**RELIGIOUS EDUCATION**

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 **Family**

 **Handbook**

 **2022-2023**

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***Good Teacher Area Faith Community***

***Church of St. Edward***

**Minneota, MN**

***Church of St. Eloi***

**Ghent, MN**

**AFC Website – www.goodteacherafc.com**

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Dear Families in Christ,

You are loved! God loves you and the parishes of St. Edward and St. Eloi love you! This note is to let you know that you are welcome in our parishes and you are wanted.

The parish is the Body of Christ, this means that we are all one with many different parts of the body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:12-26). When one part is missing from the body, it matters. Just like if our physical body looses a body part, the body can still function, but just not as well as it would if it was whole. We need you in this Church, you have a spot that only you can fill.

God loves you and He created you for a purpose! You are His daughters and His sons and He wants a relationship with you. You will be in my prayers.

Our statement of purpose guides the current mission of F.I.R.E. (Families Involved in Religious Education) and it is through the Church that we continue to help families to learn and teach the Catholic faith. Thank you for bringing your family on this journey with us!

If you have questions, please don’t hesitate to contact me. I am here for you and your family! I love your souls and each one of you and your spiritual needs are important to me!

May God bless you,

Shannon Evjen, Director of RE

goodteacherafcre@hotmail.com

**RELIGIOUS EDUCATION**

**STATEMENT OF PURPOSE**

As a faith community we respond to the call of God in our everyday lives through the ministry of catechesis.

**This ministry is threefold:**

1. It is a form of ministry of the Word that proclaims and teaches.
2. It is a form of ministry of worship that sanctifies through prayer and sacrament.
3. It is a form of ministry of service that witnesses for social justice.

The purpose of catechesis (religious education) is to help a person’s faith become **living**, **conscious** and **active**. While aiming to enrich the faith life of individuals at each particular stage of development. Every form of catechesis is oriented in some way to the catechesis of adults, who are capable of a full response to God’s Word. Catechesis is a lifelong process for the individual and a constant and concerted pastoral activity of the Christian Community.

*“Parents are the first and foremost catechists of their children. They catechize informally but powerfully by example and instruction. They communicate values and attitudes by showing love for Christ and his Church and for each other, by reverently receiving the Eucharist and living in its spirit and by fostering justice and love in all their relationships.*

*Their active involvement in the parish, their readiness to seek opportunities to serve others, and their practice of frequent and spontaneous prayer, all make meaningful their professions of belief.*

*Parents nurture faith in their children by showing them the richness and beauty of lived faith. Parents should frequently be reminded of their obligation to see to it that they and their children participate in catechetical programs sponsored by the Church.”*

 *National Catechetical Directory #212*

**PROGRAM OVERVIEW**

**GRADE ONE**

Students are introduced to the *Faith and Life* series and are taught the basic Catholic prayers. Visits to the church and engaging activities and crafts help these little ones grow in their faith.

**GRADE TWO**

The focus this year is on preparation for two important Sacraments: Reconciliation in our Parishes, and Holy Eucharist, which culminates in that important day of First Holy Communion! \*SEE SEPARATE HANDBOOK FOR MORE DETAILED INFORMATION

**GRADES THREE – EIGHT**

Students will continue using the *Faith and Life* series, and will be invited into a life of Catholic Christian discipleship, learn about Scripture, Doctrine, and Liturgical celebration, and be challenged to follow Jesus and learn and practice the skills they need to be active disciples.

**GRADE NINE**

Students will focus on *Theology of the Body*. Many teens struggle to understand who they are; Theology of the Body answers the question “Who am I” and helps teens understand Pope St. John Paul II’s vision of what it means to be a human person.

**GRADES TEN & ELEVEN**

New this year is combining our 10th and 11th graders into a 2-year program. Students are challenged to become full members of the Catholic Church as they prepare for the Sacrament of Confirmation through relationship and community building and learning what their gifts are and how to use them. In the 2nd year, they will continue going deeper by using the program *Chosen.* Candidates need to exhibit a basic knowledge of their faith, a desire to receive the gift of the Holy Spirit, and a willingness to work toward being an active and full member of their parish community. \*SEE SEPARATE HANDBOOK FOR MORE DETAILED INFORMATION

**ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

**ONLINE CURRICULUM & FLIPPED CLASSROOM –** This year, we will have in-person learning with textbooks and also with the option for families to do the online version at home.

This may change based on individual catechists, but the idea of the “flipped classroom” is that students will complete the lessons BEFORE attending that week’s RE class in person so that they may have more time for prayer, small group discussion, activities and time to ask questions relevant to their faith in their everyday lives.

**PARENT ASSISTANTS –** Throughout the year, we may need to ask for parents to assist in the classrooms, especially in the younger grades (1-5) and classes with more students. Volunteers must be VIRTUS trained according to the Diocese’s requirement for Safe Environment.

**VIRTUS** – This is a one-time, free class that is offered throughout the year to individuals who would like to volunteer in the parish or school for youth events or activities. It is a valuable resource to anyone who is around or cares for children and wants to help to keep them safe from others that seek to do them physical or mental harm and to recognize the signs of abuse.

**PARENT MEETINGS -** Parents who have children receiving the Sacraments of Reconciliation, Eucharist, and Confirmation must attend the specified parent meetings. If this is not possible, a separate meeting needs to be arranged with the Coordinator of Religious Education.

**PRAYERS** - Each grade level has specific prayers that need to be learned. Community and private prayer are essential to one’s faith formation.

**ADORATION –** Each night during 6:30pm RE, we will have Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, where Jesus is present in a special way. We encourage families to come to spend quiet time in prayer while their children are at class. There are times when catechists will bring the classes to pray in the church as well. This is an opportunity to spend time with God in our busy lives!

**YOUTH GROUP** - Youth Ministry helps to foster both personal and spiritual growth of teenagers. Spiritual, service, and social events are offered on a weekly & monthly basis to help the teens within the parish strengthen their own personal relationship to Christ and His Church.

**LITURGY AND WORSHIP** - Attendance and participation at weekend Mass is essential in one’s faith formation and nourishing their spiritual hunger. If families are not attending weekend Mass & Holy Days, what we do on Weds nights will not feed their souls like the Eucharist.

**PARISH INVOLVEMENT -** Involvement and participation in parish and community life is greatly encouraged for students and parents alike. Reaching out to others in need and providing for the needs of our church is a way to live out one’s baptismal call.

**RELIGIOUS EDUCATION POLICIES**

**CLASS DAYS and TIMES**

Grades 1-5 Wednesdays 5:30-6:15pm

Grades 6-11 Wednesdays 6:30-7:30pm

**REGISTRATION/TUITION**

Registration for Religious Education will be online. Visit AFC website for the link to register and pay for RE. For those who don’t have access, paper registration will be provided upon request.

**TUITION –** St. Eloi families are not required to pay tuition, but will be required to help with the fundraiser that provides them with free tuition.

1 Child: $35.00 4 Children: $95.00

2 Children: $60.00 5 Children: $105.00

3 Children: $80.00 6 Children: $115.00

*\*Tuition assistance is available if needed. Please contact the Religious Education Coordinator.*

**ARRIVAL/DEPARTURE TIME**

Students are asked to arrive no earlier than 15 minutes before the beginning of the specified class time and go to their classroom. The school front and side doors should be used to enter and exit the building. If a student needs to arrive late or leave early, this request must be made by the parent/guardian. Catechists are asked to arrive at least 15 minutes prior to the beginning of the Religious Education Sessions.

**SAFETY**

Students who are walking are expected to use the crosswalks and parents are encouraged to pick up on the side of the street closest to the church and school so that kids are not crossing the road into potential traffic. Students who are driving must use caution and watch for others.

**ATTENDANCE AND EXCUSED ABSENCES**

In order to ensure a quality Christian education, attendance is required at all grade levels. Consistency is needed as each of the grade levels builds upon the previous year and each of the lessons build upon the previous lesson. ***With the online curriculum, attendance will be tracked by completion of online lessons verses in-person class attendance.*** Parents will be notified if there are incomplete lessons. If a student cannot complete classes because of illness or another valid reason, parents need to contact the RE Director, **Shannon Evjen at** **goodteacherafcre@hotmail.com**

**ANNOUNCEMENTS AND NOTICES**

Please watch your email, Facebook, the AFC website, the parish bulletin, and/or newsletters for any changes, announcements and notices related to Religious Education and Youth Ministry. At times, notices may be sent home with the students, but most communication will be via email unless a different way is requested.

**CLASS CANCELLATIONS DUE TO WEATHER**

The Religious Education Coordinator has the responsibility for canceling in-person classes when it is necessary. If classes need to be canceled due to inclement weather, an announcement will be made over the local radio station, as well as on the St. Edward Church’s Facebook page and on the AFC website, [www.goodteacherafc.com](http://www.goodteacherafc.com) . An email might also be sent if one has been provided. If possible, The High School and Elementary Schools will be notified so that an announcement can be made to the students regarding any cancellations. If school is called off during the day, there will be no in-person Religious Education classes, but the lessons may still be assigned to count towards attendance per diocesan policy.

**DRUGS / ALCOHOL**

Students’ possession and/or use of alcohol, drugs or tobacco will be handled in accord with Minnesota State Statutes and the Religious Education Office Policies. Drugs, alcohol, and tobacco will not be allowed or tolerated on the premises of St. Edward’s or wherever Church-related events are held.

**Cell Phone Policy**

The Religious Education staff wishes to maintain an environment conducive to the learning process. Cell phone usage during RE classes and prayer time is disruptive to this process. All students are to turn their cell phones off upon entering the facilities. The use of cell phones is a privilege and not a right. Cell phones or related devices have no place during religious education. Cell phones are prohibited in the bathrooms at all times. Catechists will have the option of collecting all cell phones before class to ensure this policy is adhered to. An on-site emergency contact number can be provided to families that need one.

**SAFETY POLICIES**

A safe environment is a top priority for all Religious Education students, catechists, parents and assistants. All are expected to abide by the rules that provide for this safety. Below are listed several policies concerning safety issues.

**WEAPONS POLICY**

*Minnesota State Crime Bill 1995 Section 10. (127-282)*

*(Expulsion for possession of firearm)*

a) Notwithstanding the time limitation in Section 127.27, Sub-division 5, a school board must expel for a period of at least one year a pupil who is determined to have brought a firearm to school except the board may modify this expulsion requirement for a pupil on a case-by-case basis. For the purpose of this section, firearm is as defined in the United States Cod, Title 18, Section 921.

b) Notwithstanding Chapter 13, a student’s expulsion or withdrawal or transfer from the Religious Education Program after an expulsion action against the student for a weapons violation under paragraph (a) may be disclosed by the group initialing the expulsion proceeding. *Section 12 (127.48). Policy to refer firearms possessor).*

Each group must have a policy requiring the appropriate administrator(s) to, as soon as possible, refer the criminal justice or juvenile delinquency system, as appropriate, any pupil who brings firearms to school unlawfully.

Possession of a Weapon: “Possession” refers to having a weapon on one’s person or in an area subject to one’s control on school/parish property or at a school/parish event or activity.

Weapons: Article designed or commonly used to inflict bodily harm and/or to intimidate other persons. Including, but not limited to:

* Firearms-loaded or unloaded
* Knives
* Clubs
* Weapon look-a-likes

Minimum Corrective Activities:

* Initial suspension for up to five weeks
* Confiscation of weapon
* Notification of police
* Recommendation to the Administrator(s) regarding a possible expulsion.

**DISCIPLINE POLICY**

Each student is expected to respect the rights of other students, catechists and property. Catechists are asked to be present in the classroom before the arrival of students, during class and until the last child is gone as a preventive measure against misbehavior.

Inappropriate behavior consists of the following: talking back to the catechist, disobedience, continual disruption, or a failure to comply with the rules set up for the safety of the students.

The following has been developed in order to ensure quality Religious Education. The goal is to create guidelines, which will guarantee a better teaching and learning situation, cooperation from parents, and hopefully longer tenure from catechists.

· The catechist, with input from the students, establishes rules for appropriate behavior.

· The catechist corrects the students according to the rules established, and then explains privately to the student what he/she is doing that is disruptive and of the steps to be taken if the inappropriate behavior does not improve.

· The student is sent to the RE Coordinator or on-site adult in charge. If the student is sent out of the classroom a second time, parents/guardians will be contacted. If the problem continues the student will be asked to call the parents/guardians and to complete the year at home.

**SACRAMENTAL PREPARATION**

At the heart of our Catholic Faith are the Sacraments. They reveal to us how God offers transformation through the ordinary events of our lives. From our birth, through the experiences of healing, friendship, helping others, loving one another, choosing our vocations, dealing with sickness and grief, to death itself, the Sacraments help us to encounter Jesus throughout our lives. Proper understanding and readiness for the reception of the Sacraments is essential. *Missed lessons will be required to be finished prior to Sacrament.*

**BAPTISM -** This sacrament of initiation is viewed as the formation of a radically new relationship of a person with God and the beginning of a life-long membership in the faith community of the Church. Parents are asked to call the parish office for information on baptismal preparation and to arrange for Baptism.

**RECONCILIATION** - A child's understanding of reconciliation is a simple one and must first be experienced within the child’s life situation. Children who wish to receive the Sacrament must display adequate knowledge and understanding of the sacrament. Further details about this sacrament will be shared through parent meetings, letters and announcements.

**EUCHARIST** - 2nd grade children and their parents are involved in preparations for the reception of First Holy Communion.A First Communion Retreat will be a part of the immediate preparation, culminating in the Eucharistic Liturgy celebrating First Communion. Further information will be given through parent meetings, parent letters, and announcements. The Sacrament of Reconciliation must be received before Eucharist can be received for the first time.

**CONFIRMATION -** In the Sacrament of Confirmation young adults complete their initiation into the community of faith. More information is given in the Confirmation packet given fall of grades 10 & 11. All previous years of formation will be taken into consideration in preparation for Confirmation. If a student is frequently absent, has missed years of RE, or has failed to complete lessons, they will need to meet with the pastor and RE Coordinator in order to move forward towards the Sacrament.

**COVID-19 GUIDELINES**

The following requirements are based off of a document supplied by the New Ulm Diocese Director of Religious Education, Kevin Losleben.

“While Catholic schools are exempt from the new executive order and the ‘Safe Learning Plan,’ religious education programs have the difficult task of navigating how to pass on the Faith to public school students who may be undergoing a constantly changing education experience.”

**REQUIREMENTS**

The following requirements apply to all religious education classes in the Diocese of New Ulm:

* **All COVID-19 positive persons or those who have had close contact with them, as well as those who have COVID-19 related symptoms, must stay home.** If a student arrives and is showing obvious symptoms, they should be isolated and the parents must be notified. The student should be sent home if he/she is sick.
* If a person tests positive for COVID-19 after attending religious education class, they should notify the RE Coordinator so that they can monitor the class. It is not required to quarantine the entire class.
* If the local school district transitions to hybrid-learning, students and staff at religious education should social distance 6 feet apart and keep religious education facilities at 50% capacity.
* If the local school district is in distance learning, there will be no in-person RE and catechists will communicate online.
* Hand sanitizer must be made readily available and students should be encouraged to use it or wash their hands when they arrive and depart.
* If possible, writing utensils and craft supplies should be sanitized before being shared with another class.
* Following class, all used areas and common items (door handles, chairs, writing utensils, etc.) must be cleaned and disinfected.

**LOCAL GUIDELINES**

* Although religious education classes do not have to follow the directives of the public school district, in order to keep consistency and have the safest environment possible for our children based on our weekly case rates, we will be frequently consulting what our district is doing and taking their guidelines into consideration regarding in-person RE classes.
* We will be following the policies of the Diocese of New Ulm and St. Edward School, while consulting the recommendations of the MN Dept. of Health, CDC and our local school district.
* Individuals, siblings & family members of anyone being tested for COVID-19 or with symptoms consistent should stay home for the recommended time period.

***Parent’s interest, support, and cooperation are essential to a successful Religious Education experience!***

***We look forward to a great year with our families!***

**We would like to ensure all families that we are doing our best to keep them safe while also trying to meet their spiritual and emotional needs.**

**We are open to comments and suggestions to continue to improve our RE program but we also realize that a one-size-fits-all approach is difficult.**

**RELIGIOUS EDUCATION TEAM**

**RE DIRECTOR -**Shannon Evjen – goodteacherafcre@hotmail.com

**RE LEADER TEAM -** Fr. Todd Petersen, Deacon Bruce & Juanita Bot, Deacon Travis & Jessica Welsh, Eriann Faris & Deacon Jason Myhre

**CATECHIST TRAINING SESSIONS**

Catechists will participate in training sessions. The purpose of the training sessions is to assist the catechists with their teaching techniques and faith sharing. Practical matters will also be included in the in-service training.

**RELIGIOUS ED (RE) CATECHISTS**

Grade 1 Jeri Whortenbury

Grade 2 Eriann Faris

Grade 3 (OPEN)

Grade 4 (OPEN)

Grade 5 Tessa DePestal

Grade 6 Jeri Whortenbury

Grade 7 John Rabaey & Bernie DeCock

Grade 8 (OPEN)

Grade 9 Dawn Vlaminck

Grade 10 (OPEN)

Grade 11 Deacon Travis

**RELIGIOUS ED/PARISH SECRETARY**

Caren Buysse – 408 N. Washington St. Minneota 56264 507-872-6346

**EDUCATION COMMITTEE –** Erika Gorecki, Teresa Myhre, Brad Hennen, Brian Timmerman, Jaci Garvey, Fr. Todd Petersen