



## **Saint Luke Religious Formation Parent Handbook of Policy & Procedure**

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Parish web site: [stlukewestport.com](http://stlukewestport.com)**

### **Office Hours: during the school year**

<b>Mondays</b>	<b>9:00 AM to 7:00 PM</b>
<b>Tuesdays</b>	<b>9:00 AM to 4:00 PM</b>
<b>Wednesdays</b>	<b>Closed</b>
<b>Thursdays</b>	<b>8:30 AM to 3:30 PM</b>
<b>Fridays</b>	<b>8:30 AM to 3:30 PM</b>
<b>Sundays</b>	<b>8:30 AM to 12:30 PM</b>

**Summer hours: as advertised**

## Saint Luke Faith Formation Parent Handbook of Policy and Procedure

**Welcome to Saint Luke Parish Religious Formation!** The purpose of this program is to assist parents in the religious education of their children. The home remains, as it always has been, the first and foremost source of the religious education of children. It is here that prayers are learned and that patterns and habits of church attendance are begun and cultivated. The home is the church in miniature, a community of God's people.

In our School of Religion, the parish seeks to build on the foundation of faith, which you have already laid, and to offer a sense of community into which you had your child baptized.

The goal of Religious Formation is to deepen and nurture the faith of the Body of Christ. The staff of our School of Religion will support you in fostering a deeper understanding and appreciation of faith, which binds us together in the one Body of Christ.

We seriously take our responsibility to keep your children safe. It is important that parents recognize that, in order to achieve this mutual goal, we rely on parents to support these policies, to help us improve upon them, and to follow a simple principle: what is acceptable and expected in your child's public school generally applies to our School of Religion as well.

We ask that you read this Parent Handbook, cover to cover. Let's work together and make this year and every year rewarding and fulfilling for the children of Saint Luke. God bless your family.

1. Attendance: Students are expected to attend all scheduled classes, including sacramental preparation and special functions. Families are expected to attend faithfully both Sunday and Holy Day liturgies and the sacrament of Reconciliation.
2. Absence: If a student is going to miss a class, a parent should call the Religious Formation office, so that we can excuse your child. If the absence is prolonged, a parent should see the teacher for make-up work. Students in all classes should not have any more than three absences per year, whether excused or unexcused. A reminder notice will be sent home, when a student reaches 3 absences before the end of the year.
3. Arrival and Dismissal: Students should arrive on time. We kindly ask parents to refrain from looking through classroom windows during class time. This could be a frightening situation for a child who would not recognize that person.
  - A) ARRIVAL/DISMISSAL: SUNDAY CLASSES
    - Elementary level students in grades K-6 should be dropped off at Hall Monitor Station where they will lineup outside classroom door at 10:15 AM to be met by teacher. Parents should pick up their children from the classroom at 11:15 AM.
    - Secondary level students in grades 7-8 may go directly to classrooms at 10:15 AM to be met by

teacher. Parents should pick up their children from the classroom or parking lot at 11:15 AM.

B. ARRIVAL/DISMISSAL: MONDAY CLASSES

- Elementary level students, grades K-6, should be dropped off at Hall Monitor Station where they will lineup outside classroom door at 4:00 PM to be met by teacher. Parents should pick up their children from the classroom at 5:00 PM.
- Students in grades 7-8 should go directly to classroom to be met by teacher at 6:00 PM. Parents should pick up their children from the classroom or parking lot at 7:00 PM.

**WALKERS:** Students who walk home should have a note from a parent filed with the office.

**EARLY DISMISSAL:** Students may be dismissed early only with a written note from a parent. This note must include the reason and time of dismissal and the specific name of the person to whom the child will be dismissed. If a parent does not provide a note, he/she must sign the teacher's attendance sheet, noting the date and time of early dismissal. **During class time, see the CRE or secretary for Student release. The hall monitor or the CRE/secretary will obtain your child from the classroom.**

Parents should exercise courtesy and make all efforts to be on time for dismissal. They should also keep phone lines open, in case the office is trying to contact them during class time. Parents **MUST** list the name of the emergency contact on the registration form. Be sure this person is available during class time. Only those adults listed on your registration form may drive your child home.

B. Parking: All drivers picking up children must park only in designated spaces. Please do not park or stand on Turkey Hill Road. We ask that you observe traffic patterns. Additional Parking Lot on Long Lots Road.

4. Attire: Students should dress casually but respectfully at all times. Scant clothing or items of clothing that express stances contrary to Church doctrine will not be allowed. Hats, audio and sports equipment and spiked shoes must be removed upon entrance. Sports uniforms may be worn. Cell phones are permitted, with the permission of the parent, but they must be turned off during class time. Sneakers with wheels and spiked shoes are not allowed.
5. Calendar: All classes generally begin on the second or third Sunday in September, called Catechetical Sunday, and staff is commissioned during the masses. Sacramental preparation classes end later than other classes, until reception of the sacrament. Parents should always check the office, parish bulletin or parish website: [stlukewestport.com](http://stlukewestport.com)  
Our calendar follows the school year, September through April/May, and takes into consideration public school vacations, liturgical celebrations and special functions. Our calendar for the year is posted on the Saint Luke Parish website.
6. Cancellations: Classes are canceled when Westport public schools are closed, even for early dismissal, usually due to inclement weather. Announcements are made on (television) News 12 Connecticut, WFSB Channel 3, and on the Religious Formation office phone. All families in the program will also be notified by email to report cancellation.

7. Catholic School Students: Confirmation students in local Catholic schools, registered as St. Luke parishioners, may receive the sacraments through our program. Students must attend all classes and functions. Catholic school families are urged to contact the Religious Formation office before classes begin.
8. Child Abuse: Our staff are mandated reporters of child abuse and will inform the Pastor and the CRE when abuse is suspected or children report it. All teachers, substitutes, hall monitors, youth ministers and adjunct staff, including our volunteer parents, must participate in the diocesan-sponsored program on this subject. Our Religious Formation program follows instructions and mandates of the diocesan **Office for Safe Environments**, which has been created by the bishop to set policy and oversee programs that create a safe environment for children. SEE “SAFE ENVIRONMENTS”
9. Christian Witness Award: Teachers may distribute the Christian Witness Award to elementary students, as a means of encouraging good behavior. Learning prayers, doing well on tests, displaying exemplary service, and helping in the classroom are just some of the discretionary reasons teachers have for rewarding their class for being a witness of Christ.
10. Communication: Staff communicates with parents in many ways, including letters, emails, take-home notices, phone calls and the weekly parish bulletin. The CRE has an e-mail address: [stluke-reo@optonline.net](mailto:stluke-reo@optonline.net). For drop-off and pick-up, a small mailbox is located on the door outside the Religious Formation office. **Parents should inform the**

**office of any changes of address, phone, pertinent family situations, medical conditions, and special needs. They should check with their child each week for staff notices and handouts.** The CRE is responsible for all aspects of the program, and parents are kindly asked to keep in contact with the office. Parents should make an appointment with teachers and the CRE, if the information is confidential or requires excess discussion time.

11. Conduct and Disciplinary Policy: Students are expected to exhibit a Christian attitude in word and deed at all times, whether attending a church-sponsored function, on or off church grounds. Any conduct that is detrimental to the reputation of the parish is grounds for disciplinary action. Unkind, demeaning, or harassing behavior, inappropriate physical contact, foul language, disrespect of any kind towards persons or property and other inappropriate conduct will warrant a phone call to a parent. All disciplinary action is age-appropriate. For minor to moderate infractions, a three-step disciplinary policy will be enacted. First offense, the student will be removed from class, write a letter of apology that explains the reason for disciplinary action, and, if appropriate, will be given make-up for the missed class. This letter is sent home to parents. Second offense, the CRE will schedule a meeting with the parent and student to determine the best course of action. In this case, parents may be asked to attend classes with their child. Third offense, the student will be removed from class for a specified time and expected to complete at-home assignments. The Pastor will become involved, if the student continues to misbehave. For major infractions, a “severe action” disciplinary policy will be enacted, resulting in temporary or permanent dismissal. The student will be detained, and the Pastor,

parents and authorities will be contacted immediately if a student possesses drugs, alcohol, cigarettes or a dangerous object.

Any student facing suspension or dismissal has the right to refute the decision and will be given the opportunity to do so before the Pastor and the Religious Formation Board.

All parents are encouraged to assist and support the staff in disciplinary matters by discussing ways to avoid problems that their child might be experiencing in the classroom.

Our guiding principle is the desire to act in a Christian manner and the application of Christian fairness and compassion.

- 12. Confidentiality: The Religious Formation staff will respect a family's right to confidentiality.
- 13. Drivers: When taking students on a parish-sponsored trip, chaperones and drivers must comply with Safe Environments policies by being Virtus trained (completion of a child abuse training session) and background checked. Catholic Mutual Insurance requires that drivers have liability and collision insurance. We will use a bus when transporting groups. Children/teens may not be driven on parish-sponsored trips in a car that is not operated by their own parent, even if there is a written permission slip from a parent. However, carpooling to and from Religious Formation classes is permitted as it is the choice of the parents. ANYONE who drives a child, other than the parent, must be listed on the registration form as a driver approved by the parent.
- 14. Emergency Procedures  
Medical. A simple First-Aid kit is on site. Teachers will not be responsible for changing a large bandage. Should a

child become ill or impaired during class time a parent will be contacted after simple emergency first-aid procedures are taken. In extreme cases, 911 and parents will be called. Students with severe, chronic or life threatening illness are allowed to bring prescription-only medication in its original container. No medication will be dispensed without written permission and specific instructions from a parent. The medical emergency situation must be noted on the registration form; the classroom teacher will be informed.

Building. The student body practices fire drills and evacuation procedures each year.

- 15. Family Masses: Mandatory for all grades K-8. (October through May) 9:00 AM (First Sunday of the month)

Hosted by:	Month:
Grade 8	October
Grade 7	November
Grade 6	December
Grade 5	January
Grade 4	February
Grade 3	March
Grade 8	April
Grade 2	May
- 16. First Class: For notification of the first day, check the parish bulletin and web site: [stlukewestport.com](http://stlukewestport.com) On the first day, an "Introduction to the School Year" meeting and family blessing are scheduled for all students and their parents. Calendars and a parent handbook will be distributed, and policies will be reviewed.

17. Home Study: Home study programs are allowed only when a family can demonstrate a family emergency or hardship and their students cannot attend weekly classes. “Emergency” is defined as: a change in the family dynamic, an immediate family member who is seriously ill, a child who already receives home school, and a child with needs that our program cannot provide. Unless this emergency exists, home study programs are not allowed during sacramental preparation.
18. Liturgy of the Word for Children: Each week, following opening prayer, children are dismissed with their teacher from the 9 AM Mass and 11 AM Mass, and they attend a special 20-minute class in the Community Room or St. Cecilia. Children hear the same readings of the day, but in a language suited to their understanding. They rejoin their family at Mass during the Presentation of the Gifts. Young people of all ages are invited to take part in this special liturgy; however, children under 4 must be accompanied by an adult or older sibling. Each week children will take a pamphlet home to discuss with their family. There is no registration fee.  
SEE “PROGRAM ADDENDUM”
19. Materials and Supplies: The registration fee includes all supplies and materials. Each teacher has the option of keeping student textbooks in their room or sending the books home. If textbooks go home and students do not bring them for two consecutive weeks, the parent will be contacted and the student may not be allowed in class until the parent brings the book. If the textbooks go home, parents are responsible for proper maintenance.
20. Missed Years: If a student has missed a year or more of

Religious Formation, he/she could attend a one-year Transition class. These classes are scheduled at the convenience of the teacher. At times it could be necessary to allow the student to simply “drop down” one grade. Each situation is different and the course of action is determined by the CRE, in consultation with parents. There are two Transition textbooks: *One Faith, One Lord* is published for middle school and adolescents, and *Our Catholic Faith* is published for elementary students. Upon completion, students may progress to the next grade level the following September.

21. Monitors: When they are available, adult hall monitors assist the teaching staff by supervising student activity 15 minutes before, during and immediately after elementary and middle school classes. A monitor’s station is situated at a desk at the entrance of the main classroom hallway. A Visitor’s Log is placed at the Monitor’s Station and student visitors must sign and date it.  
SEE “VISITATIONS”
22. Off-Site Activities: Permission slips, issued by the office, must be completed by a parent or guardian for any off-site activity. No student will be allowed to participate without this form. SEE “SAFE ENVIRONMENTS” and “DRIVERS”
23. Parent Involvement: According to the Second Vatican Council, parents are the primary religious educators of their children. Our program assists parents in their important task of faith formation. Parents may participate in the program by teaching, substituting,

chaperoning a retreat or off-site activity, acting as table leaders for middle school and Confirmation classes, providing baked goods, contacting other parents, serving as hall monitors, overseeing service projects, or assisting with special projects. Volunteer parents must comply with Safe Environments policies by attending a child abuse training session and submitting to a criminal background check. See the CRE.

**The success of our program depends upon the volunteer time of our parents. Please utilize the Volunteer Form and let us know how you are able to help.**

24. Proficiency: All efforts will be made to help a student successfully complete all program requirements. Any student who does not demonstrate grade level proficiency and/or fulfill all obligations will be referred to the CRE. A meeting with a parent will be scheduled and a plan of action will be devised. All teachers may assign make-up for any missed work. Teachers have the option of giving homework. For tests, students are given sufficient notice. **Grade 8 Confirmation students prepare for a final written exam given prior to the sacrament of Confirmation. The sacrament could be delayed with insufficient preparation. By the first grade, all children should learn the three basic prayers (Hail Mary, Our Father, and Glory Be). By grade two they should know the Act of Contrition. By the fourth grade, students should know the Apostles' Creed. Parents are expected to support the teaching staff by reinforcing these prayers at home.**

25. Program Overview: Our Religious Formation program

begins with an optional program, Liturgy of the Word for Children. Our program formally begins with kindergarten and concludes with the sacrament of Confirmation in the spring of grade eight, providing all requirements are met. Students in grade 2 receive First Reconciliation and First Eucharist. Confirmation is a two-year preparation, beginning in grade seven. Vacation Bible Camp is offered during the summer, depending on the availability of a teacher. A post-Confirmation Youth Ministry program is available. All grade levels are encouraged to perform service for the community or parish. SEE "PROGRAM ADDENDUM"

26. Records: Registration forms include confidential information and their contents are released only for appropriate program-related reasons. St. Luke voluntarily complies with the provisions of the Buckley Amendment. **Non-custodial parents will be given access to unofficial copies of student records, and catechists will be available to discuss the student's progress, unless a court order requesting otherwise is filed in the office.** It is the responsibility of the custodial parent to provide the office with the official copy of the court order or the custody section of a divorce decree. We cannot be held responsible for failing to honor arrangements that have not been made known.
27. Registration: Registration takes place on a yearly basis, primarily for the purpose of updating information. Forms must be submitted for all classes. Registration is done on-line through our parish website. All new families MUST submit a copy of their child's baptism certificate and any other relevant sacrament certificates. There are 4 primary registration forms: the family form, a student form for

EACH student, a volunteer form for parents and program charges. Religious Formation families should be registered parishioners of St. Luke, and this requires a parish registration form from the Rectory. PLEASE NOTE ANY ADVERTISED DEADLINES. Students who register on the first day must wait until the following week to attend class; any later, they will be marked absent, until make-up is complete. No child is refused admittance to the program due to financial hardship; special arrangements can be made with the Pastor. If a parent has a specific request for class day or class placement in the elementary grades, it must be noted on the registration form and the form must be received before the advertised deadline.

28. Religious Formation Board (Parent-Catechist Advisory Board or PCAB): The Pastor appoints a group of parishioners to assist the Coordinator of Religious Formation in establishing and implementing policy. They may call parents and students for appointments to assess student proficiency, and parents may address this group by appointment. Call the Religious Formation office or email at: [stluke-pcab@optonline.net](mailto:stluke-pcab@optonline.net).
29. Rosters: Classes are capped at 15-20 students. There must be a minimum of 5 students, in order to establish a class.
30. Sacramental Preparation: Children in grade 2 prepare for and receive the sacrament of First Penance (Confession) in the fall and the sacrament of First Eucharist in the spring. The child must complete grade one, worship weekly at Sunday Mass and produce proof of baptism. Level One Confirmation begins in grade 7; Level Two is offered in grade 8 and the sacrament is received in grade 8. Confirmation candidates must produce all relevant

sacrament certificates and successfully complete requirements set by the Diocese and St. Luke Church. Mandatory sacramental preparation meetings, which involve the students, their parents and/or Confirmation sponsors, are separate from class and take place during the year at designated times. Parents must call the office when they are unable to attend these meetings and are responsible for obtaining missed information. All sacramental preparation programs require rehearsals.  
SEE 'PROGRAM ADDENDUM'

- B. RCIA for Children: Students who have not received the Sacraments of Initiation (Baptism, Eucharist and Confirmation) and/or First Penance at the customary age may receive instruction for the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults for Children. The sacrament is received when the student is ready. Students 16 years or older who need the sacraments could be referred to RCIA (adult sacrament preparation), which is led by Sister Maureen Fleming.  
SEE "PROGRAM ADDENDUM"
31. Safe Environments: This term refers to the environments that are created and maintained in an effort to provide children, young people, ministers and other people with the safest possible place in which to minister, study and work. The bishop has established the Office for Safe Environments for this purpose. All parents are invited to attend the child abuse seminars, and all volunteers and church employees must abide by its policies.
32. Snacks: Unless your child has a medical excuse, such as the need for orange juice for a diabetic, no student will be allowed to bring food or drink to class. We do not have

parties in the classrooms. Students are not allowed to chew gum. Food may be consumed only in the community room.

**Parents are urged to utilize the registration form to make teachers aware of any food allergies. The staff has been instructed not to distribute any type of peanut, which can cause harm, even death, if a child is allergic.**

33. Special Needs: As Christians we recognize the uniqueness of God's children. If a parent voluntarily identifies a child as having special needs, medical or educational, the teacher will be confidentially informed and a meeting with the CRE will determine the ways that the teacher can best help the student. Some arrangements include placing the child close to the blackboard and giving oral, not written, tests. If the special needs child is not able to attend class, instruction can be facilitated by a home study program, the CRE, or a certified special education teacher in the parish, if available.
34. Staff: Our teaching staff consists of volunteers who are knowledgeable in the faith, at least 18 years old and confirmed in the faith. Those under 18 serve as aides. They attend workshops and meetings for professional development and instruction in Church and civil law. All staff complies with Safe Environments policies. Support staff includes substitutes, aides, buddy teachers (two in a classroom), hall monitors, and retreat staff.
35. Transfer Students: Students who transfer from other parishes must provide proof of baptism. The CRE may request other information, such as attendance records.
36. Transition: Students who miss one or more years of religious education must attend a Transition class.

SEE "MISSED YEARS"

37. Vacation (Summer) Bible Camp: This program is offered to children, and the schedule depends on the head teacher or the CRE. Confirmation students and volunteer parents assist. The curriculum varies each year and permission slips are required.
38. Visitation: All visitors, including parents, should report to the Religious Formation office upon entering the building, once class has begun. **Please do not go directly to a class.** Proper identification must be produced. Parents or student visitors who stay for the duration of class must sign a Visitor's Log at the monitor's station or office. This Log is used for emergency evacuation. Parents may see the teacher after class, but prolonged discussions should offer the courtesy of an appointment. Appointments with the CRE may be made at any time during office hours.
39. Youth Ministry: There is a post-Confirmation Youth Ministry Program. A Youth Mass takes place each Sunday at 5:30 PM. Service opportunities take place as scheduled. Contact our Youth Minister, Deb Toner, at 203-222-0205 or email at [SLYGroup@optonline.net](mailto:SLYGroup@optonline.net) "The Pastor, Religious Formation Board, and the CRE reserve the right to amend the handbook for just cause."

## **Program Addendum**

### Liturgy of the Word for Children

1. Ages 4 and up (under 4 must be accompanied by an adult or older sibling)
2. Take-home: *Explaining God's Word* by Liguori
3. Class time: Dismissed from the 9 AM and 11 AM Masses throughout the year and they are returned to the parents at Mass.

### Kindergarten

1. Text: "God Loves Us" by Loyola Press
2. Class time: Choice of  
Sundays: 10:15 AM – 11:15 AM  
Mondays: 4:00 PM – 5:00 PM

### Grades 1-5

1. Text: "*Finding God*" by Loyola Press
2. Class time: Choice of  
Sundays: 10:15 AM - 11:15 AM  
Mondays: 4:00 PM - 5:00 PM

### Grade 6

1. Text: "*Finding God*" by Loyola Press
2. Class time: Choice of  
Sundays: 10:15 AM – 11:15 AM  
Mondays: 4:00 PM – 5:00 PM

### Grade 7

1. Text: "*Finding God*" by Loyola Press
2. Class time: Choice of  
Sundays: 10:15 AM – 11:15 AM  
Mondays: 6:00 PM – 7:00 PM

### Sacramental Preparation

#### Grade 2: First Reconciliation and First Eucharist

1. Text: "*God's Gift Reconciliation and God's Gift Eucharist*" by Loyola Press
2. Class time: Choice of  
Sundays: 10:15 AM – 11:15 AM  
Mondays: 4:00 PM - 5:00 PM

There are mandatory parent-child meetings and rehearsals. First Reconciliation is received in December, and First Eucharist is received in the spring, April or May.

#### Grade 7, Level One Confirmation

1. Read book/Thrift Store Saints & Report
2. Research a Saint & Project
3. Service: a joint project and 5 additional hours to the Community or Church.

Grade 8, Level Two Confirmation

1. Text & Short Films: “*Decision Point*”  
by *Dynamic Catholic*

Level Two, Grade 8 includes:

- a) petition to be Confirmed
- b) first Sunday of each month attend 9:00 am  
Family Mass
- c) candidate and sponsor spending time sharing  
faith
- d) service: joint service projects and 5 additional  
hours for the community or church;
- e) participation in retreat and workshop
- f) a final written Confirmation exam

Confirmation requires that each candidate must:

- a) express a desire to be confirmed;
- b) faithfully attend weekend and Holy Day liturgies  
and the sacrament of Reconciliation;
- c) attend Eucharistic Adoration;
- d) continue to be an active member of the parish after  
Confirmation.

