



Saint Clare of Assisi
CATHOLIC CHURCH

2023-2024
Faith Formation
Parent Handbook

Our Mission:

To accompany our students as they grow into dynamic and visible disciples of Jesus Christ in the Catholic Church.

† Welcome and Congratulations!

Your family has made the decision to educate and form your students in the ways of loving, knowing and following our Savior Jesus Christ. You do so through the fullness of the Christian faith that is the Catholic Church. As your parish family, we stand with you to encourage, support and love you. We all want to be pleasing to the Lord and accepting of his holy will. Let us all strive to become saints!

This handbook outlines the policies and procedures for our Children and Youth Formation programs for grades Pre-K through 12. If you have questions or concerns, please let us know.

God's many blessings to you and your loved ones!

Father Gregory West, Pastor

WE'RE
HERE
FOR YOU

† Our Hopes and Vision



Pope Francis prayed that our Church “may be full of joyous, courageous and committed young people who can offer the world new testimonies of holiness.” (Christus Vivit)

We believe that our students have so much to offer the church and the world around us. As a parish community, we are committed to teach, guide, and accompany all our students as they strive for their fullest potential and pursue sainthood. This is something that demands the work of the entire Church, and we must always have our eyes open to encounter Christ in the lives of our students.

† Faith Formation Track

Ages 3-5	Catechesis of the Good Shepherd (CGS)
First Grade	First Holy Communion Year 1
Second Grade	First Holy Communion Year 2
Grades 3-5	Clare's Kids
Grades 6-8	EDGE
Grade 7	Confirmation Prep Year 1
Grade 8	Confirmation Prep Year 2
Grade 9-12	Life Teen
Family	Parish Events including service, prayer, and fellowship.

*** If your student is behind the above schedule on Sacrament Preparation, look into CUSP (Catch Up Sacrament Prep)**

*** Program Information and Calendars are found at clare.church. Continue reading for expectations and policies.**

† Registration

Registration is available online at clare.church. Payment is due at the time of registration and can be paid online. 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, there is a place to upload on the registration form.

† Empowering God’s Children

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 not enrolled in a Catholic School. If parents would like to opt out their child from this class, **please complete** the opt-out form included in their registration. This year’s class will be held on **Sunday, September 17, 12:00-1:00pm**

† Tuition

Tuition for the 2023-2024 school year

Catechesis of the Good Shepherd	\$50 per student
First Communion Year 1	\$70 per student
First Communion Year 2	\$85 per student
First Communion Year 2 Catholic School	\$45 per student
Clare’s Kids	\$85 per student
EDGE Sunday Group	\$85 per student
Confirmation Prep Year 1	\$70 per student
Confirmation Prep Year 1 + EDGE Sunday Group	\$100 per student (\$55 discount)
Confirmation Prep Year 2.....	\$85 per student
Confirmation Prep Year 2 Catholic School	\$45 per student
Life Teen.....	FREE
Catch Up Sacrament Preparation	\$85 per student
Retreats and Events.....	Vary in Price (pay later)

**If financial assistance is needed, please contact the parish office.*

† General Information

To stay up to date on calendars, policies, requirements, and registrations for special events, please refer always to our website: <https://clare.church>

Also, be sure to download our Parish App to see your groups, events, and important messages.

- Text STCLAREAPP to 833.245.5310 to download the app.
- Set up a profile in the app following the prompts.



† Catechesis of the Good Shepherd - Level One (Ages 3 - 5)

2023-2024 Schedule and Location

CGS classes meet weekly in the **Parish Office**. Class size is capped to 8 students to allow for a truly immersive learning experience.

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

Sacramental Catch Up

Please contact T.J. Cofield (tj@clare.church) if your student is in CGS and has not yet been baptized.

† First Reconciliation & First Holy Communion (Grades 1 - 2)

Requirements and Policies found on page 6.

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**.

† Catch-Up on Sacramental Preparation (CUSP) - (3rd - 12th grade)

Requirements and Policies found on page 6.

If your child is in **third (3rd) through twelfth (12th) grade** but still needs to make their First Reconciliation and First Communion, please consider **CUSP** (Catch-Up on Sacramental Preparation).

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

- **Monthly Assignments:** All assignments assigned for at-home formation must be submitted by 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.
- **Family Interviews:** Fernando and T.J. will meet with each family twice during the formation year to see how the process is going, answer questions, and equip the family with the tools needed to continue growing in faith. **These two (2) interviews are mandatory for each family.** We will discuss the best meeting time for each family to make sure we can accommodate busy schedules!

† 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. Clare's Kids is:

- **Open to all students in grades 3-5!**
- **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!

2023-2024 Schedule and Location

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.

† EDGE - Grades 6-8

EDGE is a ministry with middle school students in mind. It's where excitement and faith come together in a place where middle school students grow and mature in the relationship with God. The year includes faith formation classes, social and recreational outings, retreats, camp, and so much more.

2023-2024 Schedule and Location

EDGE 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! EDGE students are encouraged to bring their own water bottle. In addition to our Sunday sessions, all middle school students can look forward to participating in many events planned throughout the year. Our calendar of events can always be found on our parish website: clare.church

† Confirmation Preparation

Requirements and Policies found on page 6.

Confirmation Prep - Year 1 (non-Catholic school students)

Students interested in beginning this journey will be given a personal journal full of prayers, family activities, video links, and reflection pages to write their thoughts and questions. This journal will help each student discover what ignites their faith, and will lead them through prayer and action in the natural setting of their home life. Along with all the home activities, it includes a Mass journal that is to be completed each Sunday to help them engage more in their worship. Finally, students and parents will also be invited to a quarterly discussion to share their experiences in community and receive support along the way. **Journals will be picked up at the parent orientation meeting on August 27, 3:00 p.m. in the PAC.**

Catholic School students are always welcome to participate in our Year 1 program, but are **not required.*

Confirmation Prep - Year 2 (Both Catholic school and non-Catholic school students)

A formal year of Confirmation Prep is given to those students who have completed one year of faith formation through the parish or by being enrolled in a Catholic School the previous year. These sessions are scheduled for 2nd and 4th Sundays from 12:15 to 2:00 p.m. at BEHS in the PAC. Candidates will learn in community and be given opportunities to grow in faith both during the sessions and beyond. Along with their Sunday sessions, they will attend a retreat, complete service projects, and share their own personal testimony.

† Life Teen (Grades 9-12)

Life Teen is for **ALL** High School students of any grade or school, and it's totally **FREE**, so invite your friends! All year we enjoy moments of recreation, social events, prayer, service projects, and so much more. Life Teen is a place where teens enthusiastically share Christ with each other and the world around them. We give young people a chance to lead, while we also support them in their growth. We participate in local, Diocesan, and National events so we can encounter how big and united our Catholic faith is. Life Teen is the perfect place for your teenager.

2023-2024 Schedule and Location

Life Teen Sessions (Life Nights) are held at the **Parish Office** on the **second** and **fourth Sundays** of the month from **5:00 to 7:00 p.m.** Dinner is provided! Our calendar of events can always be found on our parish website: clare.church

† Attendance Policies

Sunday Mass

Weekly participation in Mass 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 program commit to living this out as a family.

All students in Sacrament Prep programs and/or Catholic schools are to check-in at each Sunday Mass and Holy Day of Obligation. We require that each student show a minimum of a 75% attendance rate. Keep in mind how good it is for your child to frequently participate in the Sacramental life of the Church. It is there that we encounter Christ and receive the grace that more perfectly binds us to His heart.

How to check-in:

1. Each member of your household who has a phone is to text **STCLAREAPP** to **833.245.5310** to get a link for downloading the app.
2. Complete the profile section for yourself: first and last names, email address, your mobile number, and your profile picture. Each member of your household is to do the same from their own phones. This will then link your profile to our parish database for your household.
3. Up to two hours before arrival at weekend Mass, please do the following:
 - Open the **MY CLARE** app.
 - Select **EVENTS** from the bottom navigation bar.
 - Then select **EVENT CHECK IN**.
 - **Select all of your household members who are with you at Mass.** The app will generate a barcode that you will scan at our check in stations (iPads) located by the welcome desk. This will record your attendance.
 - Do **not** check-in family members who are absent from Mass.
 - Do **not** check-in and leave immediately after.

CGS, Clare's Kids, EDGE & Life Teen

Unless you are in CUSP, where on-going faith formation is required, there is no penalty for missing CGS, Clare's Kids, EDGE, or Life Teen. However, we strongly encourage consistent and regular participation so that our students may gain the most out of their experience.

Sacrament Years

- **Attendance Policies for ALL Sacrament Prep Programs**
 - Missed classes or an absence at Mass due to travel, vacation, sports, and/or extracurricular activities, even with advanced notice are **not** considered excused and are applied to the number of allowed absences.
 - All students in Sacrament Prep programs and/or Catholic schools are to check-in at each Sunday Mass and Holy Day of Obligation. We require that each candidate show a minimum of a 75% attendance rate.
 - If you arrive to faith formation class **more than 5 minutes late**, you are marked tardy. **Three tardies equal one absence**. If you **arrive more than 15 minutes late or leave more than 15 minutes early**, you are considered **absent**.
 - In the event of **injury** or **illness** that may prevent attendance of an in-person session, please contact T.J. Cofield or Fernando Cartagena
- **First Holy Communion - Year One**
 - 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.
- **First Holy Communion - Year Two**
 - **Non-Catholic School Students:** 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 (2) absences will result in the need for the student to repeat the year.
 - **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.** However, since much of the catechetical preparation is done in religion classes at school, second grade students who attend Catholic schools are required to attend large group sessions **four (4) times** during the year. Students who do not meet the required attendance will result in the need for the student to repeat the year.
 - **ALL: First Communion Rehearsal (Year 2 Only):** First Communion Rehearsal is **mandatory** for **all Year 2 students and at least one parent**. The rehearsal is scheduled for **Saturday, April 28, 2024**.
- **Confirmation - Year One:**
 - **Non-Catholic School:** Students will complete their personal journal and submit journal assignments according to the deadlines. They will attend all in-person sessions with a parent.
 - **Catholic School:** Year One is completed by being enrolled in Catholic school and participating in your theology classes and formation offered by your school. As an option, you may sign up to receive a journal in addition to your attendance in Catholic School.
- **Confirmation - Year Two:**
 - **Non-Catholic School:** Candidates are to attend **at least 10 out of 13 classes**. Of course, attending all classes is how you will get the most out of the experience.
 - **Catholic School:** Candidates are to attend **at least 6 out of 13 classes**. To get the most out of the experience, we encourage you to attend all classes.
 - **All:**
 - **Retreat:** All candidates will complete a retreat to provide a time of deeper reflection and conversion. For any student not able to make the Confirmation Retreat, you may substitute the following:
 - **Diocesan Jr. High Rally (Fall)**
 - **EDGE Middle School Retreat (Winter)**

- **Service:** We believe there should never be a limit to what we give, so we do not require a set number of hours to check off. Instead, we ask our youth to come up with a meaningful act of service they can complete or to regularly plug-in to a parish ministry or our S.O.S. (Service On Saturday) events.
- **Written Testimony:** As written in the Catechism of the Catholic Church, every candidate preparing for Confirmation is asked to profess the Faith. This is completed during the Rite of Confirmation by the renewal of our Baptism Promises. To help make this moment of the Rite more intentional and meaningful, each candidate will be asked to write and present a personal testimony about their own relationship with Christ and the Church.
- **Rehearsal & Mass:** Our **Confirmation Mass will be held at 6:30 PM on Wednesday, April 17, 2024.** Both the Candidate and Sponsor should be present at the rehearsal. More details coming soon.
- **Mystagogy Dinner:** After the Confirmation Mass, we will hold a dinner for the candidates to begin
- **Catch-Up for Sacramental Preparation (CUSP)**
 - **Monthly In-person Sessions:** These meetings are for the parents (students are not required to attend). At least one parent of each CUSP 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.
 - **Family Interviews:** Students and parents will schedule two meetings during the year with Fernando and T.J. to discuss their growth and preparation for receiving their Sacraments.
 - **Ongoing Faith Formation for CUSP:** All CUSP students are required to participate regularly in the Faith Formation program appropriate to their age group.
 - 3rd-5th grade students are required to attend at least 75% of Clare's Kids sessions
 - 6th-8th grade students are required to attend at least 75% of EDGE sessions
 - 9th-12th grade students are required to attend at least 75% Life Teen sessions

† Arrival/Dismissal (Grades pre-K to 8)

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

- Parents or designated persons must sign students in and out for all faith formation classes and events.
- Children will be released only to a parent/guardian or a designated person. If someone different is picking up your child, we must be notified in writing before the class or event begins.
- Please be on time to pick up your children at the end of class or event. **Do not pick your child up before the children are released at the end of class or event.**
- The only open entrance for First Holy Communion, Clare's Kids, EDGE, and Confirmation will be from the parking lot off of Etiwan Park Street across from the Church. We will use the metal gate that leads into the courtyard. **The Commons entrance will remain locked.**

† Communications

Email will be our primary form of communication. Please check your email's spam folder if you are not receiving our parish bulletin or Faith Formation emails. If you unsubscribe, you will no longer receive information from our office.

If we need to cancel Faith Formation classes for any reason, we will send out an email.

As a secondary form of communication, we will use our parish app to send text messages to parents and teens with updates and announcements.

Updating your communication settings on your parish profile:

- Parents can update their personal and teen communication preferences and privacy settings. Instructions can be found on our website. If you would like to receive instructions by email, please let us know.
- All text messages sent from the parish are one way communication. This protects the privacy of all our members and maintains the safety for all our young people receiving these messages.

† Cell Phones

Students in EDGE, Confirmation, and Life Teen 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.

† Expectations of Behavior

We work hard to teach our students to live, learn, speak, and behave in ways that glorify the Lord. We are a community based on the shared acceptance of the message of Jesus Christ. 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," and "No, Sir" is expected.
- Students will respect the rights of other students to learn and the catechist's responsibility to teach.
- Students will 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 his/her 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 continues during another Faith Formation class, the parents will be notified of the need for a conference with the Director of Child or Youth Formation. Should the unacceptable behavior continue after the conference, the student will be readmitted to class only with a parent joining them until such time as the unacceptable behavior stops.

† Attire

Students are to dress appropriately and modestly. This appearance may be casual, but respectful. Appropriateness of attire will be determined by an adult leader in consultation with the Director of Youth 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. Please make the Director of Child Formation or Director of Youth Ministry aware of any unique concerns related to child custody situations.

† Special Needs & Learning Disabilities

We highly encourage you to share with us if your child has a learning disability or special need so we can best help your child learn while they are in our Faith Formation programs. Please feel free to arrange a meeting with the Director of Youth and/or Child Formation to discuss how we can help your child excel in their Faith Formation class.

† Role of the Parents in Youth Formation

The parish alone cannot teach your children everything they need to become disciples of Christ.

Our faith teaches that **parents are the primary catechists to their children**. Parents teach not only with their words but often, more importantly, with their attitudes and actions. Children learn about the world, others, and themselves from the ways their parents approach each of these. Recently, a study conducted by the National Study on Youth and Religion found that **the majority of teenagers named their parents as their number one spiritual influence**.

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. In a home such as this, Catholicism is seen as a way of life which pervades all moments of one’s day rather than an obligation to be fit into one’s weekend schedule.

When parents present their children to be baptized, the priest or deacon asks if they understand the responsibility they have.

“You have asked to have your child baptized. In doing so you are accepting the responsibility of training them in the practice of the faith. It will be your duty to bring them up to keep God’s commandments as Christ taught us, by loving God and our neighbor. Do you clearly understand what you are undertaking?” The parents answer, “Yes.”

This means that parents **promise** to bring their children to Mass each and every weekend as well as every Holy Day. They **promise** to nourish their children in the faith of the Catholic Church through faith formation and the Sacraments.

This Baptismal promise also implies that parents will go as a family to the Sacrament of Reconciliation at least once a year.

Parents also promise **to be good stewards of this parish**. They will model by their actions and attitudes a sense of joy and charity about sharing their God-given gifts—time, talent, and treasure with the parish community and the community at large. Recognizing that everything we have comes from God, parents understand that we are but stewards (caretakers) of these gifts and our ultimate responsibility is to share them with others. Children will naturally learn this joy of sharing as their parents model for them the importance of stewardship.

We want to partner with you in this AMAZING mission!

† Service Opportunities for Parents

Opportunities for service, both in the classroom and outside of it, will be offered each year. Look for those opportunities within each program and in other parish announcements.

We are excited to see what the Lord will do in your student’s life this year!

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, so as 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