**St. Michael Church**

Cranford, NJ

07016

**Family Handbook**

**Religious Education Program**

100 Alden Street

908-276-2050

**Email**: stmreled@stmichaelscranford.org

**Website**: stmichaelcranfordre.org

**Office Hours**

Monday-Thursday 10AM—4PM

**Religious Education School Year Schedule**

***Sunday***

 10:15 AM – 11:30 AM Grades 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 7

***Monday***

3:30 PM – 4:45 PM Grades 1, 2, 3

***Tuesday***

 3:30 PM – 4:45 PM Grades 1, 2, 3, 4

  6:15 PM – 7:30 PM Grades 4, 5, 6

 7:00 PM – 8:15 PM Grade 7

***Wednesday***

 7:00 PM – 8:15 PM Grade 7

***Summer***

 Grade 6 July/August

 Grade 5 July/August

 Grade 4 July

Grade 7 has a separate calendar.

Grade 8 has a separate schedule of events.

**THE FAMILY HANDBOOK**

This handbook is a resource guide containing program information, guidelines, policies and procedures. Please read and discuss it with your child(ren). It will help your family understand the expectations and responsibilities of our Religious Education (RE) Program.

Please call the RE Office (908-276-2050) or email them at *stmreled@stmichaelscranford.org* if they can be of further assistance.

May God bless you,

**Religious Education Staff**

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 **Margaret Silva Ellen Collett**

 Religious Ed Administrator Jr High Administrator

 Jr High Co-Coordinator *ecollett@stmichaelscranford.org*

*stmreled@stmichaelscranford.org*

**Family Spiritual Life**

The following are suggestions for families in our RE program.

1. Show an interest in what your child is learning in RE. Ask them what they have learned, review their work, and express the importance of knowing God and the promises God offers.
2. Attend Mass together every Sunday and Holy Day.
3. Read the parish bulletin to keep informed.
4. Pray together daily.
5. Share your faith at home through discussions, faith stories and activities.
6. Establish family Advent and Lenten traditions.
7. Use blessings/prayers to make God a part of family celebrations, birthdays, anniversaries and holidays.
8. Attend special parish events such as the Parish Feast, Reconciliation Services, Stations of the Cross and the Easter Triduum.
9. Reinforce the Corporal Works of Mercy by donating to food drives, special collections and other opportunities to serve those in need. Our program encourages student participation in these works throughout the year.
10. Consider involvement in a parish ministry to set an example for your children. The RE office will be happy to direct you.

**Student Responsibilities and Code of Behavior**

Jesus asks us to love God and our neighbor as ourselves. As we strive to follow Jesus, we need to show courtesy and respect to others and their property. We rely on parents to encourage and help their children to live God’s law of love. Most especially, the children should understand that they are welcome visitors to the St. Michael School building. Therefore, respect for school property and that of St. Michael School students is of utmost importance.

Besides weekly attendance, students need to bring required materials to class and complete all their assignments. In the interest of maintaining a good learning environment, children are expected to follow classroom rules set by their catechist. Should a child’s behavior interfere with the learning process of the class the following will apply:

* The catechist will notify the RE office and parent(s) concerning the incident.
* In the event of another incident, the child may be removed from the classroom setting and the RE office will contact the parent(s).
* Should there be another incident other arrangements for religious instruction will be made.

In addition:

* Children may be given periodic testing from Grade 2 up. Children must have a satisfactory knowledge of the grade level material in order to progress.
* A Religious Education assessment (ACRE) is administered annually to all 5th and 8th graders.
* Children are not to wear or carry any articles that are offensive or contrary to the teachings of the Catholic Church. Such students will be sent to the Religious Education Office and parents will be notified.

 Children are not allowed to wear cleats in the school building because they damage the floors.

  Cell phone use (i.e. games, texting, calls) by minors is prohibited in the building. Unnecessary use of cell phones will result in the catechist collecting and returning phones after class. Exception: RE staff has been informed by parents of special circumstances.

  ***No food or drink is permitted in the auditorium or classrooms***. If your children need a snack, please have them finish it ***before*** entering the school building.

**Registration**

The children of St. Michael Parish are required to attend religious education for the eight years of elementary school.

All eligible upcoming First Graders who are registered parishioners are mailed a letter of invitation to our program.

*New registrants must provide Original Baptism Certificates at initial registration.*

It is important to inform the RE Office of your child’s special needs (health or educational) in order to understand and deal more compassionately and effectively with your child. All information is kept confidential.

We cannot be responsible for administering any medications (epi-pens, inhalers, pills) to any child*.*

***Returning students*** are mailed registration materials in early Spring. Forms are also available on the Religious Education website.

*To avoid any additional charges, please submit registration forms on time.*

No child will be accepted into the program after the First Week of Advent.

There are additional sacrament preparation fees in Grades 2 and 7. Sacrament fees cover additional texts, teaching materials, supplies and robes (for Confirmation). Grade 8 has an additional fee for the Grade 8 Retreat which is held off property.

If payment of any fees would prevent your child from attending religious education or cause a hardship, other arrangements can be made.

**Programs**

**Summer Programs**

Summer programs run for two (2) consecutive weeks Monday – Thursday in July/August.

Summer enrollment is limited to 40 students per session. In-person registration is required. Presently Grades 4, 5 and 6 are offered.

**Religious Instruction at Home**

Parents can opt to home instruct children in Grades 3, 5 or 5. Parents attend a Home Instruction Workshop to learn about the home instruction program. An online component has been added to the home instruction program. All work must be completed no later than the first week of March.

Please inform the RE Office if you plan to home instruct so we can assist you with training and planning of your child’s lessons.

**Sacramental Preparation**

Preparation for the sacraments of Eucharist and Confirmation is a two-year period. This is in accordance with the policy of St. Michael Parish.

Children will *not* automatically become candidates for reception of a sacrament simply because they are a certain age/grade level. Only students who have a history of *continuous attendance* in a religious education program and acceptable faith knowledge for their age will be eligible. Children are required to make up missed grades of religious education *before* they are eligible for a sacrament. Grade placement is at the discretion of the RE office staff.

***First Reconciliation*** preparation begins in the summer after successful completion of First Grade religious education. The sacrament is received in the Fall of Second Grade.

***First Eucharist*** preparation begins in the First Grade and is formally completed in the Second Grade. Children receive First Eucharist during the Easter Season of Second Grade.

***Confirmation*** preparation begins in the Seventh Grade and concludes with the reception of the Sacrament of Confirmation in the Fall of Ninth Grade. Following Jesus’ example of love and care for others, community service is an integral part of preparation. In addition, youth may be required to attend special events during Grades 7 and 8.

**Parent Meetings**

Parent/family meetings/workshops are held for children entering First Grade and those preparing for the sacraments. Please check the RE calendar for these dates and make note of them.

All meetings begin promptly and last one (1) hour unless otherwise noted. Parents are encouraged to attend.

If for some reason you are unable to attend a meeting please notify the RE Office *before* the meeting so you can be advised of the agenda and arrange to pick up any material (if applicable) after the meeting date.

**Policies and Procedures**

**Attendance/Absenteeism**

If your child is unable to attend RE class, it is vital for reasons of safety, that a parent call the RE office at 908-276-2050 to report the absence.

When calling, please include the following information.

 Child’s first and last name

 Grade level

 Catechist’s name

 Date of absence

 Reason for absence

***Children who arrive after their class has left the auditorium must report to the RE office with their parent/adult to sign in and receive a late pass.***

Should your child become ill during class, you will be called and asked to pick him/her up at the RE office.

To fully participate in the catechetical process, it is vitally important that your child attend all scheduled classes. Good attendance makes it possible for your child to grasp religious concepts, and even more importantly develop a sense of belonging to a small faith community.

More than three (3) absences may hinder participation in the program. Remediation may become necessary for satisfactory progress. Arrangements are made for prolonged illness or other difficulties. ***All absences count, even if excused.***

**Child Safety**

***All children/youth enter the school building through the front doors of the school.***  All other entrance doors will be locked. For access into the school, ring the bell at the front door of the building.

St. Michael RE adheres to the New Jersey State Statutes that require the Division of Youth and Family Services (DYFS) be notified immediately if a RE staff member suspects that a child has been abused or neglected.

 Please inform the RE office of any custodial situations concerning your child.

All St. Michael Religious Education catechists and aides participate in ***Protecting God’s Children****,* a program which trains adults to be pro-active in discerning child abuse. This awareness, coupled with the screening of all volunteers who have access to children, helps St. Michael create the safest environment possible for children.

We cannot transport your child to or from any aftercare programs. This is a parental responsibility.

**Emergency School Closing**

When Cranford public schools are closed due to inclement weather, RE is cancelled. If severe weather develops on Sunday, students will be notified at Mass or by a phone chain, if possible. If severe weather develops during Monday or Tuesday, the RE office will notify the Board of Education and they, in turn, inform the public schools to announce the closing. The RE office will do our best to update our website to inform families of any closing. In all circumstances, parents should use their good judgment.

**Opening Day**

Families will be contacted before classes begin. Information regarding catechist, class time and classroom number will be given at that time. Be sure to make note of this important information.

Textbooks will be issued on the first day of class. Replacement textbooks can be purchased at the current book fee.

Students in Grades 1-6 gather in the school auditorium for prayer and announcements before catechists escort them to their classrooms.

 Grade 7 students gather in the Second Floor Meeting Room and enter the school building using the front doors.

**Transportation**

***Arrival***

***Walking to class*** *–* If your child is walking to class, enter the school building using the front doors.

***Car drop-off and pick up*** - Vehicles will be permitted to enter and exit the schoolyard through Holly Street only. ***No cars will be permitted beyond the chained barricade***. Vehicles can no longer exit onto Alden Street. Children enter through the front doors of the school.

*Please be aware that double parking and “no parking” zones are subject to ticketing by police.*

To avoid being towed, please do not park at Cleveland Plaza, a private business’ property surrounding the Church and school property.

***Dismissal***

All students are dismissed from the side door of the school closest to their classrooms.

 Rooms 101-106 / 201-206 side doors by Mt. Carmel Guild/parking lot

 Rooms 107-112 / 207-212 side doors opposite the Church

Please reinforce with your children that if their ride has not arrived after dismissal they should go to the RE office to wait. ***Your child may use the RE office phone any time there is a need*.**

For the safety of all children, please cross at the corner assisted by the crossing guard. Children should *not* walk across the parking lot or street without an adult.

**Permission Slips**

A signed permission slip is required for each student participating in activities off St. Michael parish property.

**Parish Library**

Located next to the RE office. The library offers a variety of books and videos that focus on positive moral values. These books and tapes must be signed out and may be borrowed for a two (2) week period, free of charge. Please note: ***religion classes have first preference for materials***. Lost or damaged materials need to be paid for or replaced.

**U.S. SUPREME COURT CASE**

**Zorach Vs. Clauson 1956**

**(343 U.S. 306)**

**Ruling: It is a child’s constitutional right to attend a church event or religious instruction at a parochial school even if this should disrupt a public school schedule.**

*Public school schedule* has been interpreted by the law to include sporting events, band competitions, school plays and the practices of the aforementioned and any other event sponsored by public school systems or those municipal programs open to public school students.

**ANY TYPE OF PUNISHMENT BY AFOREMENTIONED EVENTS FOR LEAVING EARLY, ARRIVING LATE OR MISSING AN EVENT IS NOT PERMITTED AND IS IN VIOLATION OF THE LAW.**

Further examples:

 A child cannot be threatened or intimidated in any way (i.e. removal from a team) because of absence due to a religious affiliation/responsibility.

 A child cannot be mocked or ridiculed for religious convictions.

 The reason a child is not present, arriving late or leaving early cannot be pointed out or discussed with other students or staff members.

 Other penalties such as benching, extra laps or any other kind of punishment because of absence, late arrival or early dismissal due to the student’s religious practices and/or responsibilities are also violations of the law.

**Philosophy**

St. Michael Religious Education strives to provide a program in which parish children and youth can experience God’s love through a growing knowledge of Jesus Christ and the Gospel message. Through prayer, faith knowledge and worship, children experience a gradual commitment to a life of discipleship that is appropriate to their age and ability.

St. Michael Parish believes the family, the *domestic church*, is the most important Christian influence on their children. It is in the home that a child first encounters love and trust. It is through this lived experience that children first perceive a loving God in whom they can place their trust. In this way, faith is nurtured. Baptismal promises, made by parents on their children’s behalf, like seeds of faith, take root and start to grow.

***The primary goal of the catechetical program at St. Michael Roman Catholic Parish is to assist families in the faith formation of their children.*** This goal is best achieved when there is cooperation and communication among families, the parish and the Religious Education program. We are members of the St. Michael Parish Family, members of the Body of Christ, living signs of Christ’s presence in the world. As a community that shares this responsibility and celebration, we seek to reflect the love of Christ. We pray to be open to hear, understand and live the Gospel, while reaching out to those who have yet to hear the Good News.