



Saint Clare of Assisi

CATHOLIC CHURCH

2022–2023

Child Formation Handbook

(Grades Pre-K - 5)



Our mission:
***To accompany our children and youth
as they grow into dynamic and visible disciples of
Jesus Christ in the Catholic Church.***

Welcome and Congratulations!

You have made the decision to educate and form your child(ren) in the ways of loving, knowing, and following our Savior Jesus Christ and, in doing so, to become his courageous and visible disciples. You do so through the fullness of the Christian faith - namely, the Catholic Church. As your parish family, we are here to encourage, support, and love you.

This handbook outlines the policies and procedures for our faith formation program for children in Pre-K through Grade 5. If you have questions or concerns, please let us know.

Let us all strive to become saints!

Father West, Pastor & T.J. Cofield, Director of Child Formation

Contact Information: Father West - 843.471.2672, gwest@clare.church
 T.J. Cofield - 843.471.2622, tj@clare.church
 Parish Main Number - 843.471.2121

† Our Hopes and Vision

We believe in a family-led, Christ-centered approach to catechesis.

Our faith teaches that **parents are the primary catechists of their children**. Parents teach not only with their words but more often (and most importantly!) with their attitudes and actions.

Saint John Paul II often referred to the family as “**the domestic Church**” because parents provide a child’s first and primary example of faith. Catholicism in the home should be a joyful way of life rather than an obligation. A family-centered approach deepens the role the domestic church plays in the faith formation of each child, providing opportunities for the entire family to learn, pray, and grow in relationship with Christ.

We are excited to partner with you and support you in the mission of forming your children to be dynamic and visible disciples of Jesus Christ in the Catholic Church!

† Table of Contents

Catechesis of the Good Shepherd	Page 3
First Reconciliation and First Holy Communion	Pages 4 - 6
Clare’s Kids	Page 7
General Policies for all Programs - MUST READ	Pages 7- 11



† Catechesis of the Good Shepherd Level 1 - Ages 3 - 5

Catechesis of the Good Shepherd (“CGS”) is a Montessori-based religious education program. It was derived from the educational philosophy of Dr. Maria Montessori who was a devout Catholic and who dedicated a lifetime to observing the natural development of the child.

As Catholics, we believe that each child has an innate spirituality and a unique relationship with God. In CGS, we give the child a space of his/her own (called “The Atrium”) where he/she is encouraged to foster this relationship through the use of hands-on materials. The child is shown how to “work” (setup and manipulate) the materials. In this way, he/she is not just memorizing information, but truly contemplating the mysteries of our Faith.

2021-2022 Schedule and Location

CGS classes meet weekly in the **Parish Office**. You may choose which class day and time works best for your family, subject to availability, as class sizes are capped to 10 students per session to allow for a truly immersive learning experience.

Sunday Mornings, 10:30 a.m. until 12:00 p.m.

Friday Afternoons, 3:15 until 4:45 p.m.

Attendance

While attendance at CGS is not mandatory, we strongly encourage consistent and regular participation so that our students may gain the most out of their experience.

Sacramental Catch Up

Please contact T.J. Cofield if your student is in CGS and has not yet been baptized.



† First Reconciliation and First Holy Communion Preparation - Grades 1 and 2

Our parish offers a two-year preparation period for all Sacraments. Preparation for First Reconciliation and First Holy Communion generally occurs in **first (1st) and second (2nd) grade**. Year 1 preparation is for **first (1st) grade students in non-Catholic school** and Year 2 is for **second grade students in both Catholic and non-Catholic schools**. If your child is in **third (3rd) through fifth (5th) grade** but still needs to make their First Reconciliation and First Communion, please consider a new formation experience called **C.U.S.P.** (Catch-Up on Sacramental Preparation) More information on C.U.S.P. can be found below!

Non-Catholic School Students

Once per month, the student and at least one parent are required to attend an in-person, large-group session. During the session, our catechists will lead the class in discussion, activities, and other enrichment opportunities to further illustrate and bring to life the topics studied at home.

Beyond monthly in-person formation, parents guide their children in at-home study for 30–45 minutes a week. A complete curriculum is provided to each family. Our catechists are available to answer your questions and can provide guidance and ideas in making this special time with your children enriching. The catechist will provide a schedule of monthly assignments to help your child progress through the preparation.

Providing flexibility for instruction in the home with fewer class sessions is intended to reduce the burden on busy families for whom weekly classes can become more a burden than a joy.

Requirements for Non-Catholic School Students

Monthly Assignments: All assignments assigned for at-home formation must be submitted at the next monthly in-person session. Failure to complete or submit any more than **three (3)** assignments on time will result in the need for the student to repeat the year.

Monthly In-person Sessions: Students and at least one of their parents are required to attend the monthly in-person sessions. A maximum of **two (2)** absences is allowed

per year for any reason. More than two absences will result in the need for the student to repeat the year.

- Missed classes due to travel, vacation, sports, and/or extracurricular activities, even with advanced notice are **not** considered excused and are applied to the two allowed absences.
- Arrival **more than 5 minutes late** is marked as tardy. **Three tardies equal one absence.** If you arrive **more than 15 minutes late**, you are considered **absent**.
- Children are required to attend the **Empowering God's Children: Teaching Safety** course offered by the Diocese on **Sunday, October 16 at 12:00 p.m.** Parents may opt their child out of the class by completing the opt-out waiver in the registration form. Not attending this class **with a completed opt-out** is not counted among the two absences.
- In the event of **injury** or **illness** that may prevent attendance of an in-person session, please contact T.J. Cofield.
- **Rehearsal & Retreat (Year 2 Only):** Retreat & Rehearsal is **mandatory** for **all Year 2 students and at least one parent.** The rehearsal is scheduled for **Saturday, April 29, 2023.**

Catholic School Students

Students receive the sacraments of First Reconciliation and First Holy Communion in their home parish and not in the school they attend. Since much of the catechetical preparation is done in religion classes while in school, second grade students who attend Catholic schools are only required to meet in the large group sessions noted above **four (4) times** during the year.

To ensure that our Catholic School students balance their attendance throughout the year, we recommend that they attend on the following dates: **September 11, November 13, February 12, and April 23.** *However, we strongly encourage all Year 2 Catholic School students to attend as many in-person sessions as they can!* We want every student to make new friends and to gain as much wisdom as possible from their sacramental preparation.

Requirements for Catholic School Students

- **Large Group Sessions:** Catholic School students and at least one parent must attend **at least four (4) monthly in-person sessions** where our catechists will lead the class in discussion, activities, and other enrichment opportunities to deepen the preparation. More than four (4) absences will result in the need for the student to repeat the year.
 - Missed classes due to travel, vacation, sports, and/or extracurricular activities, even with advanced notice, are not considered excused and are applied to the one allowed absence.

- Arrival more than 5 minutes late is marked as tardy. Three tardies equal one absence. If you arrive more than 15 minutes late, you are considered absent.
- In the event of a prolonged illness, please contact T.J. Cofield.
- **Retreat & Rehearsal:** Retreat & Rehearsal is **mandatory** for **all** Year 2 students and at least one parent. The rehearsal is scheduled for **Saturday, April 29, 2023**.

2022-2023 Schedule and Location

All First Holy Communion preparation large group sessions are held in classrooms at **Bishop England High School** on Sunday afternoons from 12:15 to 1:45 p.m. Pizza lunch will be provided!

Non-Catholic School Students Years 1 and 2 Large Group Sessions

September 11, 2022

October 9, 2022

November 13, 2022

December 11, 2022

January 8, 2023

February 12, 2023

March 12, 2023

April 23, 2023 (not the 2nd Sunday due to the date of Easter Sunday)

Recommended Sessions for Catholic School Students to Attend - Year 2

September 11, 2022

November 13, 2022

February 12, 2023

April 23, 2023

First Reconciliation (Year 2 Only): Saturday, February 25, 2023 at 9:45 a.m.

First Holy Communion Retreat & Rehearsal (Year 2 Only):

Saturday, April 29, 2023 - 10:00 a.m.

First Holy Communion Mass (Year 2 Only): Saturday, May 6, 2023 - 10:00 a.m.



† Catch-Up on Sacramental Preparation - Grades 3 - 5

Is your child already in third through fifth grade but still needs to make their First Reconciliation and First Communion? Catch-Up on Sacramental Preparation (or C.U.S.P.) is available to help your family prepare them to receive their sacraments!

C.U.S.P. is a **year-long, small-group experience** that takes our parish's Family Formation philosophy to an even deeper level. ***Every month, at least one parent of each C.U.S.P. student will meet in a small group with the other parents and our catechists for Bible study and conversation.*** At home, parents will lead their children through each month's lesson and activity set at their own pace.

Why focus on teaching parents instead of children? As we have said above, **parents** are the **original** and **primary** catechists for their children. While Saint Clare of Assisi is blessed to have an incredibly talented and dedicated team of volunteer catechists, the parish cannot match the level of time and influence that parents have with their own children. We want to be your partners in preparing your child for life in the Catholic Church! By equipping you to teach your child about their faith in the Lord, we are not just preparing your family for first sacraments; we are preparing you to journey in faith through the rest of your life together!

Students and families who complete all requirements for C.U.S.P. will celebrate their First Reconciliation and First Communion together with the First Communion Year 2 class!

First Reconciliation is scheduled for **Saturday, February 25, 2023**, and First Holy Communion Mass is scheduled for **Saturday, May 6, 2023**.

Participating in C.U.S.P. includes:

- Monthly small-group formation meetings with parents & catechists
- Family formation activities at home with your student
- Community-building events for the entire group to come together and have fun!
- Periodic check-ins with the catechists, student, and parents to see how formation is going and to help you in any way we can

Requirements for Families Participating in C.U.S.P.

Monthly Assignments: All assignments assigned for at-home formation must be submitted at the next monthly in-person session. Failure to complete or submit any more than **three (3)** assignments on time will result in the need for the student to repeat the year.

Monthly In-person Sessions: At least one parent of each C.U.S.P. student is required to attend the monthly in-person sessions. A maximum of **two (2)** absences is allowed per year for any reason. More than two absences will result in the need for the student to repeat the year.

- Missed classes due to travel, vacation, sports, and/or extracurricular activities, even with advanced notice are **not** considered excused and are applied to the two allowed absences.
- In the event of **injury** or **illness** that may prevent attendance of an in-person session, please contact T.J. Cofield.

Periodic Check-Ins: Catechists & leaders will meet with each family twice during the formation year to see how the process is going, answer questions, and equip the family in any way we can to continue growing in faith. ***These two (2) check-ins are mandatory for each family.*** We will discuss the best meeting time for each family to make sure we can accommodate busy schedules!

Children are required to attend the **Empowering God's Children: Teaching Safety** course offered by the Diocese on **Sunday, October 16 at 12:00 p.m.** Parents may opt their child out of the class by completing the waiver section in the registration form. Not attending this class **with a completed opt-out form** is not counted among the two absences.

Rehearsal & Retreat (Year 2 Only): Retreat & Rehearsal is **mandatory** for **all Year 2 students and at least one parent.** The rehearsal is scheduled for **Saturday, April 29, 2023.**



† Clare's Kids - Grades 3 - 5

Clare's Kids is a place of community and faith for elementary school students at Saint Clare of Assisi Parish. Clare's Kids is:

- **Open to students in both Catholic and Non-Catholic schools.**
- **Family-led and Christ-centered!** Children enrolled will be provided at-home faith enrichment and learning opportunities to do as a family.
- **Engaging & dynamic!** Clare's Kids sessions include worship, games, music, prayer, fellowship, fun, and service.
- **Faith, food, and fellowship twice a month!** Clare's Kids will meet twice a month to learn, serve, and spend time with one another as we grow closer to Jesus Christ!

2022-2023 Schedule and Location

Most Clare's Kids Large Group Sessions are held at **Bishop England High School** on the **second and fourth Sundays** of the month from **12:15 to 1:45 p.m.** Pizza lunch will be provided! Clare's Kids students are encouraged to bring their own water bottle.

2022-2023 Clare's Kids Schedule:

September 11
September 25
October 9
October 23
November 13
December 11
January 8
January 22
February 12
February 26
March 12
March 26
April 23

Attendance

While attendance at Clare's Kids is not mandatory, regular attendance is encouraged so that the students may develop deeper relationships with each other and with Jesus, knowing that they are a member of the body of Christ.

General Policies for Faith Formation Programs

† Registration

Registration forms are available at clare.church. Payment is due at the time of registration and can be paid online with the registration form. Baptismal certificates must be on file in the parish office for every child enrolled in Faith Formation. If you have not yet submitted a copy of the certificate, there is a place to upload on the registration form.

† Tuition: 2022-2023

<u>PROGRAM</u>	<u>FEES</u>
Catechesis of the Good Shepherd	\$50 per student
First Communion Year 1 Non-Catholic school students	\$70 per student
First Communion Year 2 Non-Catholic school students	\$85 per student
First Communion Year 2 Catholic school students	\$45 per student
Catch-Up on Sacramental Preparation (3rd-5th grade)	\$85 per student
Clare's Kids	\$70 per student

No child is ever turned away because of a family's financial situation. If you need help with tuition, please contact Father West (gwest@clare.church) in confidence.

† Attendance

Mass: Keep Holy the Sabbath.

Participation in Sunday Mass and on Holy Days is a fundamental and necessary factor in deepening your child's faith and equipping him/her for discipleship. **Parents who sign up their children in our Faith Formation programs commit to living this out as a family, just as they promised God at their child's baptism.**

Refer to the attendance policies for Faith Formation Classes and Clare's Kids in their respective sections.

† Class Arrival and Dismissal

Your children's safety is of the utmost concern to us.

- Parents or designated person(s) must sign students in and out.
- Children will be released only to a parent/guardian or a designated person.
- Please be on time to pick up your children at the end of class. Do not pick your child up before the children are released at the end of class.
- Instructions for entry to the BEHS classrooms will be distributed after registration.

† Communications and Emergency Closings

We use email to communicate important updates. Please check your email's spam folder if you are not receiving our parish bulletin or Faith Formation emails. If we need to cancel Faith Formation classes or Youth Ministry activities for any reason, we will send out an email. We will provide a number for you to call in the case of any emergency during class or large group session times.

† Cell Phones

Cell phone use in the large group sessions and rehearsal is not allowed. Students in our Clare's Kids program are expected to use their cell phones responsibly and respectfully. If the phone becomes a distraction, it will be kept by an adult volunteer and returned at the end of the session.

Any use of social media that speaks negatively about another student, an adult leader, our programs, or our Church could result in disciplinary action. However, we highly encourage our students to use social media as a platform to share their faith and God's love with others.

† Empowering God's Children: Teaching Safety

Every parish in the Diocese of Charleston is required to offer a class on "Empowering God's Children: Teaching Safety" each year to all students. If parents would like to opt out their child from this class, they must complete the [opt-out form online](#) with their registration.

† Expectations of Behavior

In the spirit of love and charity toward one another, and growth in self-discipline, we expect the following from our students:

- Students will be respectful of themselves and others, especially adults. The use of "Yes, Ma'am," "No, Ma'am," "Yes, Sir/Father," and "No, Sir/Father" is expected when speaking to all adults.

- Students will respect the rights of other students to learn and the catechist's responsibility to teach.
- Students will engage and contribute in a positive manner to the learning environment.
- Students will follow the overall class procedures.

If a student displays conduct disruptive to Faith Formation volunteers or another student, the catechist will give the student the opportunity to change the unacceptable behavior. If the unacceptable behavior continues, the student will be asked to confer with the catechist and parents after class.

If the unacceptable behavior persists, the parents will be notified of the need for a conference with the Director of Child Formation and/or the Pastor. Should the unacceptable behavior continue after the conference, the Director of Child Formation and the Pastor may consider expulsion from the program.

† Attire

Students are to maintain a modest appearance. This appearance may be casual, but respectful. No one is to wear short shorts nor revealing shirts. Appropriateness of attire will be determined by an adult leader in consultation with the Director of Child Formation.

† Special Child Custody Situations

It is the responsibility of the custodial parent to provide copies or documents to the parish office related to child custody and restraining orders, if applicable, and to personally make the Director of Child Formation aware of any unique concerns.

† Special Needs & Learning Disabilities

Please share with us if your child has a learning disability or special need so we can best work with your child while they are in our Faith Formation programs. Please feel free to arrange a meeting with T.J. Cofield to discuss how we can help your child excel in their Faith Formation class.

† Role of the Parents in Child Formation

We believe in a family-led, Christ-centered approach to catechesis.

Our faith teaches that **parents** are the primary catechists of their children. Parents teach not only with their words but often (and more importantly!) with their attitudes and actions. Children learn about the world, others, and themselves from the ways their parents approach each of these.

Saint John Paul II often referred to the family as “the domestic Church” because parents provide a child’s first and primary example of faith. Catholicism in the home should be a joyful way of life rather than an obligation. A family-centered approach deepens the role the domestic church plays in the faith formation of each child, providing opportunities for the entire family to learn, pray, and grow in relationship with Christ.

It is your moral obligation to participate in Sunday Mass with your family **every weekend and on Holy Days of Obligation**, to receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation **at least once a year** (for those who are in full communion with the Church), and to engage in your child(ren)’s faith formation programs.

Parents should be good stewards of this parish. Recognizing that everything we have comes from God, parents model by their actions and attitudes a sense of joy and charity, and share their God-given gifts of time, talent, and treasure with the parish community and the community at large. Children will naturally learn to imitate the good example of stewardship put forth by their parents.

We want to partner with you and support you in this mission you have taken on in bringing up your children in the faith. All that we offer in Child Formation is focused on this goal.

† Service Opportunities for Parents

Opportunities for volunteering, both in and out of the classroom are offered each year. Opportunities are listed on the Registration Form. Please contact the T.J. Cofield, Director of Child Formation for more information on any of the opportunities and the time commitment involved. **All adults working with children in our Faith Formation programs MUST have Safe Environment screenings on file with the Parish Office.** If you don’t have your screenings now, no problem, we can get you squared away.

Let’s go!

We are excited to embark on this journey of deepening your child’s faith and developing them into dynamic and visible disciples of Jesus Christ. Your Pastor and Parish Staff are here to support you and we pray for your children daily. **We are excited to see what the Lord will do this year in your child’s life!**

“And so, from the day we heard, we have not ceased to pray for you, asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God.” *-Colossians 1:9-10*