

St. Patrick's Catholic Church
Office of Religious Formation
Volunteer Handbook
2009-2010



"The Wise Person Makes Learning a Joy"

Proverbs 15:2

Office of Religious Formation

20500 West Maple Road

P.O. Box 10

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 Religious Formation program has flourished and offers 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 289-4947. I will be happy to set up a time to meet with you. Our Religious Formation staff is here to support you in your ministry!

God Bless,

Mary McMahan
Director of Religious Formation

St. Patrick's Office of Religious Formation

Volunteer Handbook

2009-2010

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St. Patrick's Catholic Church
Religious Formation Volunteer Handbook

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Expectations of Religious Formation 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.
- 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 April. 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.

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.

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

Procedures Before Class

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 has rung, 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 Update: The Director communicates to Religious Formation volunteers through a weekly newsletter. Newsletters are placed in the mailboxes or emailed. **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.

Procedures During Class

Under no circumstances are students to be left in the classroom unattended. If assistance is needed, send a student to the RF Office. Set classroom rules. **Religious Formation 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. Snacks may be shared during RF classes, however, desks/tables and chairs must be wiped down. **The only drink to be consumed in the classroom is water.**

Attendance: 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 RF Office.

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 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.)**

The Expectations of children participating in St. Patrick's Religious Formation program and our discipline policy are as follows:

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.
- Students should leave cell phones, game boys, CD players and other electronic devices at home. If a student is caught using the electronic device on Wednesday evenings, they will be confiscated and taken to the RF Office. A parent will need to come to the RF Office to retrieve the device.
5. Clothing
- 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 program are expected to act appropriately while attending Religious Formation 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 Religious Formation Office. 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 a child is sent to the Religious Formation Office a second time in one semester, a call will be placed to the parent(s) by the Director of Religious Formation. The child will not be allowed back into class without a parent in attendance. In the event that one of the child's parents is currently volunteering in the program, we will request the other parent attend class with the child. This incident will be recorded in the Religious Formation office.**
- 4. 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 Church for students enrolled in K through 5th grade and one hour of work detail to the Church 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 DRF. 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.**

5. **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.**

Guests

If you plan to invite guests to speak to your class, please visit with the Director of Religious Formation first. **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.

Communication with Parents: Any letter or communication to be sent home to parents of RF 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 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-time 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 chalkboards, 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 RF storage cabinet in the classroom. Please check for leftover personal items (jackets, coats, etc.) and bring them to the RF Office. 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 RF 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 to the parking lot. All students will be dismissed from the main doors of the school. All students must remain on the sidewalk in front of the

school entrance. Volunteers will be available to assist the children while in the parking lot. If a ride has not shown up within 5 minutes, the student should be taken to the RF Office to wait for his or her parents.

Children of Religious Formation 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 RF classes.

Photo Copy/Resource Materials/Supplies

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:

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

Photo Copy Requests: 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 will make the copies and place them in your mailbox prior to the following class session.

Resource Materials: There are many children’s books, activity books and videos available for check out from the Religious Formation Office. A list of resources available for check out is in your Catechist Resource/Reference manual. Plans are also being made to place this catalog on our website. Once we have completed this process, you will be notified.

If you choose to view a video other than those listed in your resource manual, 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 RF 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 RF 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 RF storage closet before the beginning of the year. 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 RF Office for use in the classroom, 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 fall 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.

Miscellaneous Class Information

Cancellation of Class: In case of bad weather causing class cancellation, every effort will be made to notify you as soon as the cancellation decision has been made. Announcements will be made over the (3) major television stations: KMTV, WOWT, and KETV. Notice will also be posted on the website if we are able to access a computer.

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 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 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 RF 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 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 RF Office for one year.

Liturgies: Our Religious Formation program will have Family Masses during the RF year, any and all Holy Days of Obligation, Thanksgiving Eve and Ash Wednesday. The Masses will be held

at 6:30 p.m. and RF volunteers are expected to attend the Mass with their family. (Ash Wednesday Masses will be held at 5:30 p.m. and 7:30 p.m.) We will not hold RF classes at 4:00 p.m., 5:45 p.m. or 7:30 p.m. on the evening of a scheduled RF Family Mass.

Catechist General Information

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, please find a substitute from the list of **Safe Environment approved** volunteers **and notify me of the name of your substitute, or call me and I will find a sub 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.

In-Services: To allow catechists and assistant catechists the opportunity to dialogue with the Director of Religious Formation and other catechists, all catechists and assistant catechists are asked to attend two in-services per year. This is a great way to converse with other catechists in your grade level and share ideas. It is also an opportunity to provide feedback to the DRF regarding concerns and suggestions for improvement on both the curriculum and the program. Your open communication will also allow the Director of Religious Formation to determine areas additional support needs to be provided to you.

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 RF 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 Religious Formation Committee. Your concerns will be addressed at the next scheduled RF Committee meeting.

On-Going Faith Formation Opportunities for Adult Volunteers

Level I and Level II Opportunities: Not only is it important for the adults in our parish community to pass on the faith to the children, it is important for adults to nourish and feed their spirituality and continue to deepen their knowledge of the Catholic faith. Our Archdiocese offers both Level I and Level II Catechist Certification opportunities for all of our volunteers.

Echoes of Faith is the Archdiocesan approved certification program for Level I. We view a video and have group discussions based on questions provided in a workbook. The topics in the ***Echoes of Faith*** video series are: ***Getting Started as a Catechist, Roles of the Catechists, The Person of the Catechist, Creed, Liturgy and Sacraments, Spirituality and Morality.***

Parishes offering Echoes of Faith and the dates/times Echoes of Faith are offered will be posted frequently in the weekly volunteer update. Please call The Office of Religious Formation and arrangements will be made for you to attend Echoes of Faith courses at other parishes. St. Patrick's will pay any fees associated with the Echoes of Faith courses.

Level II courses: In these classes, participants will read independently from assigned books and then come together as a group to discuss the reading and how you will apply the material to your classroom teaching and/or daily life. Participants will keep a journal and portfolio for all Level II courses. The participant must be Level I certified.

Additional educational opportunities will be offered to Religious Formation volunteers throughout the year. In most instances, the parish will pay all fees associated with the workshop.

SAMPLE FORM
St. Patrick's Catholic Church
Office of Religious Formation
20500 West Maple Road
P.O. Box 10
Elkhorn, NE 68022
(402) 289-4947

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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 _____

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 16, 2010.

Print Name

x _____

Signature of Volunteer

Date