

ST. RICHARD CHURCH  
FAITH FORMATION PROGRAM

**Parent & Participant Handbook**



*Embracing the Children of God  
to Fill Their Hearts with Faith  
& Deepen Their Relationship with Christ*

**St. Richard Church**  
**Office for Parish Faith Formation**  
**Parent & Participant Handbook**  
*(Revised 6/27/10)*

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The purpose of this handbook is to set forth the guidelines for those that participate in St. Richard Faith Formation Program. By enrolling your child into our programs, you agree to support and abide by the provisions outlined in this handbook. Parents are therefore encouraged to discuss these provisions with their children to ensure that all parties understand the requirements and obligations of their participation in the Faith Formation Program.

*(Rev. 6/27/10)*

**St. Richard**  
**Office for Parish Faith Formation**

**PROGRAM PHILOSOPHY**

*Canon Law, the law of the Church, states that “parents above others are obliged to form their children in the faith and practice of Christian life by word and example; godparents and those who take the place of parents are bound by an equivalent obligation” (Can. 774 §2). The General Directory for Catechesis and the National Directory for Catechesis resound the same sentiment. St. Richard’s Office for Parish Faith Formation recognizes and embraces parents in their role as the primary catechists of their children as they strive to fulfill this special role. Our mission is to assist parents in providing sound catechesis on the catechism and teachings of the Catholic Church so that their children will be formed in the faith of the Catholic tradition. This is accomplished by providing parents with a variety of resources and programs that will enable their children to cultivate a deep appreciation for and understanding of what it means to be a Catholic Christian in today’s changing world. Our program attempts to provide children with ample opportunities to live and experience their faith through catechesis, service, worship, and fellowship. The Office for Parish Faith Formation is committed to improving its programs so that we may better assist parents in providing their children with the fullest experience of living their Catholic heritage on their journey of faith and deepening their relationship with God.*

***The following programs are offered by the  
Office for Parish Faith Formation***

**CONFRATERNITY OF CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE**  
**(CCD)**

The CCD Program assists parents in providing a sound foundation for the faith formation of their children to develop. The program is for children in grades one through six. Catechetical sessions are held every Wednesday evening from 5:45 PM to 7:00 PM in the school building. Sessions begin the third week of September and conclude the third week of May.

**SACRAMENTAL PREPARATION PROGRAM**

All baptized children from grade two and up who desire to enter into full communion with the Catholic Church with the reception of Holy Communion and/or Confirmation are eligible for this program **provided that they have successfully completed a minimum of two consecutive years of formation in the Catholic Faith.** First Penance is celebrated for children in grades 2 and up. First Eucharist is celebrated for grades 3 and up. Confirmation is celebrated every year in the Fall for children in grades 7 and up.

## **HOME SCHOOLING PROGRAM**

The home schooling program was developed to affirm parents in their role as the primary catechists of their children and to accommodate families that have special circumstances that render them incapable of participating in the other programmatic options available. Parents electing this option will be provided with a manual, guidelines, and the appropriate workbook materials for their child. The exact requirements and expectations for those wishing to participate in the home schooling program will be reviewed with the parents during a detailed training session. Please contact the program director for more details.

## **STUDENTS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS**

St. Richard Parish embraces all of its children regardless of special need or disability. We will make every effort to accommodate the needs of participants with special disabilities and provide them with an inclusive environment in our programs. If your child has a special need or disability you are encouraged to contact the program director to discuss your concerns and enrollment options.

## **LITURGY OF THE WORD FOR CHILDREN (CLOW)**

Liturgy of the Word for Children (CLOW) is held every weekend during the 10 AM Sunday Mass beginning after Labor Day and running through the week before Memorial Day. It provides children ages four through nine with a celebration of the Sunday Scripture Readings in an age appropriate presentation that makes the Word of God real and present for them. There is no fee for this program and no formal enrollment is required to participate.



## POLICIES & PROCEDURES FOR FAITH FORMATION PROGRAMS

### I. ATTENDANCE

**The faith formation received in the programs is ongoing in that each session builds upon the previous session. Therefore, it is imperative that children attend their program sessions regularly.**

If your child is unable to attend a session for any reason, a parent ***MUST*** complete the following procedures:

1. Call the rectory at 215-468-4777 to report the absence. Please be sure to leave your child's name, grade level, and the program for which they will be unable to attend.
2. If your child will be attending the session late, you must call and notify the rectory as described in 1 above. (*See LATENESS on page 5.*)
3. If your child fails to report to a session and no phone call is received, then the absence will be recorded as unexcused unless a doctor's note is provided upon returning to the program.
4. After the third unexcused absence the program director will contact the parents by letter to notify parents that the child may be required to repeat the grade level and that dismissal from the program could result should unexcused absences continue.
5. **ANY PARTICIPANT ACCUMULATING SIX UNEXCUSED ABSENCES WILL BE DISMISSED FROM THE PROGRAM.** The participant may re-enroll the following school year. Upon re-enrollment the participant will be required to repeat the previous grade level that was not completed. This proceeding may delay the reception of sacraments.
  - a. In the event that your child is dismissed from the program due to excessive absences, lateness, or problem behavior, no refund of tuition or material fees will be made to the family.
6. Extended absences due to illness require a doctor's note upon return to the program. In addition, parents should be in regular contact with their child's catechist in an effort to obtain assignments and keep their child's formation up-to-date when possible.

## **II. LATENESS**

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Sessions begin promptly at their designated times. Therefore, any participant arriving after the designated starting time will be considered late. It is strongly recommended that children arrive at least ten minutes prior to the scheduled class time. Lateness will be noted on Progress Reports. Chronic lateness will require a conference with a parent and might interfere with your child's promotion and reception of sacraments.

## **III. ARRIVAL & DISMISSAL PROCEDURES**

Participants should arrive at least 10 minutes prior to the scheduled start time of a program. All participants are to use the glass door entrance to the school building and follow the following procedures:

1. Upon arrival students report directly to the school hall and sit at the table assigned for their class until their catechist or classroom aide comes to bring them to the classroom.
2. Students arriving after their class has reported to the classroom will be escorted by a staff person to their class.
3. Parents must inform the program director **AND** their child's catechist in advance if they are picking up their child early. This may be done via phone or a note sent in with your child.
4. Students will be brought back the school hall by their catechist or classroom aide for dismissal and will wait in the hall at their assigned tables to be picked up by their parents or other designated person.
5. No participants are permitted to walk home on a regular basis without a signed release form on file in the Formation Office. No participants will be permitted to walk home on an interim basis without prior notification from a parent.

## **IV. ENROLLMENT & ATTENDANCE**

The faith formation provided in our programs involves incremental learning. That is each year builds upon the learning of the previous year. Therefore, it is essential that participants remain enrolled in the program consistently from year-to-year.

Any participant who voluntarily leaves the program for a period of one year will be required to make-up the missed year upon re-enrollment into the program. (e.g., a 3<sup>rd</sup> grade student who leaves the program for a period of one year after completing level 3 and re-enrolls in the program when they are in 5<sup>th</sup> grade will be placed into a level 4 CCD session.)

Any participant who voluntarily leaves the program for two or more consecutive years must fulfill the following two requirements:

1. The participant will be placed into a grade level that is one below their current day school grade level. (e.g., a 3<sup>rd</sup> grade student leaves the program after completing level 3 and re-enrolls when he is in 6th grade. The participant has missed two consecutive years of formation. Therefore, he would be placed into the 5 level CCD session upon re-enrollment)

**AND...**

2. Parents will be required to home school their child for at least one missed year in addition to their child attending sessions regularly. (e.g., using the example above, the 6th grade student who missed two consecutive years of formation would be placed into a level 5 CCD session, and in addition to attending his weekly catechetical sessions, his parents must also provide home schooling for the missed level 4 CCD material)

**NB. The Archdiocese of Philadelphia REQUIRES a minimum of two consecutive years of formation prior to a child receiving a sacrament. Students who leave the program following First Holy Communion and re-enroll in grade 6 in order to receive Confirmation DO NOT meet this requirement. Therefore, their reception of Confirmation will be deferred.**

## **V. NON-CUSTODIAL PARENTS**

**(rev. 6/27/10)**

It is the responsibility of both biological parent to provide the Parish with the latest, most up-to-date Custodial Order or Custody Agreement. St. Richard Faith Formation Program will request these documents in the beginning of the year at the time of registration. If either Custody Order or Custody Agreement changes during the course of the year, it remains the responsibility of both biological parents to provide that document to the Parish immediately.

Our program abides by the provisions of the Buckley Amendment with respect to the rights of non-custodial parents. In the absence of a court order to the contrary, our program will provide the non-custodial parent with access to the records and other program related information regarding the child. If there is a court order specifying that there is to be no information given, it is the responsibility of the custodial parent to provide the program director with an official and the latest copy of the court order.

If a court order prohibits our releasing a child into the custody of a non-custodial parent, it is the responsibility of the custodial parent to provide the program director with an official copy of the court order or custody section of the divorce decree.

In situations with shared legal custody, the parish program expects the cooperation of both parents.

The Faith Formation Programs offered by St. Richard Parish are designed to assist parents with the faith formation of their children, as well as foster values and behavior that are in accord with Catholic Church teaching. The program has **NO TOLERANCE** for behaviors that are contrary to Catholic faith and morals, including but not limited to ongoing acts of obstinacy, improper language, fighting, physical, emotional or psychological intimidation, vandalism, demeaning behavior such as name-calling, obscene language or gestures, and harassment. Such behaviors violate the central teaching of our faith and will not be tolerated in any form.

These categories do not cover every possible situation. The parish determines what is appropriate or inappropriate behavior, both in and out of the program sessions, in the program generally, and outside the program where such improper behavior affects the program community.

Conduct by children or parents/guardians, or anyone acting on their behalf, incompatible with the educational and religious mission of the Parish is grounds for disciplinary action, including but not limited to, immediate dismissal of the participant, as well as reporting the incident to the appropriate legal authorities where appropriate.

In addition, in the case of threats of violence or harassment, in any form, including oral, written, or electronic, by a child against any member of the program community, the child, if suspended but not dismissed, may be required to have psychological or psychiatric clearance before returning to the program.

In the event a participant engages in any of the above listed behaviors or any other inappropriate conduct, and has failed to respond to a catechist's attempt to stop or correct the behavior, the following action may be taken and at the discretion of the Pastor or the Director of Faith Formation:

1. **First Incident:** The participant will be removed from the session and the parents/guardians will be immediately notified by phone by the program director. The program director will schedule a conference with the parents/guardians, participant, and catechist to discuss the matter.
2. **Second Incident:** The participant will be removed from the session and be suspended from the program for a period of one session. The parents/guardians will be immediately notified by the program director and required to pick up their child. Prior to returning to the program the program director will schedule a conference with the parents/guardians, participant, and catechist to further discuss the matter.
3. **Third Incident:** The participant will be removed from the session and dismissed from the program. The parents or guardians will be immediately notified by the program director and required to pick up their child. Following a conference with the program director, parents/guardians, participant, and catechist, the parents/guardians will be

provided with the option of having their child repeat his or her current grade level the following school year or opting to complete the current year's material by home-schooling their child. In either case, no refund of tuition or material fees will be made.

However, St. Richard Faith Formation Program reserves the right to supersede the forgoing course of action depending on the particular circumstances of any given situation.

## **VII. CONTRABAND**

(rev. 6/27/10)

**BRINGING CONTRABAND TO PROGRAM SESSIONS IS STRICTLY PROHIBITED AND WILL BE CONFISCATED AND RETURNED TO PARENTS/GUARDIANS ONLY! Depending on the contraband confiscated, the proper legal authorities could be notified.**

1. Items considered contraband include, but are not limited to, gum, food, beverages, toys, electronic games, beepers, walk-mans, weapons, drugs, alcohol, and tobacco products.
2. It is unlawful for minors to be in the possession of alcohol or tobacco products. Participants found to be in the possession of such products may be immediately suspended from the program. Depending on the contraband confiscated, the proper legal authorities could be notified.
3. Participants who bring weapons or drugs/drug paraphernalia of any kind onto parish property may be immediately dismissed from the program and all proper and necessary authorities could be notified.

## **VIIa. SEARCH & SEIZURE**

(rev. 6/27/10)

It is the policy of St. Richard's Faith Formation Program to respect the privacy of its participants. However, in the event that a participant is suspected of having weapons or drugs in his/her possession, or is believed to be a threat to himself/herself or others, the director will be notified immediately. The director will conduct a search with an adult staff member as a witness. Refusal on the part of the participant to cooperate will result in the parents/guardians being contacted and asked to assist with the search. Parental refusal to cooperate will result in the participant's immediate dismissal from the program.

## **VIIb. CELL PHONES, PAGERS, & SPECIAL NOTES:**

We realize that devices such as pagers and cell phones have become a necessary tool in keeping communications open with children, especially for working parents. However, it is the policy of this program that such devices may not be brought to catechetical sessions. If a participant brings a pager or cell phone to the program, the device will be sent to the school office and must be picked up by a parent/guardian.

A safe, secure and respectful environment is necessary for participants to learn, achieve, and build appropriate relationships with others. St. Richard Faith Formation Program refuses to accept any behaviors that hinder or undermine such an environment. Therefore, acts of harassment, hazing, intimidation and bullying (including cyber bullying and the like) are unacceptable behaviors and are prohibited in our programs. The Faith Formation Program personnel cannot monitor the activities of program participants at all times and eliminate all incidents of bullying between participants, particularly when participants are not under their direct supervision. However, to the extent such conduct affects the environment of the faith formation program and the rights and welfare of the participants and is within the control of the faith formation program in its normal operations, it is St. Richard Faith Formation Program's intent to prevent bullying and thus, will take action to investigate, respond, discipline and remediate any acts of bullying. Administration and the catechetical staff are to demonstrate appropriate behavior by treating others with civility and respect, and being aware of and not tolerating harassment, intimidation, hazing and bullying, etc. If incidents do occur, participants should be able to report and know that the inappropriate behavior will be dealt with promptly and effectively. There will be no retaliation against a victim, reporter or witness.

### **Policy**

Bullying involves actions or words against another for the purpose of inflicting physical or emotional harm or discomfort or damage to a person's reputation that is intimidating or threatening and affects the learning and program environments. The following describes types of bullying but is not an exhaustive list.

- Hitting, kicking, shoving, spitting, hair pulling, or throwing something
- Getting another person to hit or harm student
- Teasing, name-calling, making critical remarks or threatening in person or by other means
- Demeaning and making another the victim of jokes
- Making rude and/or threatening gestures
- Excluding or rejecting the student
- Intimidating (bullying), extorting or exploiting
- Spreading harmful rumors or gossip

If the bully is threatening harm, a program participant should tell a catechist, adult volunteer and/or the Program Director immediately so that action can be taken to remediate the situation. Parents/guardians and the Pastor will be notified of the situation, and Law Enforcement Officials may be contacted if warranted (e.g., someone threatened with a weapon, terroristic threats, etc.).

## **VIII. ASSIGNMENTS**

Every catechist in the program assigns take-home assignments on a weekly basis in the form of written work, activities, or study. As those primarily responsible for the faith formation of their children, it is expected that parents/guardians will supervise the completion of these assignments. *Incomplete assignments and material may delay preparation for sacraments.*

Faith formation is not an academic exercise nor is it intellectually based. Faith must be experienced, witnessed to, and lived. The faith formation programs outlined in this handbook do not utilize standard grading procedures as a result.

1. The catechists as a means to gauge the understanding and formation progress of the participants will use appropriate review materials. Each individual catechist will arrange review schedules. A minimum of four reviews will be administered over the course of the program year. These reviews are a valuable tool that will assist parents in identifying areas of difficulty in the faith formation of their children.
2. Progress Reports will be mailed to parents twice a year (2nd week of January & 1st week of June). The purpose of the Progress Reports is to provide parents/guardians with feedback regarding the faith formation of their children.
3. As active and interested parties in the faith formation of their children, we require parents/guardians to sign and return all reviews and Progress Reports by the following week that they are received.
4. Every catechist has a policy regarding make-up work. Catechists have been asked to contact parents in the event of an absence in order to convey any missed work or assignments. These assignments must be completed by the time the child returns to the program following an absence.

## **X. SERVICE INITIATIVES**

**(rev. 6/27/10)**

From time to time, catechists may invite participants to engage in service activities as a means of deepening the formation process. These activities will take place outside the scope of the regular catechetical sessions. In the event that a catechist elects such an option, he or she will provide the participants with a detailed list of suggested activities as well as permission and release forms. It is the responsibility of the parents/guardians to oversee the completion of such initiatives and it is strongly recommended that parents/guardians take an active role in such initiatives by participating in the event with their child.

## IX. WORKBOOKS

Every participant is assigned a workbook at the beginning of the year and is required to bring the workbook to **EVERY** program session. Failure to bring a workbook to a session will result in the following actions:

1. Every time a participant forgets his or her workbook, the participant will be required to rent a workbook for that session at a rate of \$3.00 per incident.
2. Parents will receive a bill in the mail for the workbook rental. The due date will be posted on the bill.
3. Any unpaid rental fees will carry over to the participant's program fee for the following year.
4. No participant will be permitted to register for programs come fall until all fees accrued during the prior program year have been paid in full.
5. Lost workbooks must be replaced by purchasing a new workbook priced at \$20.00. A new workbook will not be issued until the full purchase price has been received, unless prior arrangements have been made with the program director.

## XII. PRAYER SERVICES

Prayer and worship is a vital and necessary dimension of our faith as it is the primary way in which we commune with God. Throughout the program year, there will be occasions when students will be asked to report to the Church for reception of the sacrament of Reconciliation or for a prayer service. On such occasions, please follow the procedures below.

1. Check your monthly calendar. It will note if there is a special service scheduled. Students that are to report to school by 5:45 PM once attendance has been taken they will be brought to Church.
2. **RE: RECONCILIATION SERVICES:** Students will return to the classroom following the reception of the sacrament for the remainder of the session.
3. **RE: FAMILY PRAYER SERVICES:**  
Students will be dismissed from Church *immediately* following the conclusion of the prayer service.
  - a. All prayer services begin at 6:30 PM. Parents/guardians are encouraged to attend so that they may take their children home immediately following the conclusion of the service.

### **XIII. SACRAMENTS**

Archdiocesan policy requires that school age children satisfactorily complete **TWO CONSECUTIVE YEARS** of faith formation to be eligible to begin preparation for the reception of a sacrament.

**PARTICIPANTS EXHIBITING CHRONIC ABSENCES (3 or more unexcused absences), LATENESS, OR WHO ARE A PERSISTENT DISCIPLINE PROBLEM MAY HAVE THEIR RECEPTION OF BAPTISM, RECONCILIATION, FIRST HOLY COMMUNION, AND/OR CONFIRMATION DEFERRED UNTIL THE FOLLOWING YEAR OR LATER.**

Preparation for the reception of a sacrament is a time of prayerful reflection and discernment. A participant's desire to receive the sacrament is reflected in his or her positive attitude toward the preparation process. Thus proper attendance and behavior are expected.

The parents of all sacramental candidates are required to attend a special parent meeting relating to the appropriate sacrament. The sacramental candidates are required to participate in all activities relating to the preparation process including rehearsals and retreats. Failure to comply with the requirements outlined at the parent meeting may result in the reception of the sacrament being deferred until a later date.

Archdiocesan policy requires that a child receive the sacraments of initiation (Baptism, Eucharist, and Confirmation) in the parish that their family is registered.

### **XIV. TUITION**

**(rev. 6/27/10)**

Tuition is a necessary and required part of our faith formation programs and ensures that our programs can provide participants with the most current and best catechetical resources for their formation needs.

Tuition is due in full at the time of registration. However, being sensitive to the needs of our families, other payment options are available upon request. Anyone who can not pay their tuition in full at the time of registration or who has difficulty making payment due to hardship should contact the program director to discuss the matter and to make other arrangements.

Families that do not request other arrangements for tuition payment and fail to meet their financial obligations by the end of the program year will have a \$20.00 surcharge applied to the outstanding balance on your account. This surcharge and the outstanding balance must be paid in full prior to enrollment the following program year.

In the event that your child is dismissed from the program due to excessive absences, lateness, problem behavior, or for any other reason for dismissal, no refund of tuition or material fees will be made to the family.

## XV. SNOW EMERGENCY & CANCELLATIONS

In the event of severe inclement weather, tune your radios to *KYW News Radio 1060 AM* or internet users can log on to [www.kyw1060.com](http://www.kyw1060.com) for a complete list of school closings. **IF PHILADELPHIA PUBLIC AND PAROCHIAL SCHOOLS ARE CLOSED OR ARE DISMISSED EARLY DUE TO INCLEMENT WEATHER THEN ALL FAITH FORMATION PROGRAMS WILL BE CANCELLED FOR THE DAY AS WELL.** Notifications of late cancellations due to inclement weather will be provided via KYW's community cancellation bulletins as soon as the decision is made. Be sure and listen to the station throughout the day in the event of a late cancellation. Those families that provided an e-mail address at the time of registration will receive an email notification of the cancellation. These forms of notice will be the *only* notification given for the cancellation of scheduled programs, activities, or events.

In the event of a non-weather related cancellation, we will make every effort to contact families as early as possible via KYW, and e-mail to inform them of the cancellation.

## XVI. COMMUNICATION

(rev. 6/27/10)

### 1. Calendar and Communiqués

Parents are provided with a yearly calendar at the beginning of the program year. *This calendar is subject to change during the course of the year.* Parents will be notified of changes as well as upcoming activities via handouts and flyers sent home in the student's *Communication Folder*. There is also a monthly Newsletter that contains ideas, articles, and reading suggestions for faith enrichment for the entire family. The Newsletter along with an updated monthly calendar will be sent home with students in their *Communication Folders*. In addition, the monthly calendar can also be obtained via our parish website – [www.strichardchurch.org](http://www.strichardchurch.org) by following the links for *Parish Calendar* under **NEWS** in the header of the web page.

### 2. Contact Information

Parents should feel free to contact the program director regarding any concerns or problems that may develop during the course of the year. The program director may be contacted using any of the means listed below:

**Faith Formation Office:** 215-468-4777

**School Office:** 215-467-5430

**E-mail:** [dmueller@strichardchurch.org](mailto:dmueller@strichardchurch.org)

**Website:** [www.strichardchurch.org](http://www.strichardchurch.org)

### Additional Numbers to Know:

**Rectory Phone Number:** 215-468-4777

**Rectory Fax Number:** 215-468-3161

**E-mail:** [parish@strichardchurch.org](mailto:parish@strichardchurch.org)

Direct communication with your child’s catechist is also a necessary component of the catechetical process. Parents are encouraged to meet with their child’s catechist to discuss any concerns or information that will enhance the learning experience. Call the program director to make arrangements to meet or speak with your child’s catechist.

### **3. Updating Contact Information**

The contact information that you provide at the time of registration will be used as the primary means of contacting you. Updating changes to this information is your sole responsibility. In order to receive necessary and vital information pertaining your child’s participation in our programs it is imperative that you notify the program director as to any changes in address, phone numbers, or email.

### **4. Participant Communication Folders**

Every participant will receive a two-pocket *Communication Folder* for weekly assignments and other important papers. Parents should check this folder after each weekly session to view whatever flyers, bulletins, take-home assignments, etc. are being sent home.

## **FINAL NOTE**

The program director reserves the right to amend this handbook. In the event of any such amendment, parents will be given prompt notification of the changes made.