

St. James Christian Formation Family Handbook



*“Make me to know your ways, O Lord;
teach me your paths.” – Psalm 25:4*

Welcome to St. James Christian Formation!

We are happy to join with you in helping your families grow in faith and love of God. On the day of your child's baptism, you accepted the responsibility of helping them to know Jesus and understand our faith. You are the first and most important teacher of your child's faith. On the day of their baptism, the St. James community also pledged to help your family grow in faith. As parish ministers and part of the community, we accept the task of supporting you in your role as Christian Catholic parents. We do our best to offer a rich and meaningful formation process. Our staff, along with many parents and parishioners, will share our faith and love of God with your young people.

This handbook has been developed to help keep you informed of our policies and procedures. If after reading the information contained in this booklet you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact any of us in the Christian Formation office.

Sue Devine-Simon
Director of Formation/Adult & Family Ministry
ssdevine-simon@stjames-parish.com
262-253-2904

Kristin Kebis
Coordinator of Child Ministry
kkebis@stjames-parish.com
262-253-2908

Amy Ruege
Administrative Assistant
aruege@stjames-parish.com
262-253-2902

Maggie Rielley
Coordinator of Youth Ministry
mriellley@stjames-parish.com
262-253-2915

Christian Formation Main Office Line
262-251-0897

Program Essentials

When are Classes?

Sessions are held weekly from mid-September through April.

Classes meet at these times:

- Sundays: 8:15-9:15 (3k-4k-5k)
9:30-10:30 (1st - 5th grade)
11:30-12:30pm (11th grade)
4:30-5:30 (6th - 11th grade)
6-7pm (6th - 11th grade)
- Tuesdays: 6-7pm (1st - 11th grade)

Calendars

Calendars for all grade levels can be found on the St. James website at www.stjames-parish.com/christian-formation-calendars

Registration Fees

Fees are \$150.00 per child with a family maximum of \$450.00 for 3 children or more.

An additional Sacramental Fee of \$65.00 is charged to those celebrating First Eucharist & First Reconciliation this year. The fee covers the cost of two Parent-Child retreats and other sacramental supplies.

This year, you will have 3 payment options for CF fees:

- 1) Pay your fees in full by September 16th.
- 2) Pay your fees in two installments – First payment due September 16th; Second payment due January 6th
- 3) Pay your fees in four installments – First payment due September 16th; Second payment due November 4th; third payment due January 6th; fourth/final payment due on March 3rd

Payments can be made two ways:

- 1) **Online:** Go to our parish website and click on the Christian Formation tab. Once there go down to where it says *CF Program Payments* and it will take you to the Abundant page and it will walk you through the payment process. Be sure to pick *Pmt/Tuition Fees* in the drop down.

2) **Pay by check:** Make out your check to St. James and put CF Fees on the memo line. Mail payment to: Christian Formation W220N6588 Town Line Rd., Menomonee Falls, WI 53051 or drop off in the Christian Formation office during regular work hours or class times.

We want every family to feel welcome to participate in Christian Formation regardless of the ability to pay. Contact the office if you need tuition assistance. Your needs will remain confidential.

Retreats

Retreats are offered to build individual spirituality as well as a sense of community among the students. All retreats are considered part of the faith formation scheduled program and are essential for those students preparing to receive sacraments.

Retreat fees will be charged separately and are **not** included in CF fees.

Family Faith Days

All children in Christian Formation will participate in 3 Family Faith Days as part of their regular program. On these days, we ask the whole family (**students, parents & younger/older siblings**) to attend the session together.

Dates for Family Faith Days are:

September 14 & 16

November 23 & December 2

March 8 & 10

*Your family has the option to attend on either date at these times: Sunday 9:30, Sunday 11:30, Sunday 5pm or Tuesday 6pm

Communication

Our primary form of communication will be via email. Families will receive our weekly CF newsletter each Wednesday evening, as well as other important details about CF. It is very important that we have up-to-date contact information for your family. If your contact information should change during the year (i.e., email, cell phone or mailing address), please notify the CF staff immediately. If you are not receiving email from the parish or the faith formation department, please check your SPAM and JUNK folders.

Christian Formation Office Hours

Our regular office hours are: Sunday 7:30am-12:30pm/4-7pm, Monday, Wednesday, Thursday & Friday 8am-4pm and Tuesday 8am-8pm. Often someone is here outside of these hours, but it is always best to call first to be sure someone will be in the office.

Policies & Procedures

Arrival and Dismissal

Please be prompt for class. Students may begin arriving for class 10 minutes prior to class time.

Our primary entrance for Christian Formation classes will be the doors on the south side of the CF building. Parents & students should use the south lot when parking to come into the building.

All 3k, 4k & 5k students must be dropped off & picked up at their classroom by a parent or guardian.

Drop off and pick up for all 1st grade-11th grade classes should be at the south entrance. Please use the drop-off/pick-up line that leads up to the entrance. Volunteers will be in the parking lot to assist with student pick-ups following the 9:30 class time.

Attendance/Absences

We believe that consistent attendance at Christian Formation sessions at all age levels will help your son or daughter learn and grow with his/her peers. We have limited time together each week, so we ask you to prioritize attendance and only miss when unavoidable.

To report an absence, go to <https://www.stjames-parish.com/report-an-absence/>. Be sure to provide your child's first & last name, grade, class time, catechist's name, and date of absence.

***Make-up work is required for 2nd grade & Confirmation classes.**

We would be happy to give you class materials for any grade level to work on at home when your child must miss class.

Cell Phones

Cell phones and electronic devices should not be used during class unless specifically indicated by the catechist. Students using cell phones at inappropriate times may have them held by a catechist until the conclusion of class. Respectful attention and courtesy toward others are expected during class time.

Class Requests

Each year, we receive many requests about 2 common issues: switching classes in the middle of the year to accommodate changing schedules and putting friends together in a CF classroom. We spend a considerable amount of time each year setting class lists based on a variety of factors that help us balance classrooms: ratio of male/female students, schools that students attend, prior year class assignments, special needs of individual students, etc. We also cap class sizes at 16 students to keep classes manageable for our catechists. Class changes during the year can shift the balance we work so hard to create.

Therefore, these are our policies on class request issues:

- 1) All requests to change your student's class time during the CF year will be evaluated on an individual basis and allowed ONLY if we are able to accommodate the request within the guidelines mentioned above.
- 2) We do not accommodate requests for students to be in class with a friend or to be with a specific teacher.

Discipline

One of the goals of the Christian Formation program is to develop a respect for life and the dignity of others. Respect for oneself, peers, adults, and property are needed to enhance the learning environment and create an atmosphere conducive to faith development.

If your child/youth is disrespectful, the following procedures will be implemented:

1. The catechist will give a warning to identify disrespectful or inappropriate behavior.
2. If the behavior continues, the child will be sent to the Christian Formation office to speak with a staff member.
3. Parents will be notified if their child is sent to the office so that we can discuss concerns and determine next steps.

Individualized Learning Needs:

Please let us know if your child has any special medical needs such as allergies, visual or hearing impairment, special motor skill needs or disabilities.

It would be helpful to know about learning needs your child may have that would aid us in the classroom. If your child has an IEP or a 504 plan in place at their school, we encourage you to share the plan with us. Having information of this kind will help us to provide the best possible learning environment and assistance for your child.

Also, if there is a family or school situation that may affect your child's behavior in the classroom, please let the office know so that we can respond appropriately.

Any information you provide will be confidential. Please feel free to call the Christian Formation Office at any time to talk about your child.

Parent Volunteers

Our programs only run because of volunteers, and we appreciate the support of the many people who volunteer each year! There are many opportunities for you to be involved: catechist, aide, sub, supply parent, bin parent, retreat helpers & chaperones, Break Open the Word leader, VBS volunteer and more. You can also look for other opportunities in the CF Newsletter. Volunteering is a great way to grow in your own faith! If you're interested in learning more, contact the CF office.

Snacks in the classrooms

Because there are so many serious food allergies, we will closely monitor any food entering the classrooms. Please do not send any food to class with your child without contacting the Director of the program. **Peanut products of any kind should not be brought into the building.**

Weather / Emergency Cancellations

If Christian Formation classes need to be canceled due to weather or an emergency, you will be notified by email. You can also find closing info on WTMJ and on our parish Facebook page.

Tuesday evening classes will be canceled if the Hamilton School District is closed due to inclement weather.

Building Safety

Catechists are instructed in how to keep your children safe while in our building. In the event of a fire, we will evacuate the children outdoors and away from the building. If there is a tornado warning, everyone will be taken downstairs to the Community Center.

Medical Emergencies

CF staff are trained in First Aid & CPR and can treat common medical issues that come up during class time. We will call 911 if necessary & contact the parents. If necessary, we will interrupt mass. Emergency phone numbers are very important. It is up to you as parents to let us know where you will be or how to contact you.

Safe Environment Training

As mandated by the United States Catholic Conference of Bishops and in cooperation with the Safeguarding All of God's Family program of the Archdiocese of Milwaukee, all St. James parish staff and volunteers who work with children receive Safe Environment Training to ensure that all young people in our parishes come to know God and His Church in a safe and appropriate setting. The Archdiocese of Milwaukee also requires mandatory criminal background checks for those who work with minors and upholds a Code of Ethical Standards. Additionally, all students will be offered grade appropriate safe environment lessons, which will be built into the curriculum, as mandated by the United States Catholic Conference of Bishops and in cooperation with the Safeguarding All of God's Family program.

We encourage you to participate in Safe Environment training to raise awareness of the issues of child abuse & neglect and to allow you to help in our CF programming. For more information, visit www.archmil.org/safeguarding