

***St. Patrick's Catholic Church
Religious Formation Program
Volunteer Handbook
2018-2019***



The Mission of St. Patrick's Parish Religious Formation Program is to partner with parents to provide opportunities for children in our parish to grow in their relationships with Jesus and their understanding of the Catholic faith.

**Office of Religious Formation
20500 West Maple Road
Elkhorn, NE 68022
(402) 289-4947**

Dear Religious Formation Volunteers:

Welcome to St. Patrick's Religious Formation Program. Our Religious Formation Program is volunteer-based and we are grateful for your involvement.

As a follower of Christ, you have responded to your Baptismal call and have agreed to share your faith with the children in our Parish. I know the task you are undertaking isn't always an easy one. I also know the sacrifices are small compared to the personal satisfaction we receive helping others to develop a relationship with Jesus. Our goal is to partner with parents in their children's faith formation, to pass on the traditions and beliefs of the Catholic faith and to nurture individuals to become active disciples of Jesus.

With the continued support and dedication of so many volunteers, our faith formation programs have flourished and offer many opportunities for our children to form their faith life through classroom lessons, Liturgy of the Word for Children, Vacation Bible School, parent/child retreats and service projects.

This handbook is provided for your convenience. Its purpose is to provide continuity and stability. Hopefully, it will give everyone a more specific idea as to what is expected from him or her and what is to be expected of others.

If you should have any questions or concerns, please feel free to call me at (402) 289-4947. I will be happy to set up a time to meet with you. Our Religious Formation Program staff is here to support you in your ministry!

God Bless,
Mary McMahan
Director of Religious Formation

**St. Patrick's Catholic Church of Elkhorn, NE
Office of Religious Formation
20500 West Maple Road
Elkhorn, NE 68022**

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How to Reach Us:

Religious Formation Office	(402) 289-4947
Parish Office	(402) 289-4289
Parish Fax	(402) 763-9530

Staff:

Pastor	Reverend Tom Fangman
Associate Pastor	Reverend Patrick Moser
Director of Religious Formation	Mary McMahan
Religious Formation Administrative Assistant	Julie McClure
Welcome Desk	Aimee Limongi

Religious Formation Committee Members:

Wendy Cobb
Chris Else
Ron Hawkins
Mary Hawkins
Linda Mack
Joann Mancuso
Ann Rasmussen
Chris Stara
Kerrie Tabaka

Ex-Officio Members:

Reverend Tom Fangman, Pastor
Mary McMahan, Director of Religious Formation

**St. Patrick's Office of Religious Formation
Volunteer Handbook**

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St. Patrick's Catholic Church
Religious Formation Program Volunteer Handbook

Expectations of Religious Formation Program Volunteers:

- Be a follower of Christ and conduct self in a manner that is consistent with the values of the Gospels and teachings of the Catholic Church.
- Provide a loving, Christian atmosphere within the learning environment so that children will be able to develop a relationship with Jesus and grow in their Catholic faith.
- Celebrate Sunday Mass regularly.
- Set aside adequate time each week to prepare and teach designated curriculum.
- Partner with parents in fulfilling their roles as the primary educators of their children in the ways of the faith.
- Dress should reflect and respect the Catholic Christian teaching environment served.
- Agree to attend Archdiocesan "Safe Environment" training sessions and complete the necessary forms for a background check.
- Acknowledge receipt and review of the Volunteer Handbook.

Registration: Registration forms are sent home in February. Class assignments are set on a first come/first serve basis. **Catechists are unable to approve class changes.** All requests for changes must be directed to and approved by the Director of Religious Formation.

Class Size: In most cases, class sizes will be limited to 12 students per room. However, class sizes maybe increased or decreased after visiting with the lead catechist regarding the dynamics of the group.

Class List: Catechists and assistant catechists will be provided with a class list that will include the child's name, parent's name, family email address and phone number. If the child has any special needs, or medical alerts, a copy of this information will be provided to both the catechist and assistant catechist. This information is considered confidential and should never be given out.

Lesson Plans: All Catechists and assistant catechists are asked to plan their classroom lesson in advance and utilize the approved curriculum for the grade level they are teaching. Preparation is essential when passing on the Catholic faith to the children in our parish.

Arrival: Catechists are to arrive 15 minutes before the start of class. Catechists must check their mailbox and obtain any messages or newsletters. Catechists should prepare their classroom and then meet their students in the school lobby. Once the bell rings, you may proceed to your classroom. If we are scheduled to meet in the church for a prayer session, you will be dismissed by class to the Church.

Weekly Volunteer Updates: The Director of Religious Formation will communicate program needs and changes via email and a weekly newsletter. Please take the time prior to class to read the newsletter. The newsletter will update volunteers on any current or future changes that have been made in the program schedule. Mailboxes are located in the school copy/workroom.

Class Procedures:

- Under no circumstances are students to be left in the classroom unattended. If assistance is needed, send a student to the Office of Religious Formation.
- Set classroom rules. (Review Expectations of Religious Formation Program students which can be found in both the volunteer and family handbooks when setting your classroom rules.)
- Religious Formation Program volunteers and students are not allowed in the 5-day school teacher's or student's desk. Computers in the classroom are not to be used by students. Snacks may be shared during faith formation classes, however, desks/tables and chairs must be wiped down.
- The only drink to be consumed in the classroom is water.

Student Attendance: Attendance cards will be placed in the catechist's mailbox at the start of each class. Catechists should take attendance at the beginning of class. Attendance cards should be placed outside the door. A check mark placed beside all students present, A for absent, or T for tardy. Parents of all students marked absent and not already excused will be phoned.

Late arrivals: All students arriving late for class must check in with the Office of Religious Formation.

Behavior: Classroom disturbances will not be tolerated. Catechists should handle matters immediately, fairly and consistently. During the first class session, and as frequently as needed, review the expectations of each child and the discipline policy. Repeated disturbances should be brought to the attention of the Director of Religious Formation by sending students and the completed discipline form to the office. (Sample of the discipline form is included in the back of the volunteer handbook.)

EXPECTATIONS FOR ALL CHILDREN PARTICIPATING IN THE ST. PATRICK'S RELIGIOUS FORMATION PROGRAM:

1. Treat all people, including self, with respect.
 - Speak politely to peers and adults; do not use hateful words, or unnecessary criticism.
 - Listen while others are speaking.
 - Show respect for all different points of view.
 - Physical attacks are not allowed.
 - Forgive others when they have hurt you.
2. Attend and participate in all scheduled sessions for your grade level.
 - Be on time for class or scheduled activity.
 - Come to class prepared and open to the Word of God.
 - Show an eagerness to learn at all times.
 - Remain on task during all class sessions.
 - Complete outside assignments on time.
3. Respect the property of others and of our parish.

- Keep track of all of the materials needed for class.
 - Help to take care of classrooms and church property.
 - Return borrowed items promptly.
4. Electronic Devices and Fidget Spinners
- Students should leave Fidget Spinners, cell phones, game boys, MP3 players, IPODS and other electronic devices at home. If a student is caught using a Fidget Spinner or an electronic device on Wednesday evenings, it will be confiscated and taken to the Office of Religious Formation. A parent will need to come to the office to retrieve the device. (If your child's IEP indicates a need for a Fidget Spinner, please provide a copy of the IEP to the Director of Religious Formation.)
5. Clothing/Attire
- All hats/baseball caps will be removed while on church/school premises.
 - All coats/jackets will be hung on a coat rack, or the back of student's chair.
 - No low riding pants that expose underwear, tops that expose undergarments, tops or shorts that expose mid-drift area either while standing or while seated, low cut tops, or clothing that advertises alcohol, tobacco, or messages that can be construed as a sexual innuendo or other non-Christian messages are allowed.

Discipline Policy: All children participating in our faith formation program are expected to act appropriately while attending classes. In the event that a child misbehaves, the following steps will be taken to correct the matter:

1. The teacher will give the student one warning to stop the negative behavior.
2. If the child continues to misbehave, he/she will be sent to the Office of Religious Formation. The child will be asked to call their parent(s) and make them aware of the problem. The incident will be recorded in the office and the child will return to the classroom after he/she has notified his/her parents of the incident.
3. If the child is sent to the office a third time within a semester, the Director of Religious Formation will place a call to the parents prior to the student returning to the classroom. The student will be required to complete one half hour of work detail to the parish for students enrolled in K through 5th grade and one hour of work detail to the parish for students enrolled in the 6th grade through Confirmation. The work detail and the time the work detail is completed will be at the discretion of the Director of Religious Formation. Work detail must be completed within two weeks of the initial incident and the student's parents must be present while the student is completing the work detail. The incident will also be recorded in the office.
4. In the unfortunate event that a fourth incident occurs, a conference among the parents, student, catechist and the Director of Religious Formation will be held. At that time, a determination may be made that the child should be dismissed from the program for not exhibiting Christian behavior. If so, arrangements for home schooling will be offered.

Dispute Resolution: Our Religious Formation staff is committed to working collaboratively with members of St. Patrick's parish community. In the event that you have any concerns or suggestions for changes in the Religious Formation Program here at St. Patrick's Parish of Elkhorn, NE., the protocol for addressing your needs is as follows:

1. Set up an appointment, or address a letter to the Director of Religious Formation to discuss your concerns or suggestions for improvement in the Religious Formation Program. Your matter will be addressed in a timely manner.
2. If you feel that your matters were not given sufficient attention, please address your concerns or suggestions in a letter format to the attention of the Religious Formation Committee. Your concerns will be addressed at the next scheduled Religious Formation Committee Meeting.

Guests: If you plan to invite guests to speak to your class, please visit with the Director of Religious Formation first. Guest priests and religious may need to be approved by the pastor. This includes students who bring a friend with them. A determination for students to bring a guest will be dependent on the dynamics of the class, along with the reason for bringing a guest.

Homework: Homework can be given as a reinforcement of the week's lesson. It should be collected, remarks made and returned to students. However, when assigning homework, please take into consideration the busy lives and the many activities our families are involved in.

Communication with Parents: Any letter or communication to be sent home to parents of faith formation program students must be approved by the Director of Religious Formation first. Please provide a copy of communication you send to parents to the Office of Religious Formation.

Prayer: All Religious Formation Program classes should begin and end with prayer. A suggestion would be to open class with a prayer that we come together as a faith community (i.e. Our Father, Hail Mary, etc.). Repetition of the prayers each class will assist students with memorization of the prayers. In addition to being able to recite the prayers, students should know their meaning. A list of prayers, their meaning and the grade level children should master these prayers is included in your Catechist Resource/Reference manual.

Classroom Clean-up: Each catechist is asked to erase whiteboards, leave desk and chairs in order, pick-up debris off the floors, wash desks if necessary, close windows if opened and return all supplies/Bibles to the Religious Formation storage cabinet in the classroom. Please check for leftover personal items (jackets, coats, etc.) and bring them to the Office of Religious Formation. Please remember that each classroom is used more than once on Wednesday evenings and will be utilized by the 5-day school first thing on Thursday morning. A copy of classroom expectations for the 5-day school teacher and Religious Formation Program catechist is included in this handbook. These expectations have been approved by both the Director of Religious Formation and the 5-day school Principal.

Dismissal Grades K-Confirmation

- All students, volunteers and visitors must enter and exit the building through the school entrance.
- For the safety of the children in our parish, the doors between the school building and Boland Hall will be locked on Wednesday evenings until 9:00 p.m.
- Students will be dismissed from the classroom by the catechist. Either the catechist or the assistant catechist must escort the students outside through the main doors of the school and wait with them in front of the school entrance until their ride picks them up.
- Students must remain on the sidewalk in front of the entrance to the school until their parents walk up to pick up their child or drive up to the designated pick-up area.
- Volunteers will be available to assist the children while in the pick-up zone. If a ride has not shown up within 10 minutes, the student should be taken to the Office of Religious Formation to wait for his or her parents.
- Children of Religious Formation Program volunteers are not allowed to be inside or outside the parish campus without the supervision of an adult. Please designate and discuss with your child(ren) where you will meet them at the conclusion of class.

Photo Copy Requests: If you need to make copies for your class, the copier code for catechist is **7600**. All volunteers are encouraged to make their own copies. However, if you provide advance notice (one week) for your copies, the Office of Religious Formation staff will make the copies and place them in your mailbox prior to the next scheduled class session.

Copyright Law Consideration: Section 107 of the 1976 Copyright Act deals with “fair use” and specifically states that the fair use of copies in teaching “is not an infringement of copyright.” The “sticking point” is what the term “fair use” means. The section lists four factors to be included in the determination of fair use:

- The purpose and character of the use, including whether such use is of a commercial nature or is for nonprofit educational purposes;
- The nature of the copyrighted work;
- The amount and substantiality of the portion used in relation to the copyrighted work as a whole;
- And the effect of the use upon the potential market for or value of the copyrighted work.

Resource Materials: There are many children’s books, activity books and videos available for check out from the Office of Religious Formation. Please call or email the Religious Formation Administrative Assistant to reserve resource materials and DVD players.

If you choose to view a video other than those available from the Office or Religious Formation, you must get approval from the Director of Religious Formation one week prior to the class you plan to view the video. Your request for approval must include the name of the movie, rating if provided and how the movie will apply to your lesson.

Supplies: Each classroom will have a bucket with basic supplies, glue, colors, markers, pencils, scissors, tape, stapler and hole punch. These supplies will be used by all three Religious Formation Program sessions sharing that room. (Please make sure trash, etc. is not left in the buckets, caps are on markers and glue bottles closed before returning the bucket to the Religious Formation storage area.)

In addition to the above supplies, many other supplies may be available for your use in the classroom. Please take time to check out the Religious Formation storage closet before the beginning of Religious Formation class. Any unused supplies should be returned to the location you found them. If you are in need of supplies that are *above and beyond* what is in the Religious Formation storage closet, please discuss with the Director of Religious Formation to determine if there are funds available in our budget. Alternative ideas may be suggested.

Catechist's Manuals: Manuals are handed out at the Catechist In-Service. All teaching materials and Catechist Resource/Reference manuals must be returned at the end of the Religious Formation year so that they can be updated.

Cancellation of Class: In case of severe weather, a request will be made to the three major television stations, KETV, KMTV, and WOWT to broadcast our cancellation. Every effort will be made to post cancellations on the website.

If St. Patrick's school is closed due to weather related issues on Wednesdays, Religious Formation classes will not be held that evening.

Disaster/Tornado Drill: A disaster/tornado drill will be held during the month of April. The announcement is made over the intercom. Directions are posted in each classroom and provided to catechists at the beginning of the year. (Copies are also provided in the Catechist Resource/Reference Manual.)

Fire Drill: A fire drill will be held during the first month of classes. The fire alarm system will sound. Catechists should take students outside. Directions are posted in each classroom and given to catechists at the beginning of the year. (Copies are also provided in the Catechist Resource/Reference Manual.)

Intruder in the Building: In the unfortunate event that an intruder is in the building, an announcement will be made. A copy of the procedures can be found in your Catechist's Resource & Reference Binder. When faith formation classes are in session, classroom doors are to remain locked and shut when students are present in the classroom.

Field Trips/Service Projects: Field trips/service projects are to be discussed with the Director of Religious Formation. Service projects involving the collection of money must be approved by the Director of Religious Formation and presented for discussion at parish staff meetings. After the trip/project is approved and date chosen, permission slips from the Director of Religious Formation need to be sent home for parent/guardian signature and returned before the student may attend. Field Trip Permission Forms must be retained in the student's family file.

Liturgies: Our parish and faith formation programs will have family Masses during the year, any and all Holy Days of Obligation, Thanksgiving Eve and Ash Wednesday. Please refer to the parish bulletin for Mass times. Students are expected to attend Masses with their families on these special Liturgical days.

Daycare: Daycare is provided for catechists and assistant catechists during the 4:00 p.m. and 5:45 p.m. sessions. Please provide the Director of Religious Formation with your child's name, age and any health concerns if you need this service on Wednesdays. In turn, the daycare volunteers will be provided with your name and the classroom where they can locate you in the event of an emergency.

Substitutes: Please discuss with your assistant if he/she is comfortable with taking the class in your absence. If not, call the Director of Religious Formation and a substitute will be found for you. You are expected to write a complete lesson plan in advance for your substitute. This will allow sufficient time for your substitute to review and prepare for the class.

For Safe Environment reasons, all volunteers must notify the Director of Religious Formation of the date and time they will be unavailable to serve. A record of volunteer absences will be kept in the Office of Religious Formation.

In-Services: Catechists and assistant catechists are asked to attend in-services that are held throughout the year. The in-services are held to allow catechists and assistant catechists the opportunity to work on catechist certification, network with other catechists and share ideas to implement into your classroom setting. It is also a great opportunity to dialogue with the Director of Religious Formation, provide feedback on the program and curriculum. Your open communication will also allow the Director of Religious Formation to determine areas where additional support needs to be provided to you.

SAMPLE FORM
St. Patrick's Catholic Church
Office of Religious Formation
20500 West Maple Road
Elkhorn, NE 68022
(402) 289-4947

DISCIPLINE POLICY:

All children participating in our faith formation programs are expected to act appropriately while attending classes. In the event that a child misbehaves, the following steps will be taken to correct the matter:

1. The teacher will give the student one warning to stop the negative behavior.
2. If the child continues to misbehave, he/she will be sent to the Office of Religious Formation. The child will be asked to call their parent(s) and make them aware of the problem. The incident will be recorded in the office and the child will return to the classroom after he/she has notified his/her parents of the incident.
3. If the child is sent to the office a second time during the faith formation program, the Director of Religious Formation will place a call to the parents. The student will be required to complete one half hour of work detail to the parish for students enrolled in 1st through 5th grade and one hour of work detail to the parish for students enrolled in the 6th grade through Confirmation. The work detail and the time the work detail is completed will be at the discretion of the Director of Religious Formation. Work detail must be completed within a timely manner of the initial incident and the student's parents must be present while the student is completing the work detail. The incident will also be recorded in the office.
4. In the unfortunate event that a third incident occurs, a conference among the parents, student, catechist and the Director of Religious Formation will be held. At that time, a determination may be made that the child should be dismissed from the program for not exhibiting Christian behavior. If so, arrangements for home schooling will be offered. No refunds of fees will be made.

Discipline Report

Student's Name _____ Grade _____

Catechist/Assistant Catechist's
Name _____ Date _____

Description of Incident:

Catechist/Assistant Catechist's
Signature _____

Action Taken by RF Office:

Student Signature _____ Date _____

Parent Signature (If required) _____
Date _____

Director of Religious Formation
Signature _____ Date _____

CLASSROOM EXPECTATIONS

The 5-day School Teacher will...

Leave the classroom welcoming for
The RF program by...

Leaving ample space for the catechists
and students to teach and learn.

Remove student and teacher items from
desk tops and tables when possible.

Remove or place any valuable or breakable
items away when possible.

Leave a note if there is something special
you need RF to avoid or pay special
attention to.

Allow white board space for teaching.

Leave one designated cupboard for RF.

Please leave a gentle note if you are concerned
about a special area or item in the classroom.

The RF Catechist will...

Leave the rooms as they found it.
(Return desks, tables, etc. to where
they found them.)

Wash tables/desks after completing
craft projects involving glue, paint,
etc.

Not allow messy snacks.

Only allow water for drinking, no
other beverages allowed.

Wash tables if snack is provided.

Keep RF students out of 5-day student's and teacher's
personal things and displays.

Supervise students at all times.

Please leave a gentle note or email the
5-day teacher if something happens in
the classroom that could cause any concerns
when the 5-day school teachers returns to the
shared classroom space.

*****To improve our relationships while ministering to the children in our parish community, please email or call each other to communicate any concerns.*****

Please provide your name and phone number.

Name

Email Address

Session

5-day Classroom Teacher: _____

RF Catechist: _____

RF Catechist: _____

RF Catechist: _____

RF Catechist: _____

St. Patrick's Catholic Church
Acknowledgement of Volunteer Handbook Form

We ask that each volunteer assisting with St. Patrick's Religious Formation program sign an ***Acknowledgement of Volunteer Handbook Form*** to indicate their acceptance and support of all that is contained in this handbook.

Please return your signed ***Acknowledgement of Volunteer Handbook Form*** to the Office of Religious Formation by Wednesday, September 18, 2018.

Print Name

X _____

Signature of Volunteer

Date