

Church of the Holy Family

School of Religion

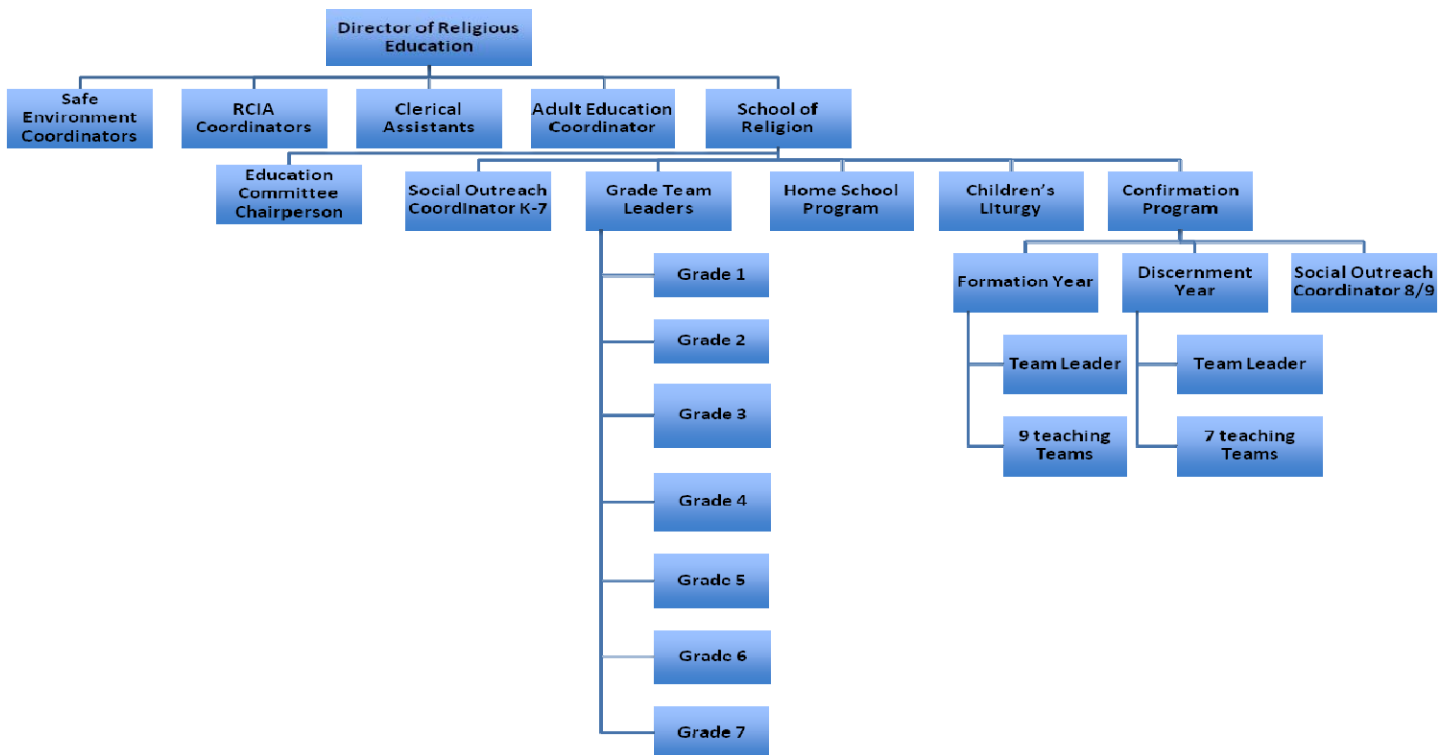
Mission:

The goal of the School of Religion 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.

“Love one another as I have loved you” John 15:12

Objective:

The Catholic Religious Education (CRE) objectives of the Church of the Holy Family 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 around us.



Contact Information

Parish Office: 860-228-0096 x2 9:00 am - 1:00 pm, Monday - Friday

Office is closed on Mondays during June, July & August

Director of Religious Education: 860-228-0096 x3, 8:30 am - 4:00 pm, Tuesday - Thursday

DRE is available during all school sessions

Grade level Team Leaders: emails and phones numbers will be made available when classes begin

Classroom teachers: emails and phone numbers will be made available when classes begin.

Calendars, curriculum, documents and more can be found on line: www.holyfamilyhebron.org

Church of the Holy Family

Religious Education Handbook

Welcome to the Church of the Holy Family's School of Religious Education!

“And whoever receives one child such as this in my name receives me.” Matthew 18:5

We celebrate our parish families as the most important and primary teachers of God's love in our children's lives. We thank you for inviting us, the Church of the Holy Family Religious Education Program, to join you in exploring our Catholic faith with your children as our relationship with God continues to unfold and deepen.

As catechists, we are aware of the awesome responsibility we share with you. Our hope is to provide the knowledge and tools to answer God's unique call for each and every one of our lives. Each one of us can draw further into the mystery of our faith and the wonder of being a child of God through Christ and a member of the Catholic Church.

Much progress has been made in the development of a curriculum to assist us in our current endeavors and help us to continue to expand and deepen our program. This manual provides information about the logistics of our program and its operation; and is a resource for you as you navigate through the school. Please read it carefully. Your input is welcome and vital. We hope you find it helpful.

Registration

“So all went to be enrolled, each to his own town” Luke 2:3

Religious education is available to all children in grades K - 9 of families who are registered parishioners at the Church of the Holy Family. Families can register to become parishioners by contacting the Parish Office at 228-0096 x2.

Registration for CRE is held during a limited window of dates that are announced at Masses, on the church's web site and published in local papers and in the church bulletin. Children of teachers and assistant teachers receive priority class placement and other students are registered on a first-come, first-serve basis.

A late fee is charged after the announced registration period has passed. In the event that classes are then filled, home schooling may be the only option offered except for the sacramental preparation years of second grade and Confirmation (grades 8 & 9). All kindergarten children are assigned to the home school program.

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

Fees may be waived due to financial hardships, with the approval of the DRE and pastor. Requests and approvals are handled in the strictest confidence.

To register, students in grades 2 – 9 are expected to have attended CRE for the previous year to be prepared to move to the next grade. Students who have not previously enrolled in a CRE program are expected to make special arrangements with the DRE regarding matriculation into the Church of the Holy Family's CRE program.

Home schooling by the student's parents is an alternative to our traditional classroom instruction for children from first through 7th grade with the exception of second grade and requires the following:

- a. Parents must register students for the home school program.
- b. Parents must follow the grade level appropriate curriculum, which will be available along with the grade level books.
- c. Parents must attend CRE meetings, when applicable.
- d. Student must attend CRE meetings/retreat, when applicable.
- e. Student must complete all testing/assessment and may be subject to review.

Note: Students attending sacramental preparation years (2nd grade, 8th and 9th grades) classes may not be home schooled. These students must attend formal classes to prepare for receiving their sacraments.

Safe Environment

“In peace I shall both lie down and sleep, for you alone, Lord, make me secure” Psalms 4:9

The Church of the Holy Family Safe Environment Committee'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 CRE teachers and assistants are required to participate in a one-time training and consent to periodic background checks.

Please be assured that every volunteer working with our children is being asked 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 CRE 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 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). Should there be an emergency situation the director is to be contacted.

Attendance

“If a son ceases to hear instruction, he wanders from words of knowledge” Proverbs 19:27

Attendance is a very sensitive subject to broach. Our Pastor and DRE expect that each and every student and family attends 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.

Attending Mass is essential. 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.

Bring the children; they deserve the chance to be strengthened with Christ’s love and to meet Jesus within our community of faith. They deserve this spiritual gift to help them deal with their daily trials.

To assist our students (and families) understanding and appreciation of the wonder of the Mass, our Pastor annually makes a presentation breaking down each part of the Mass and explains it’s meaning and significance. This presentation is open to members of our parish community and their attendance is encouraged.

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.

As in any academic environment, continuity is paramount to learning. Missing multiple classes stifles that continuity and the child’s education suffers. Again, as in the academic environment, failure to receive the fundamentals hinders the creation of a sturdy foundation of understanding. Depending on the annual calendar, there are approximately 14 classes to cover 20 units and holy days included in the liturgical seasons. A student misses 7% of the material for that year with each absence from class.

Attendance is recorded on the class sign out sheet. Parents are asked to fill in Mass attendance and the class attendance. These records will be monitored and the Coordinator will contact parents to ask if there is a situation we can assist with should the child miss Mass or two classes.

In the case of illness, it is the parent’s responsibility to contact the teacher for make up material to keep the student current.

Curriculum/Assessment

“And to man he said: ‘Behold, the fear of the Lord is wisdom; and avoiding evil is understanding.’ ” Job 28:28

At the Church of the Holy Family a parish specific curriculum has been created based on the “Blest Are We” class books and the specific needs set by our parish family. This curriculum is available to all parents and teachers on our website. It stipulates the prayers, concepts and levels of “living our faith” that the child should reach at each respective grade level. This is a tool for parents and teachers alike to enhance the children’s knowledge of dogma and their spiritual development. There will be assessments following the curriculum criteria to make sure that the students are at grade level. Students new to our program may be asked to show they have mastered basic competencies. If a student is not at grade level, parents will be asked to help their child to become current with materials. Assistance will be available by the DRE and/or a grade level teacher. Students who are behind in their formation hinder the class performance as a whole making it more difficult for the other students and/or the teacher. Special circumstances will be dealt with on a case-by-case basis by the DRE.

Homework is assigned at the discretion of the classroom teacher. Parents are asked to supervise and aid their children with homework.

Sacrament Years

“.. and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven” Matthew 16:19
“... this is my body, which will be given for you; do this in memory of me” Luke 22:19
“... and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit” Acts 2:4

The sacramental preparation years of 2nd and 8th/9th grades are extremely important formative years of faith deepening, a growing sense of involvement in the life of the parish community, combined with a practical and age appropriate understanding of what it means to be a Catholic in today’s world. Due to the significance of these years in the life of a Roman Catholic child, students in these grades must attend and participate in CRE classroom instructions. There are additional obligations that are required of the students and parents before the conference of the sacrament.

The 2nd grade students will prepare to receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation and the Sacrament of Holy Eucharist for the first time by attending Mass weekly with their families, and participating in CRE classes as scheduled. In addition, the child must participate in two retreats intended to give an in-depth understanding of the sacraments they are to receive and attend a session of the Stations of the Cross for children during Lent. Parents are asked to attend two short informative sessions during the children’s retreat to be informed regarding the faith materials discussed with the child.

The preparation for the Sacrament of Confirmation is a two-year program, beginning in 8th grade (Formation Year) and ending in 9th grade (Discernment/Preparation Year) designed to prepare the student for a faith-filled adult Christian life. Students will remain with the same teachers and group Church of the Holy Family

of students throughout this 2-year period to foster a sense of a small Christian community. Classes are 1 ½ hour long including both small group and larger group sessions. In addition to regular Mass attendance and participating in classes as scheduled, the Confirmation students will be required to perform community service, attend a Reconciliation service and Holy Thursday Mass, in addition to experiences designed to deepen their faith. Ninth grade Confirmation students attend a two-day overnight weekend retreat, which is held off site.

The Golden Rules

“You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” Matthew 12:13

Students

All the children of the parish are invited and welcome to attend CRE. A large part of our parish mission is sharing our faith with our children through parent’s home instruction of children, attendance at Mass and participation in CRE. With over 700 students and over 65 classes, we are in essence operating a religious education school.

Our expectations for our student in our School of Religion are:

- Everyone (teachers, volunteers, parents and students) is to be treated courteously and with respect.
- Students are expected to arrive on time, dressed appropriately, 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 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.
- 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

Parents are the first and primary religious educators of their children. We ask parents to assist in making the program a stellar learning experience. Parents are asked to make attending Mass and CRE a priority for their family. Each class is important and regular attendance is expected. Our teachers are parishioner volunteers who share their time, 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. If you have questions or concerns that are unable to be addressed before or after class, teachers can be contacted by email. Teachers and the DRE welcome your comments and questions and are anxious to address any concerns.

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 walk in with their children in grades 1-5, never leaving them unattended. Older children may be dropped at the door, but 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 your child out at the end of 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.
- Remember that there are sometimes parking issues; therefore plan arrival and pick up accordingly. Parking at the door is not allowed and can be dangerous for the children as they come and go.
- Parents may not allow children to bring food and drinks to CRE.
- Parents must not ask teachers to administer any medication to your child.
- If special arrangements are needed for extended absences, the DRE must be contacted.

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 instruction provided during Mass is a critical component to our CRE instruction.

Parents are asked to inform the teacher of absences and assist children in completing any missed assignments.

Teachers

We greatly appreciate the commitment of our all volunteer teaching staff. Their faith and energy play a vital role in our education program. Professional development (both required and optional) and classroom management workshops are provided for teachers. Support is an integral part of the success of our program and is available by the DRE and team leaders. Teachers are asked to remember they are role models and students see and follow their example and behavior.

Our expectations for teachers are:

- Everyone (teachers, volunteers, parents and students) is to be treated courteously and with respect.
- Teachers are expected to start and stop class as scheduled, opening and closing class with a prayer.
- Safe environment requires that two adults are in the classroom. If a co-teacher is unable to attend, a parent must be recruited.
- 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 out after class (don't put sign-out sheet out until end of 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 not allow children to switch classes. Children are to attend their assigned class only. Should a situation arise the DRE must be contacted. The office must know where each and every child is assigned at all times.
- Teachers should notify the DRE in the event of a cancellation, and then notify their team leader and their student's parents. When a last minute emergency occurs, notify the DRE in order 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. If the DRE is not on site, contact by phone or email.
- 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

“If you love me, you will keep my commandments.” John 14:15

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 and child; if not resolved
 Level 2 is discussion of inappropriate behavior by teacher and parent; if not resolved
 Level 3, teacher will discuss with the director 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 or prolonged neglect in following rules, the student may be withdrawn from CRE and need to be home schooled.

Social Outreach

“It is more blessed to give than to receive.” Acts 20:35

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 at the Church of the Holy Family incorporates social outreach as part of the student’s faith formation. Our intention is to create a lifestyle mannerism whereby students become caring, serving adults as a natural characteristic.

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

Communications

“Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations,” Matthew 28:19

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

Major school and parish events are posted on the parish monthly calendar.

All forms related to CRE can be downloaded from the church website. www.holyfamilyhebron.org

In the case of cancellation for inclement weather notices will be on television on Channel 3, WFSB Eyewitness News, radio WTIC AM and FM, WRCH FM (100.5) on Sunday mornings. During the weekdays, we follow the public school cancellation schedule, no school – no religion classes.

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

The School of Religion’s yearly 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.

Education Committee meetings are a formative avenue of communicating thoughts and concerns regarding the Religious Education of your children. Meetings are held the second Wednesday of each month at 9:30 a.m. in the parish house and are open to all parishioners. Parents are invited to discuss, formulate and advise the DRE in respect to policy, procedures, curriculum and annual sacramental practices for our students. Should you not be able to attend meetings, notes can be made available upon request and comments are always welcomed.