their faith and energy with our students. They have limited time with students in the classroom and coverage of the curriculum requires that instruction start and stop promptly as scheduled. It is unfair to teachers and other students when students arrive late or leave early.

### **Our expectations for parents are:**

- Teachers, volunteers, parents, and students are to be treated courteously and with respect.
- Students are expected to be brought to every class on time, prepared and attend *only* the class to which they are assigned.
- Parents must sign in their children in all grade levels, never leaving them unattended. ALL students must be picked up and signed out at the classroom by an authorized individual.
- Children must be picked up on time and parents must sign their child out at the end of class. (Students **should not** be picked up early as it disrupts the continuity of the lesson for all the class.)
- Only those authorized on the registration form are allowed to pick up the children. (A teacher may ask for identification.) In an emergency, the DRE is to be contacted and a note must be provided, signed by the parent identifying the person picking up the child.
- Parents should not allow children to bring food and drinks to Faith Formation classes.
- Parents must not ask teachers to administer any medication to their child.

Parents are asked to discuss lessons with their children and reinforce classroom instruction at home, and make sure their children attend Mass regularly. Our curriculum is liturgically based and consistent attendance at Mass is a critical component to our Faith Formation instruction.

## **TEACHERS' EXPECTATIONS**

We greatly appreciate the commitment of our all-volunteer teaching staff. Their faith and energy play a vital role in our education program. Support is an integral part of the success of our program and is available from the DRE. Teachers are asked to remember that they are role models and that students see and follow their example and behavior.

### **Our expectations for teachers are:**

- Everyone (teachers, volunteers, parents and students) are to be treated courteously and with respect.
- Teachers are expected to start and stop class at scheduled times, opening and closing class with a prayer.
- Safe environment requires that two adults are in the classroom.
- Teachers will assist students in following the rules.

- Behavior issues should be first addressed with the student, then parent, then referred to the DRE. In extreme cases, where the safety of a child or adult is at risk the situation is to be dealt with immediately. (See behavior management).
- Teachers may not bring food or beverages into the classroom.
- Teachers must make sure students are signed in and out.
- (Do NOT put sign-out sheets outside of the class).
- Restrooms should be used prior to the start of class or after class. When unavoidable, only one child is to leave the classroom at a time.
- Teachers should make sure attendance sheets are completed and turned in. If you are aware that a child is ill, please note that on the attendance sheet. If you would like a parent contacted regarding attendance or any other issue, please note this on the attendance sheet or contact the DRE. Parents will be called after a child has missed two classes unless there are extenuating circumstances.
- Teachers should notify the DRE in the event of a cancellation, and then notify their students' parents. When a last-minute emergency occurs, notify the DRE so that arrangements can be made for students to be welcomed into class.
- Teachers should not hesitate to contact the DRE with any comments, questions or concerns.
- In the case of a medical emergency, call 911, DRE and parent. One teacher is to accompany the student with the appropriate medical information on the child's registration form.

## **BEHAVIOR MANAGEMENT**

Our primary concern is providing a safe environment conducive to learning for all our children. School-appropriate behavior is expected of all students and staff. Any inappropriate behavior issues will be addressed and hopefully resolved at the lowest level possible.

**Level 1** is discussion of inappropriate behavior by teacher with the child; if not resolved  
**Level 2** is discussion of inappropriate behavior by teacher with the parent; if not resolved  
**Level 3**, the teacher will discuss this behavior or concern with the Director of Religious Education who will contact the parent and an appropriate remedy will be agreed upon which may include asking the parent to attend the class with the child.

In extreme cases where behavior endangers the safety of a student or teacher, the student will be removed from the classroom immediately and the parent contacted. In extreme cases of negligence of rules or special needs, a student may be withdrawn from the classroom.

## **Social Outreach**

We are a giving parish community. It is part of Christ's mandates to care for those less fortunate or in need. The School of Religion incorporates social outreach as part of the student's faith formation. Our intention is to create an environment whereby students become caring, serving adults.

Within our parish and our School of Religion, we foster these self-giving projects at classroom, grade, school, and parish levels. Participating in these activities will help build children with selfless characters and create in them an awareness of the world around us, both local and global.

# Communications

The church website, email system and the weekly bulletin are the main vehicles of transmitting Faith Formation information to parishioners, parents and teachers. Please pick up the bulletin when you attend Mass to obtain updated Faith Formation information.

All forms related to Faith Formation can be downloaded from the church website [www.holyfamilyhebron.org](http://www.holyfamilyhebron.org) under "documents and forms".

In the case of cancellation for inclement weather, notices will be on television on Channel 3, WFSB Eyewitness News and wfsb.com.

Parents will be contacted if it is necessary to cancel a specific class if time allows.

Please note that Faith Formation teachers **SHOULD NOT** use social media with students as a means of communication. Emailing parents or phone conversations is the suggested medium.

The Faith Formation calendar will be made available on the church website or by hard copy by the middle of August of that year. The calendar will include all major celebrations, holy days, school events and vacations throughout the school year. Any changes will be clearly announced in the bulletin in a timely manner.

This handbook was created for the use of the Church of the Holy Family and St. Columba Church Parish School of Religion..