

Parent Handbook
St. Elizabeth Church
Parish Religious Education Program (PREP)
2017-2018



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Mission Statement

The Parish Religious Education Program (PREP) of St. Elizabeth Church
Seeks to provide our Parish Families,
Adults, Youth, and Children,
With the information, skills, and experiences
encouraging **life-long** spiritual growth and development.

In keeping with their age and maturity,
All will assume responsibility as active members
Of Our Parish Community
And constantly seek an ongoing relationship with Jesus
And further God's Kingdom on Earth.

Welcome to St. Elizabeth Parish Religious Education Program (PREP)

The opening prayer of the Rite of Baptism begins with the following words:

*In doing so (asking for your child to be baptized) you are accepting the
responsibility of training her (him) in the practice of the faith.*

*It will be your duty to bring her (him) up to keep God's commandments
as Christ taught us, by loving God and our neighbor.*

Do you clearly understand what you are undertaking?

Parents' response is:.....We do!!

With this pledge in prayer, parents accept the responsibility as primary educators of their children. Therefore, it is the responsibility of the parents and by extension, the entire family, to raise your child in the Faith. Our Parish Religious Education Program (PREP) is here to support you in your ministry to your children. It is *our duty and privilege* to walk with you and your children on your life-long faith journey in this foundational responsibility of parenthood.

Our brothers and sisters of the Old Testament were taught the *Shema*, the great prayer reminding us of who we are and who God is.

Hear, O Israel! The Lord is our God, the Lord alone!

***Therefore, you shall love the Lord, your God, with all your heart,
and with your whole being, and with your whole strength.***

Take to heart these words which I command you today.

Keep repeating them to your children.

*Recite them when you are at home and when you are away,
when you lie down and when you get up.*

Bind them on your arm as a sign and let them be as a pendant on your forehead.

Write them on the doorposts of your houses and on your gates.

Deuteronomy 6: 4-9 (NABRE)

Overview and Introduction

This PREP Parent Handbook is designed to provide our families with an overview of our Program. All policies and guidelines listed follow the guidelines and policies for religious education and catechesis as established by the Diocese of Columbus, Office of Religious Education and Catechesis. For a more detailed study of Diocesan policies and guidelines, please visit <http://education.coldsdioc.org/ReligiousEducation/AdministrationPolicies.aspx>.

Class availability is affected directly by the number of volunteers who work as classroom catechists and aides and have successfully completed the requirements of the State of Ohio and the Diocese of Columbus by being fingerprinted, having a background check done by the Bureau of Criminal Investigation (BCI), and attending an awareness session entitled Protecting God's Children (PGC). The PGC session provides each volunteer with the knowledge and awareness tools to protect children against any sexual abuser. **It is also a policy of our Parish and the Diocese to follow the "2-deep" policy of having two (2) adults present in each classroom whenever possible.** We strive to provide the safest possible environment for all of our children and youth participating in our programs.

Class availability and scheduling is also determined by enrollment as well as the number of available volunteers. As we have limited classroom/meeting rooms and sizes, if enrollment exceeds the available space, the Pastor and his delegate, the Director of Religious Education, reserve the right to amend the schedule to best meet the needs of our students and the space and schedule of the parish community as a whole.

With this stated, it is vital to our program for you to prayerfully consider sharing your faith journey with the children and youth of our parish family as a PREP Volunteer, or to be available during our sessions to assist by monitoring the facilities or sitting in on a class. *Regular volunteers* are eligible for a PREP tuition discount at the discretion of the Director or the Pastor. Additional information can be found on the PREP Volunteer Registration Form.

For those families who have extraordinary circumstances, a Home School option can be discussed with the Director on a case by case basis.

This handbook provides you with the policies and guidelines you need to follow so that we can accomplish our goals of providing a safe environment, quality religious education and faith formation experiences, community expression of faith, as well as the necessary practices used to keep our sessions running smoothly.

With you and your student(s) commitment, and the commitment of the volunteers and staff, we will work together to provide the families of St. Elizabeth Church with an enriching environment for life-long growth in our Catholic faith.

Policies Grades K-8

Registration

There is a Family Registration Form for each family. A Student Registration Form is now required for each student as additional information is now required, such as medical needs, allergies, or special needs. In addition, there is a PREP Volunteer Application for those interested in sharing their faith with the youth of the parish. PLEASE REGISTER PROMPTLY.

Attendance

All PREP Classes K-8 will meet on Sunday mornings between the Masses (approx. 10:00-11:00am). Additional sessions for Sacramental Preparation (First Reconciliation, First Eucharist, and Confirmation) could be added and are at the discretion of the Pastor or Director of Religious Education to meet the needs of the students or the parish. Any additional dates and times will be announced in advance of the date as early as possible.

While the scheduled class time is 10-11am on Sundays, we understand many of you will be attending 9am Mass while others will be attending 11am Mass. We will do our best to accommodate your family's needs for regular, active participation in the Parish Liturgies. Therefore, **class dismissal will actually be at approximately 10:50-10:55am**. Pastors' Hall or other space is available for you to wait comfortably while your students are in their respective session(s). If you leave the premises during PREP, we ask that we have current emergency contact information and that you return by 10:45-10:50am for dismissal. Regular attendance is crucial and excessive absences and tardiness can affect your student(s) faith development as well as be disruptive to the class.

If your student(s) is absent for any scheduled session, please contact the Religious Education Office by phone (614.891.0150 x18) or email (stelizabethreled@sbcglobal.net) to notify us of date and reason for absence. All absences (excused or unexcused) are to be made up by completing the work covered in class and any homework assignments with the guidance of a parent or guardian. With our PREP Family mailboxes, as well as your cooperation, communication can be maintained between classroom catechists and you via mailbox, phone, or e-mail regarding missed lessons or other comments and concerns regarding your student(s) progress.

The IDEAL attendance would be 100%, however we understand that every family has emergencies arise and illnesses occur. Any attendance percentage below 75% raises great concerns with us on your commitment to your parental responsibility and could prevent your child from being eligible to receive sacraments. Maintaining proactive communications with the classroom catechist (teacher) and the Director of Religious Education is essential!

Along with regular attendance at PREP Sessions, regular weekly Mass attendance and the actual and conscious participation in the Liturgy and Life of the Parish are necessary and required to your family's faith formation. On an average, we are with your student(s) for only 35-45 hours per year. YOUR participation in Parish Life and Liturgies, as well as the example you provide at home through family life and prayer provides the foundation necessary for our sessions to fulfill our goal of life-long faith formation.

Arrival / Dismissal and Security/Parking

ALL students ***MUST be escorted into and out of the building.*** Please park in the parking lot and escort your student(s) into the facility and their classroom(s) – NO PARKING in the fire lane in front of the main entrance or in the West Parking Lot Turnaround is allowed. Do not drop your student(s) from the fire lane and they will not be released from the building without adult supervision. *Students are not allowed to leave the building to look for you in the parking lot. This policy is for the safety of the students.*

If there is no catechist present when you arrive, PLEASE stay with your student(s) until one arrives or another adult is present. If no other adult is present, please wait with your student(s) in the corridor outside the classrooms or in Pastors' Hall. No student(s) are to be alone in any classroom.

Late arrivals and /or early dismissals require appropriate sign-in/sign-out procedures as well as notification to the classroom catechist and Religious Education Office. If your student is actively involved in liturgical ministries, such as altar server, please communicate that with the classroom catechist to minimize classroom disruption and allow for sufficient time for the student to finish liturgical responsibilities at the 9am Mass or to prepare themselves for the 11am Mass.

Parking is available in the main parking area near the main entrance, or in the West Parking Lot. You may enter the building through the main, west, or north entrances. In rare occasions for events not occurring on Sunday mornings, for the safety and security of the students, limited entry points might be announced.

Included in the Student Registration Form is information pertaining to providing us with information on authorized adults that might be transporting your student(s).

Inclement Weather /PREP Session Cancellation

In the event of inclement weather (i.e. snow day) or other emergency (i.e. gas leak, power outage), a PREP session may be cancelled. With our Sunday mornings schedule we will most likely eliminate the need for session cancellations, however the following diocesan guideline does apply:

As St. Elizabeth Church exists within the boundaries of the Columbus Public School District, our policy in the event of inclement weather is if Columbus Public Schools are closed, our PREP session will be cancelled. This policy is also at the discretion of the Pastor and Director. If in doubt, contact the Religious Education Office.

Regarding winter Snow Emergencies as declared by County, we understand that many of our families live outside of Franklin County. Please follow local law enforcement guidelines. Your family's safety and security is paramount and families should make the best decision for your particular situation.

Every effort will be made by PREP and/or Parish Staff to contact you by email, text message, and/or phone in the event of a cancellation. It is important to make sure all of your contact information (home and work phone, cell phone, home and work e-mail) is on file and current with the Religious Education Office. Also, arrangements exist for media announcements to be made in the event of a cancellation through primary media outlets such as the four (4) local television stations and some radio stations.

Discipline / Disruptive Behavior

Disrespect toward catechists (teachers), aides, other students, property, or **any inappropriate behavior or language** will not be tolerated. We practice what we preach; Love of God and Love of Neighbor are one and the same. Any incidents will be recorded in the student's file and parents will be notified. If necessary, parents will be required to attend class with their student in order to maintain a positive environment for faith formation. Additional action will be determined on a case by case basis and are at the discretion of the Pastor and/or his delegated Director of Religious Education.

Textbooks & Classroom Materials

For grade 2/First Reconciliation and First Eucharist Preparation Class, we utilize the We Believe series from Sadlier as well as additional resources from publishers approved by the Diocesan Office of Education and the USCCB. For all other grades we use Pflaum Gospel Weeklies, a "weekly reader" formatted pamphlet that focuses on living out our faith and applying the message from the Sunday Liturgy to our lives in the world.. For Confirmation Preparation, we will be utilizing multiple resources. Supplemental materials are limited in supply and are replaced as needed if available. *All technology, materials, and resources used via Internet are subject to the approval of the Director and the policies and guidelines of the Diocese of Columbus.*

In the event a textbook is lost, replacements are \$25 for students preparing for First Reconciliation and First Communion, \$40 for Confirmation Students.

Being Prepared & Homework

All students are expected to come to each PREP session with all necessary materials such as textbooks and homework assignments. Assignments sent home with your student(s) or make-up assignments to cover missed lessons are vital to maintaining communication with you as the parent & primary educator, as well as to reinforce the material presented and discussed during our brief formal class time. It is a wonderful way to grow in your own faith as a parent by sharing your faith with your student(s), and *our faith formation is life-long. Jesus himself teaches us about the importance of being open and honest about our faith as a child is. Our student(s) teach us as well!*

PREP at Home

For weekends that we are not scheduled for a session (i.e. Thanksgiving weekend), we will be providing each family by way of electronic communication or handout in the PREP Family Mailbox, a brief lesson for the family to share in that will reflect the Liturgical Readings and Themes of Sunday Mass. This provides us with a resource to engage you into your parental religious education ministry and encourages preparation and participation in the Sunday Liturgy.

Music Ministry

Mr. Rich Krehnovi, Director of Music Ministry for the Parish, encourages youth involvement in music ministry as vocalists and/or instrumentalists. He annually forms a seasonal Children's Choir for Christmas and Easter. All students and families interested in that ministry should contact Mr. Rich directly. Watch your PREP Family Mailbox and the Parish Bulletin for additional information.

Classroom Visitors, Rules, and Snacks

Each classroom catechist establishes individual classroom rules and norms for behavior and the effective use of our brief time with your student(s).

Due to the various dietary needs, restrictions, and/or allergies of our students, it is vital that the student information form has complete information on your student(s) medical records. Since classroom sessions are only approximately 45-50 minutes; small or easy to prepare and clean-up snacks are permitted at the discretion of the classroom catechist and/or the Director and we must take into account the dietary needs, restrictions, and/or allergies of all student(s).

Parents and Grandparents are always encouraged to attend with your student(s) on occasion, but we ask that arrangements be made in advance with the classroom catechist and/or the Director and must notify the Religious Education Office prior to the beginning of the session in order to maintain a safe & secure environment.

Communications

Our primary means of communication to you is now our weekly *PREParing for Sunday* e-newsletter which is developed weekly with the purpose of providing information and resources to assist the parent(s) in fulfilling the promises made at your child's baptism to be the first and best educator of the faith to your child.

In an effort to foster communications, we also utilize PREP Family Mailboxes which are located in the corridor leading to Pastors' Hall just outside the entrance to the kitchen as our primary mode of communication for *printed materials*. Please make it part of your normal routine when arriving and departing for a PREP Session or for Mass to check your PREP Family Mailbox for communications from your student's classroom catechist, from the Religious Education Office, or from the Parish.

We will also utilize electronic based communication tools such as text messaging, e-mail, and the parish website for additional communication. Additionally, for those who utilize social media, St. Elizabeth maintains a Facebook Page and we encourage you to "like" and follow us on social media.

Communication is vital in all forms of education. It is vital that the Religious Education Office be provided with current and accurate phone number(s) including home and cell, email addresses, and all pertinent contact information. **If you have any changes to your contact information, address, phone, cell phone, and/or email**, please contact the Director or classroom catechist with questions or concerns.

Social Networking and the Internet

The Diocesan Office of Religious Education and Catechesis have published guidelines and policies for the use of social networking and other tools on the internet for communication and socialization.

Please note that all such forms of social networking, blog sites, wikis, and other internet based forms of communications on behalf of ANY parish ministry MUST be approved by the Pastor or his Delegate (a delegate is any staff person or Professional Lay Ecclesial Minister that is given explicit responsibility by the Pastor or Pastoral Administrator to direct or oversee programs or operations of the parish). Complete overviews of these guidelines are available in the Parish Religious Education Office.

As part of the New Evangelization and the commitment as apprentices of Jesus Christ to go out into the world, preaching, teaching, and baptizing in His name, we will be making more of an effort to properly utilize all forms of electronic communication such as websites, blogs, social media, etc. to accurately and honestly communicate the Good News of Jesus Christ, all while conforming to ISTE standards (International Society for Technology in Education).

Beginning in February, 2015 after receiving a generous grant through the Challenge in Changing Times from The Catholic Foundation, St. Elizabeth now offers a guest WiFi network that is made available at no cost to the individual user. Terms and conditions apply and there is a strong content filter in place to limit content to family appropriate websites. The availability and usage of the guest network is at the discretion of the Pastor/Pastoral Administrator and the delegated Director of Religious Education who has the responsibility of access and operation.

There are many good quality Catholic websites and web applications available for your various devices and we encourage parents to use these tools as a means of growing in faith and guiding your student(s) in safe internet and social media usage.

Special Needs and Home School Option

Every effort is made to offer appropriate catechesis for all children and youth regardless of their abilities or needs. The U.S. Catholic Bishops stated in 1995 “By reason of their baptism, all Catholics are equal in dignity in the sight of God and have the same divine calling”. Therefore, we work with our families to place all students in our regular PREP classes. However, if you feel your child would be better served by home-schooling, please contact the Religious Education Office to discuss and make appropriate arrangements.

Other than for special needs, the St. Elizabeth Religious Education Office is committed to working with our families to meet their needs due to the various circumstances we find our families facing on a daily basis by offering, on a case-by-case basis, a home-schooling option. If you have an extraordinary scheduling conflict, home-schooling is an option. Please contact the Director to schedule an appointment to discuss.

Use of the home-schooling option is at the discretion of the Director and the Pastor and must take into consideration all policies and guidelines as stated in this Handbook as well as the guidelines established in cooperation with each family on an individual case basis. Contact the Director to discuss.

Extended Sessions – Extra Sessions – In-Service Days for Catechists

At the direction of the Pastor or Director of Religious Education, PREP will, on occasion, schedule an extended session or schedule an extra session – especially in regard to Sacramental Preparation – to meet the spiritual and social needs as well as to encourage fellowship of the PREP community. We also reserve the right to schedule a catechist (teacher) in-service during regular PREP scheduled times and replace the student time with a PREP @ HOME lesson.

Sacramental Preparation & Required Parent Meetings

It is the policy of St. Elizabeth Religious Education Department and a guideline of the Diocese of Columbus that no student will be eligible to receive any sacrament unless the student has been registered & regularly attending the PREP program for **at least two (2) years** prior to the reception of a sacrament. *Exceptions to this are at the discretion of the Pastor and/or Director only.*

Therefore, in order to be eligible to receive First Reconciliation and First Communion at the end of the student(s) second grade year, they must be registered and attending beginning in first grade.

Grade levels for reception of sacraments:

First Reconciliation	Second Grade or Older
First Communion	Second Grade or Older
Confirmation	Seventh Grade or Older (every two years)

Parents of these students are **required** to attend sacramental preparation parent meetings. A schedule of these parent meetings will be provided as early in the year as possible. It is *imperative* that parents and students regularly attend Sunday Mass at any age. However it is more important that **Mass attendance becomes a family priority**, especially during the sacramental preparation years.

To summarize, in order for your student(s) to be eligible to receive First Reconciliation, First Communion, or the Sacrament of Confirmation, the following guidelines must be met:

1. Student must be registered and regularly attending PSR classes for two (2) full years.
2. Parents must attend sacramental preparation parent meetings as scheduled.
3. Regular and active participation in Sunday Mass and Parish Life must be a family priority.
4. Confirmation catechesis will be every two years as part of a revised Jr. High preparation cycle and is scheduled for March, 2014. See Calendar in this Handbook for specific dates

R.C.I.A. ~ Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults

Is a Liturgical Rite designed for those aged sixteen (16) and older to inquire into or enter the Church. If you have a family member or friend who has expressed interest into joining us, please contact the Director of Religious Education for additional information.

Conformity to Diocesan Standards

All policies and guidelines stated above conform to Diocesan standards as published in the *Catechetical Administrative Handbook* (CAH) as published by the Diocesan Office of Education, Office of Religious Education and Catechesis, and the Office of Youth and Young Adult Ministry. The CAH is available to view online at the following link:

<http://www.cdeducation.org/ReligiousEducation/AdminPolicies/Policies.aspx>

This information is also accessible through the Diocese of Columbus website: www.colsdioc.org and select offices, then the Office of Education, Office of Religious Education and Catechesis (OREC), or the Office of Youth and Young Adult Ministry (OYYAM).

Diocesan Policies and Guidelines

For the complete guidelines and policies of the Diocese of Columbus related to Religious Education, Catechesis, and Youth Ministry, please visit the following:

Office of Religious Education and Catechesis

<http://education.colsdioc.org/ReligiousEducation.aspx>

Policies

<http://education.colsdioc.org/ReligiousEducation/AdministrationPolicies/Policies.aspx>

Guidelines

<http://education.colsdioc.org/ReligiousEducation/AdministrationPolicies/Guidelines.aspx>

Safe Environment

<http://www.colsdioc.org/ProtectingOurChildren.aspx>

Youth Ministry

<http://education.colsdioc.org/YouthYoungAdult.aspx>

Youth Ministry Policy Manual

<http://education.colsdioc.org/YouthYoungAdult/YouthMinistry/Resources/DiocesanResourcesManual.aspx>

The following policies must be distributed/signed off on every year:

- 2213.0 Code of Conduct for Catechetical Leaders
<http://education.colsdioc.org/portals/3/dre/docs/policies/2000%20Administration/2213.0%20Code%20of%20Conduct.pdf>
- 4110.0 Policy Civil Criminal Background Checks
<http://education.colsdioc.org/portals/3/dre/docs/policies/4000%20Personnel/4110.0%20New%20OREC%20version.pdf>
- 4110.01 Curriculum Support for "Protecting God's Children
<http://education.colsdioc.org/portals/3/dre/docs/policies/4000%20Personnel/4110.01%20Curriculum%20Support%20final.pdf>
- 4116.14 Code of Conduct for Catechists
<http://education.colsdioc.org/portals/3/dre/docs/policies/4000%20Personnel/4116.14%20Code%20of%20Conduct.pdf>
- 4116.15 Harassment Policy: Personnel
<http://education.colsdioc.org/portals/3/dre/docs/policies/4000%20Personnel/4116.15%20Harassment.pdf>
- 5140.05 Harassment Policy: Children and Youth
http://education.colsdioc.org/portals/3/dre/docs/policies/5000%20Children,%20Youth%20and%20Adults/5140.05_Harassment.pdf

Each family is required to review the preceding six (6) links.

By registering your student(s) in the St. Elizabeth Church Parish Religious Education Program and/or Teen Fellowship Program, you are acknowledging receipt of this handbook either in printed or electronic format.

This Parent Handbook is also available at our parish website at:
www.stelizabethchurch.org and select the Parish Religious Education Program (PREP) link.

Important Dates for 2017-2018 PREP

Tentative Planning Calendar

Day	Date	Detail
Mon	September 4, 2017	Labor Day
Sun	September 10, 2017	PREP for grades K-8 Begins – 10am Parent Meeting – Pastors' Hall
Sun	September 17, 2017	Catechetical Sunday
Sun	September 24, 2017	Confirmation Parent Meeting – Pastors' Hall 10am during PREP
Mon	October 9, 2017	Columbus Day
Sun	October 22, 2017	First Reconciliation Parent Meeting – Pastors' Hall 10am during PREP
Tuesday	October 31, 2017	Halloween
Weds	November 1, 2017	Solemnity of All Saints – Holy Day of Obligation
Thurs	November 2, 2017	All Souls Day
Sun	November 5, 2017	Daylight Savings Time Ends (Fall Back) 11am - 50th Anniversary of St. Elizabeth Mass Bishop Campbell Celebrant
Thurs	November 23, 2017	Thanksgiving Day
Sun	November 26, 2017	No PREP – Thanksgiving Holiday
Sun	December 3, 2017	PREP Resumes – 1st Sunday of Advent
Fri	December 8, 2017	Immaculate Conception – Holy Day of Obligation
Sun	December 17, 2017	Last Sunday of PREP of 2017
Sun	December 24, 2017	No PREP – 4th Sunday of Lent/Christmas Eve
Mon	December 25, 2017	Christmas Day
Sun	December 31, 2017	No PREP - Feast of the Holy Family
Mon	January 1, 2018	New Year's Day – Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God – Holy Day of Obligation
Sun	January 7, 2018	PREP Resumes – Solemnity of the Epiphany
Tues	January 30, 2018	7pm – First Reconciliation Parent Meeting for First Communion after service
Weds	February 14, 2018	Ash Wednesday – Lent Begins
Sun	February 18, 2018	First Sunday of Lent
Sat	March 10, 2018	9:30am – Confirmation Rehearsal-Student & Sponsor 5:30pm – Confirmation Mass
Sun	March 11, 2018	Daylight Savings Time Begins
Sun	March 18, 2018	Last PREP Session before Easter Break
Sun	March 25, 2018	Palm Sunday – No PREP
Sun	April 1, 2018	Easter – NO PREP
Sun	April 8, 2018	Divine Mercy Sunday – PREP Resumes
Sun	April 22, 2018	FINAL PREP SESSION FOR 2017-2018
Tues	April 24, 2018	7pm – First Communion Rehearsal
Sat	April 28, 2018	5:30pm – First Communion
Sun	April 29, 2018	9am – First Communion 11am – First Communion

❖ Some PREP dates subject to change