

Good Shepherd Religious Education Catechist Handbook



2016-2017

Rev. Michael Krull
Pastor

Mrs. Maria C. Arcelay
Director

Statement of Mission

We are called by Jesus as a community of faith to love God and love one another by our acts of worship, fellowship and stewardship.

A Statement of purpose

Dear Catechists and Aides,

Welcome to the Good Shepherd Religious Education Program, and thank you for joining our family of catechists and volunteers. Your gifts of time and energy are appreciated and essential to our ministry of catechesis.

Religious Education is a total parish experience, involving not just the children, but parents, families, and our whole church community. It includes doctrine, liturgy, sacramental preparation, prayer, and catechesis.

As catechist or an aide, you are a person of faith, creating an atmosphere for the Holy Spirit to bring about growth in faith and a love for God. We want the children to feel that they are part of our church community, encouraging them to participate at weekly Mass.

Remember, we are always held as an example of our faith too. Our words, behavior, and attitude are held to a high standard. The task of catechesis a daunting undertaking, but entirely doable, and the rewards are endless.

This handbook outlines the requirements of volunteers, your responsibilities, the procedures of our program as well as the curriculum and other information you need to be aware of.

On behalf of our parish community, thank you for your love of our parish and your wish to serve us in the role of catechist or aide. Good luck and may God bless you, be with you and guide you in this important ministry.

Please sign the agreement contained on the handbook, stating that you have read the contents and agree to our policies. Please return the agreement before our first session. It will be kept on file in the Parish office. Thank you for your support and corporation.

Yours in Christ

Father Michael G. Krull

-1-

Welcome to Religious Education

with
God ...
all things
are possible



Religious Education Program

Thank you for becoming a member of our Faith Formation Program. Our Religious Education Program is only possible through your dedication and willingness to spend your time and energy to help our children develop in their Faith. You have promised to teach the traditions and doctrine of the Roman Catholic Church, supported by Church documents and The Catechism of the Catholic Church.

Children in the Good Shepherd Religious Ed. program, Levels 1 through 8, meet twice a month on Saturday mornings. There are sixteen sessions, meeting from September to April. Some dates are subject to change due to inclement weather.

Children in Levels 2 and 8, as well as registered 8th grade Catholic School students, will attend special sessions held on additional Saturday mornings which are necessary for Sacramental preparation.

Our regular scheduled sessions will meet downstairs in the Perth Amboy Catholic Primary School gym at **8:45 am**. We invite each level (1-8) along with any parents to join our Director or guest clergy member for morning prayers followed by any important announcements. Parents are always welcome to participate.

Then each level will be excused with their catechist and aide to start class promptly. Children will also be dismissed in Perth Amboy Catholic School Gym. **The doors will not open till 11:00 am.** Each child will have to be signed out on a class list supplied by the Parish Office by the signature of their parent or guardian. After class please give this sign out sheet to the Director. No child is allowed to walk home unless they have a signed form on file with the Director. You will be informed if we have one.

-2-

Good Shepherd

I have read the Good Shepherd Catechist/Aide Handbook and understand the guidelines and rules outlined therein and agree to abide by them.

Catechist/Aide or Volunteer Signature:

Date: _____

Please detach this page and return it to your Director before our first session on September 10, 2016.

-15-

RED ALERT CRISIS

2016-2017

1. In a Red Alert Crisis Situation, the Religious Education Program will follow the directives of the local authorities.
2. There will be a loudspeaker announcement informing everyone that it is an evacuation, lockdown, or shelter in place.
3. Catechists/Aides will close doors, windows, shut off lights, fans etc.
(As a new policy, all classroom doors will be left opened in the locked position).
4. The use of cell phones should be limited, but should be turned on in case Mrs. Arcelay needs to contact the Catechists.
5. In an evacuation, Catechists will lead their students out of the building using the exit route described in their classroom, and will meet in the parking lot of the school, unless told differently.
6. In a lockdown, Catechists will direct their children to move to an area not seen through the door window.
7. In a shelter in place, Catechists will lead their students to the Campus Auditorium and wait there for further instructions.
8. Once everyone is settled in the designated area, each Catechist/Aide will be responsible to take attendance of his/her class, using the class attendance roster, and will keep their students as quiet as possible. Everyone will need to be alert and open to decisions made at a moment's notice.
9. When the Alert is over, students will be returned to their classrooms or given further directions.

Thank you for your cooperation with this procedure!!!

Important Contact

Information

Fr. Michael G. Krull
Pastor

Maria C. Arcelay
Parish Secretary/Parish Catechetical Leader
*(PCL's private home/cell number is for your use only.
Please do not give it to your parents, etc.)*

Good Shepherd Parish
625 Florida Grove Road,
Hopelawn, NJ 08861
phone: 732-826-4859
fax: 732-826-6078

website: www.goodshepherdpanj.org

email: goodshepherd20@verizon.net

Parish Office Open Monday-Friday 9 am to 4 pm

school: 732-826-5747 (during a session)

REQUIREMENTS

All volunteers under the age of 18 must complete:

- Diocesan volunteer application
- Code of Conduct

All volunteers over the age of 18 who work with children within the parish must:

- be interviewed
- complete a Catechist Application and Personnel Record from the Diocese of Metuchen
- have a criminal background check, including fingerprinting, paid by the Parish.
- participate in the VIRTUS program, “Protecting God’s Children”, which includes in-person training as well as the completion of ongoing online learning modules.
- sign a Code of Conduct each year.

All Catechists must fulfill all of the above plus **one** of the following options:

Complete a CORE Course, *Introduction to the Catholic Faith*. This is an online course. In addition, Catechists must enroll in the Catechist Study Day, a four hour Methods Workshop.

Complete the “*Echoes of Faith Plus*” Program, consisting of weekly sessions, plus readings. Contact Pat Martin at 732-529-7931 or pmartin@diometuchen.org for more information.

PLANS & PROCEDURES

Food Allergies

Because there are several students with severe and potential life threatening allergies to peanuts and tree nuts, the Good Shepherd Parish will make every attempt possible to maintain a “peanut free” facility. Because of the possibility of allergies or food restrictions, the Diocese mandates that edible treats of any kind are not allowed.

Emergency Closing

It is extremely important that you keep your phone or email information current with our office. In the event we will need to cancel classes you will be contacted. In some cases, we may cancel classes as early as Friday prior to class. If you are unsure you may contact the Parish Office. It is then your responsibility to contact the parents of your students to inform them of a school closing. Therefore it is imperative that you have an updated list of the names and phone numbers of your students (this is normally given at the beginning of the school year). If you are aware of any phone, address changes from your students, please inform the Parish office immediately.

Crisis Management Plan

It is required by the Diocese of Metuchen that two drills are to be implemented during the school year. Our emphasis will be on evacuation and lockdown procedures. Evacuation and Lockdown Procedures are attached to the end of this Handbook under “RED ALERT CRISIS”.

Attendance/calling out (Catechist/Aides)

- Each school year, you will be given a complete Attendance/phone roster for your class. Please record attendance as well as tardiness for your students. As the school year continues we will update a class list several times (due to late sign ups) in order to provide you with an updated roster. It is imperative you keep this information to refer to, in the event of a cancellation of classes.
- If you find that you are unable to teach at a regular or special session, please notify the Director, Mrs. Arcelay, as soon as possible by calling her cell number. Be sure to have her cell number available but confidential, and do not give it out to anyone. If you need to contact the School office during a session the number is 732-826-5747.

The Parish Catechetical Leader of Good Shepherd Parish has the right to amend the Catechist/Aide Handbook at any time.

Worship

Family worship at Mass is the most important part of our curriculum. As educators of our children, it is important that we are devoted to our faith. Please worship at weekend Liturgy. Let the children and their families see you present at Mass in community prayer and celebration, as well as various church sponsored events, like the soup kitchen, retreats, and communion breakfasts. Our parish is community based, and relies on everyone's support.

Our Curriculum

Level 1: Sign of the Cross/Our Father/ Hail Mary/Glory Be; Introduction to the Bible

Level 2: All of the above plus: Act of Contrition; Introduction to the Sacraments, especially preparation for Reconciliation and First Communion

Level 3: All of the above plus: The Apostles' Creed and The Rosary, and a deeper understanding of the Parables

Level 4: All of the above plus: an understanding of the Ten Commandments and the Mass

Level 5: All of the above plus: an understanding of the Paschal Mystery and an introduction to the Beatitudes

Level 6: All of the above plus: the Mysteries of the Rosary, and living the Ten Commandments

Level 7: All of the above plus: Studying the Life of Jesus, understanding the Trinity, discovering Jesus in the Scriptures

Level 8: Learning more of the Gospels, the New and Old Testament, and preparation to receive the Sacrament of Confirmation

Lesson Plans and Progress Reports

Catechists are required to develop and implement bi-monthly lesson plans, incorporating prayer and the curriculum of the texts we are working with.

They must also complete Progress Reports for their students twice a year, including a comment for each child, and be available if a parent wishes a conference. The Progress Reports are made out in triplicate:

- pink copy going home after Christmas,
- yellow copy at the end of the school year,
- white copy goes back for Office filing.

Completed Progress Reports are due in the Parish Office prior to 4 pm on the Friday before they are distributed. They are to be distributed on the first session after Christmas, and also at the last session of the school year.

Confidentiality

- Catechists must maintain confidentiality regarding children's special needs and learning challenges, medical information/allergies, family status, etc.
- Photos of children may not be reproduced or published without the written consent of the parent/guardian and the completion of the Photo Release Form.
- Catechists and all volunteers are prohibited from phoning, text messaging, emailing or corresponding via social media directly with current students or former students under the age of 18.
- As representatives of the parish and the Catholic Church, volunteers are expected to convey and maintain a professional image, particularly with respect to communication outside the classroom.

- Children are responsible for completing all in-class and at home assignments to the best of their ability.

Corporal Punishment Policy

- Catechists and Aides must understand that corporal punishment is NOT permitted.
- The law defines corporal punishment as any punitive touching (i.e. pushing, shoving, slapping, etc.)

Supervision Policies

- Catechists and Aides must understand that they are responsible to supervise young people at all times.
- Unless there is an emergency situation, children cannot be left unattended. This includes the time before and after sessions, as well as during the session.
- Children may not be disciplined by exclusion from visual or physical space. It is highly recommended that at least two supervisory persons (e.g. catechist and aide) be present with each group of children at all times.

PROGRESS REPORT



PARISH: _____
 STUDENT: _____
 TEACHER: _____
 GRADE LEVEL: _____
 SCHOOL YEAR: _____

This Progress Report offers an evaluation of your child's current performance. Please sign and return to the teacher next week. Your comments are welcome.

KEY: E - Excellent
 G - Good
 S - Satisfactory
 N - Needs Improvement (and home help)
 I - Improvement shown

	Date			Date			Date		
	First Semester	Second Semester	(Optional) Third Semester	First Semester	Second Semester	(Optional) Third Semester	First Semester	Second Semester	(Optional) Third Semester
Prayers									
Understanding of Content									
Participation in Class									
Testing:									
Conference Requested (date & time)									
Teacher Comments: (First Semester)	_____								
Parent / Guardian Comments:	_____								
Parent / Guardian Signature:	_____								
Teacher Comments: (Second Semester)	_____								
Parent / Guardian Comments:	_____								
Parent / Guardian Signature:	_____								
Teacher Comments: (Third Semester)	_____								
Parent / Guardian Comments:	_____								
Parent / Guardian Signature:	_____								
Director of Religious Education:	_____								
Phone:	_____								

CURRICULUM

Family Life Education

As mandated by our Diocese, our program will now include Family Life Education in levels 3 through 8. We have an additional text, published by RCL-Benzinger. There will be no exemptions from the Family Life Program. This program specifically addresses four needs of today's developing young Catholics:

- Young people need skills and knowledge of family living now, and for the future when they, too, may become mature Catholic parents.
- Young people need to understand their own physical, emotional and spiritual development.
- Young people need to develop a Catholic Christian understanding of, and reverence for, sexuality.
- Young people need to interact with others outside the family, in a respectful manner and thereby take their responsible place in society.

POLICIES

Behavior

Jesus has asked us to love God and to love our neighbor as ourselves. As we strive to follow Jesus, we should be aware of showing respect and courtesy to each other. Catechists and all volunteers should encourage children to live God's law of love especially while on church premises. Children who are unable to behave in an appropriate manner during our Parish gatherings or Sacramental Catechesis may require that their parents remain with them at all times. If a family is unwilling to cooperate in a reasonable way with the "Code of Behavior", a teacher/parent conference may be required.

Code of Behavior for Children

- Children will show respect for all persons in words and actions.
- Children will conform to the attendance policy stated in this handbook.
- Children will treat the Good Shepherd Parish as their spiritual "home" and responsibly care for all church property.
- Families will support and encourage an environment of cooperation.
- Children will cooperate with the adult catechist so that a good learning environment can be maintained for all.