

# ST. JUDE CATHOLIC CHURCH

CHILDREN'S MINISTRIES  
PREK 3'S TO 6<sup>TH</sup> GRADE



## Volunteer Handbook

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"Called by God to be a faith messenger!"

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## **St. Jude Children's Ministries Philosophy for Religious Education**

The religious education program is part of the Children's Ministry Department at St. Jude and is intended to support parents in educating their children about the Catholic faith. Each grade level provides learning experiences based on the individual child's understanding of God and the church. Emphasis on church doctrine is included with each lesson, and prayer is an integral part of each class. St. Jude parish also believes in connecting what is taught in the religion classroom to the home. A "family page" is sent home each week to let the parent's know what is to be learned, and also gives them a few activities to work on at home.

The Preschool classes for three and four year olds and kindergarten use the Allelu! curriculum published by Our Sunday Visitor. This curriculum approaches the teaching of the Catholic Faith in an active learning environment. Simple songs, stories, art activities, and prayers are used to teach children about the love of God.

The first thru sixth grade program uses the *Be My Disciple* program published by RCL. The content of each lesson emphasizes the teachings of the Church as it correlates to the Catechism of the Catholic Church. Scripture supports each lesson, and traditional prayers are practiced each week.

## **St. Jude Children's Ministries Vision for Religious Education**

The St. Jude Parish vision of what qualities a volunteer who teaches religion possesses is that this person is patient, enthusiastic, creative, open minded, accepting of all children, a sense of humor, loving, dependable, trustworthy, is committed to teaching children, and has knowledge of their Catholic faith.

Each year we plan to encourage

1. Prayer in our classroom
2. Reading the Bible, memorization of verses,
3. Active participation by the students in class
4. Music
5. Sharing faith
6. Family involvement
7. Smiles and becoming friends in Jesus
8. Attendance so we can pray together
9. Children to have fun and have a desire to attend religion class

Together, volunteers and parents, we will be faith messengers of God's word to the children of our parish. We will follow Jesus and teach with love and compassion.

# Volunteers Rule!

All the instructors for the Children's Ministry at St. Jude Catholic Church are gracious volunteers.

**Catechists** volunteer to teach the children about the Catholic faith following the chosen religion curriculum. They follow a weekly lesson plan

**Catechist Aides** volunteer to help the catechist in the classroom. They substitute as the teacher when the catechist is absent.

**Substitute Catechists** volunteer to teach in the classroom when a catechist is absent.

**Office Aides** volunteer to help the children's ministry staff do various tasks for the program. They may substitute in a classroom when the need arises.

**Nursery Aides** care for the children of the catechists and catechist aides during class time.

**Teen Aides** volunteer in the early grades (PK to 4<sup>th</sup> grade) to assist the Catechist.

**Safety Monitors** volunteer their time to watch in the hallways during class time.

Being a volunteer for Children's Ministry is a beautiful way to model for the children the important value we place on learning about God and the Church.

*"We have gifts that differ according to the favor bestowed on each of us. One's gift may be prophecy; its use should be in proportion to his faith. It may be the gift of ministry; it should be used for service. One who is a teacher should use his gift for teaching; one with the power of exhortation should advise strongly. He who gives alms should do so generously; he who rules should exercise his authority with care; he who performs works of mercy should do so cheerfully." Romans 12: 6-8*

## **EXPECTATIONS OF THE VOLUNTEERS**

*As "faith messengers" (volunteers teaching the young members of our faith community) you are called to an exemplary standard of behavior.*

*You will:*

- Follow the teachings of the Catholic Church in planning and implementing the curriculum.
- Use the curriculum provided by St. Jude Catholic Church to teach the children about their faith.
- Treat each adult and child with respect.
- Use kindness in your approach to discipline.
- Complete all areas of the safety program before working with the children of St. Jude.
- Model behavior that correlates to the teachings of the Catholic Church
- Make it a priority to enhance your spiritual journey by attending workshops, trainings, reading the bible, and attending more than just a Sunday mass. Consider becoming a Master Catechist through the Diocese Catechetical program..

# A few tips for a successful year!

- **The entire chapter from the curriculum is to go home every week.**
- You must use the curriculum “Be My Disciple” when planning your lessons. If you supplement with anything else you must clear it with the Children’s Ministries office.
- Going over the weekly lesson before coming to class is most helpful!
- Put everything away at the end of your class. Please use only your shelf for things. If what you bring from home doesn’t fit please transport it back and forth. We apologize for this inconvenience.
- Please turn out lights and fans when you leave a room.
- Last class of the day. Please stack the chairs in three (3) groups of 8 chairs, and leave them beside the table.
- No ‘rocking’ allowed on any of the chairs! The children’s chairs cost \$26.00 each, and the adult chairs cost \$45.00!
- **No sitting on the tables**—they cost \$120.00!
- If your supplies are low please ask your teen helper or the adult aide to request the needed items.
- Please keep the children from playing with the dramatic toy items in the corner.
- You may use the small, square tables for your prayer table.
- No one over 8 years of age should use the small bathrooms between the classrooms.
- Remember volunteers’ children will remain in their classrooms until five minutes after the classes are dismissed, and then an older sibling, the teen aide, or another adult may escort them to their parent’s classroom.
- Please request copies of materials before your class time.
- Children must be escorted and watched on the playground by adults. Please don’t send your children outside without the correct supervision.
- In order to plan for the safety of all there are “Safety Rules” for the St. Jude playground. Please be consistent with following them with children.

# **Policies and Procedures**

## **Volunteers—Catechists, Aides, Teens, Office Help, Nursery Caregivers, and Hall Monitors**

### **Arrival Time:**

1. Volunteers will arrive at least **10 minutes before** class begins to check in, set up classroom, and greet children.
2. Please call if you are running late (972-727-1177, #2224).
3. Please check in before class and pick up any information in your folders.
4. Check-in is located in the hallway by the playground doors.
5. **Please keep attendance records** weekly, and place them outside the door.

### **Child Abuse Reporting:**

1. Texas law requires caregivers, teachers, and volunteers report suspected child abuse or neglect to the Texas Department of Protective and Regulatory Services or law enforcement.
2. Call 1-800-252-5400 to make confidential reports.
3. Failure to report suspected abuse or neglect is a crime.
4. Please inform Father Andrew so that he can minister to the family

### **Class Cancellation:**

1. If classes have to be cancelled due to bad weather, etc., It will be noted as soon as possible on the front page of the website.
2. We also will try and email the volunteers and have you email your students.
3. Emergency cancellations will be posted on the website: [www.stjudeparish.com](http://www.stjudeparish.com)
4. Please keep a copy of your class list at home in case we need you to make phone calls or email.

### **Code of Conduct for all staff—paid and volunteer:**

You may only use positive communication to address behavioral issues. Please follow the discipline policies when dealing with difficulties in the classroom.

### **You may not:**

1. Administer corporal punishment in any manner. (NO pushing, pinching, slapping, paddling, etc)
2. Touch any child in an inappropriate manner.
3. Allow children to engage in any dangerous activity (playing on the playground unsupervised, lighting candles, or standing furniture).
4. Leave a child unattended. Children must be in view of their parents or a screened adult at all times.
5. Send teens with children to the restroom.

### **Dismissal Time:**

1. Classes are never to be dismissed early.

2. Please stay with your class until all parents have arrived.
3. No child may walk down the hallway unescorted.
4. Please bring students to the RE office if the parents are more than 10 minutes late.

### **How to Handle an Emergency**

1. Send someone specific to the office for help.
2. Make sure the person who is hurt is comfortable.
3. Contact 911 if needed.
4. Contact parents.
5. Share information with Julie and/or Toni
6. Write an incident report.

### **Incident Reports**

1. What is an incident? An incident is anything that causes concern for the safety of a child and/or all children.
2. When in doubt write the report using the attached form. Please request additional forms in the office.

### **“In-House Field Trips”**

What is an In-House field trip? It is taking children anywhere outside of the education building.

1. Any change to the typical routine of the religious education classroom must be approved by the Children’s Ministries team.
2. Safety procedures must be followed at all times.
3. Playground rules must be followed at all times. The use of the playground must correlate to the lesson plan for the day.
4. Proper etiquette must be followed when going to the church and/or chapel.

### **Phone Use**

1. You must “dial 9” to use the telephones on the church property before dialing a number.
2. Phones are located in all the church offices and in the two kitchens.
3. Cell phones may not be used while you are in charge of children.

### **Pre K 3’s and 4’s Arrival and Dismissal Policy**

1. Classroom doors must remain closed at all times, even at arrival and dismissal time. One volunteer must be standing at the door to greet each child.
2. As children arrive parents are asked to sign their child into the classroom.
3. In the PreK-3 class a beeper system for reaching the parents will be used. The parent must sign for the beeper. At the end of the class the parent will sign out, the beeper is returned and the child will be released to the parent.
4. No children will be released to siblings unless they are an older teen and the parents have given you a specific note. Keep these notes in your classroom folder.

### **Request for Materials:**

1. Request forms are on the shelf by the window. Please make requests **by the Friday before your scheduled class time**. It is much too hectic to do copies the day of class. We really appreciate your following this procedure. This includes all requests for copies, supplies, and videos and equipment.
2. You may email the requests: jbuchanan@stjudeparish.com or tcechan@stjudeparish.com or you may call in the requests 214-644-2085 or 972-727-1177, #2225.

### **Safety First**

1. No "real" candles in the classroom please!
2. No standing or sitting on tables by children, teens, or adults.
3. Always count the number of students you have in attendance when leaving and returning to the classroom.
4. Always have volunteers dispersed in the line and at the end of the line watching the children.

### **Special Events:**

1. If your class includes a special event or speaker, please know that the teacher and aide must remain in the classroom at all times.
2. No class may leave the church property for any reason.
3. Classes are allowed to go to the church building for Mass, and for tours.
4. Visiting friends are allowed if okayed by the teacher.
5. Speakers to the classroom must be approved by the DRE.

### **Screening of Volunteers/Staff:**

1. All volunteers must complete appropriate forms, pass a criminal background check, attend safety training, and provide references.
2. All cleared volunteers will receive a St. Jude ID badge.
3. Only cleared volunteers may work with children or the elderly. **BADGES MUST BE WORN AT ALL TIMES.** If you forgot yours please sign out a temporary badge in the office.
4. Re-certification takes place every year.

### **Supervision of Children**

The safety of the children in the classroom is up to the volunteers. It is **expected and required** that all volunteers will be diligent in following these procedures:

1. You must have the children within view of the volunteers at all times. If a child needs to use the restroom; they must be escorted by a safety cleared volunteer.
2. When going to the church or any other place on the church grounds, please count the children in your care before you leave and return to the classroom. One volunteer must be at the head of the line and one at the back. Any other volunteers may help keep the middle of the line together.
3. Children may not be left unattended in the classroom at any time.

4. Children of volunteers must remain in their respective classroom until all other children have been dismissed, and then they may be escorted to their parent's classroom by a safety cleared adult.
5. Children may not be dismissed to a sibling, unless that sibling is a cleared volunteer.
6. Parents must bring their children into the building for class. No child is to walk into the building unescorted.

### **Teens**

1. Teens are important volunteers. Please give specific jobs to them in the classroom.
2. Teens may escort children to their parents' class at the end of the class time after all other children have been picked up.
3. Teens may not be left alone in the classroom with children.
4. Teens may not take children to the restroom.

### **Use of Curriculum:**

1. Catechists are expected to use the religion curriculum purchased by the parish. Use of other materials must be approved by the staff in the RE office.
2. **The chapter must be sent home each week.**
3. Simple lesson plans are provided, but you are welcome to make the lesson your own by adding to the provided lesson plan.
4. If extra information is not included in the lesson do not share it with the children.
5. Do not share beliefs or family practices that concern family traditions, such as Santa Claus, the Easter Bunny, etc.

### **Use of Items in the Classroom:**

1. The upper cabinets are for RE use. In them you will find your class books, crayon supplies, a tote with pencils, scissors, tape, and a stapler. Please leave these items in the room.
2. Also on the counter is a CD player.
3. Please don't allow the children use the play furniture in the classroom.
4. Specific times and bulletin board space will be given to the grade levels to plan something from their lesson to display what the children have learned.
5. Please monitor how the children use the Whiteboards. They should not wipe the erasers on the wall.
6. The TV's in the classrooms are "smart" tv's and may be used to show religious videos from "Formed". Talk to the office personnel for help in using them.

### **Use of Medical Supplies**

1. No one may administer any medications, prescription or over-the-counter, to any child.
2. If a child has a cut or scrape, please wash the area with soap and water. Band-Aids are located in the Children's Ministries office above the cabinet where you sign-in.
3. Children with severe allergies who carry an "epi-pen" will have them with them in the classroom.