



3435 Trindle Road * Camp Hill, PA 17011
717-761-1167



**Parish Religious Education Program
Parent Handbook
2026-2027**



Good Shepherd Parish Religious Education Program (PREP)

The Role of Parents & the Church in Faith Formation

The Sacred Role of Parents

The role of parents in Religious Education is one of the most sacred and beautiful vocations entrusted to God's people. Nothing and no one can replace the influence and example of a parent in the spiritual life of a child.

As stated in the *Code of Canon Law (226, §2)*:

“Because they gave life to their children, parents have the most serious obligation and the primary right to educate them... in the faith according to the teaching of the Church.”

Parents are the **first and foremost teachers of the faith.**

The Domestic Church

The family is known as the **“Domestic Church.”**

It is within the home that:

- Children are first introduced to prayer
- Faith traditions are formed and practiced
- A relationship with God begins
- Habits of Mass attendance are established

Your example—through prayer, participation in Mass, and daily living of the faith—shapes your child's understanding of what it means to be Catholic.

The Role of Religious Education Ministers

As ministers of Religious Education, we consider it a true privilege to support you in your role as primary educators.

Our responsibility is to:

- Provide **formal catechesis** rooted in Church teaching
- Reinforce the faith already being lived at home
- Partner with families to deepen understanding and love of God
- Help guide children in living out their faith in everyday life

This partnership between **home and Church** strengthens families and builds up the Kingdom of God.

Living the Faith as a Family

Parents are called to give visible witness to their faith through:

- Daily and family **prayer**
- Regular **Mass attendance** (every Sunday and Holy Days of Obligation)
- Participation in the **Sacraments**
- Living out Catholic values in everyday life

Religious Education is most effective when it is not just taught—but **lived**.

Our Commitment to You

The Good Shepherd PREP Team is here to:

- Support and guide your family's faith journey
- Build upon the strong foundation you are creating at home
- Provide meaningful and engaging faith formation experiences

We encourage you to:

- Ask questions
- Stay engaged in your child's learning
- Take time to pray, talk, and grow in faith together as a family

Contact & Communication

We are here for you! Please reach out at any time with questions, concerns, or ideas. Open communication helps us better serve your family.

Together, as partners in faith, we can nurture hearts that know, love, and serve Christ.

Sincerely,

Maria Specca
Director of Religious Education
Good Shepherd Catholic Church
717-980-3621
mspeca@thegoodshep.org

Overview of Contents in the Handbook

Parent Orientation Meeting:

Monday, August 31, 2026

Back to PREP Night from 6:00 PM – 8:00 PM

Program Session Dates:

Grades 1-8 – Classes begin Monday, September 14, 2026

First Session Grades 1-4: 6:00 PM – 7:00 PM

Second Session Grades 5-8: 7:15 PM-8:15 PM

Preschool and Kindergarten – Classes begin Sunday, September 20, 2026

Classes are Sundays from 9:30 – 10:30 am

2026-2027 Calendar

Please see **page 7** of the Handbook for the full calendar with important dates for classes, non-instructional days, retreats, practices, and sacraments.

Registration

The link to the registration form is:

<https://forms.gle/q2kbUj4jP2bvdyoz5>

Purpose and Overview of Parish Religious Education Program (PREP)

The purpose of the Parish Religious Education Program (PREP) is to assist parents in the sacred responsibility given at Baptism—to form their children as disciples of Jesus Christ in the Catholic faith.

Religious Education is a **parish-wide mission** involving children, parents, catechists, clergy, and the entire faith community. Together, we help children come to know Jesus and understand what it means to follow Him.

Our program provides an integrated experience of:

- Catechesis
- Prayer
- Sacramental preparation
- Service and Works of Mercy

Through these, we prepare students to actively live their faith and participate in the life of the Church.

The Church identifies six key tasks of catechesis:

- Knowledge of the faith
- Moral formation
- Liturgical education
- Learning to pray
- Community life
- Missionary spirit

Religious Education is a **lifelong journey** that nurtures both mind and spirit, helping each person grow into the image of Christ.

Registration for the Parish Religious Education Program (PREP)

PREP is an eight-year faith formation program for students in Grades 1–8. We also offer programs for Preschool and Kindergarten.

All Catholic children of the parish who do not attend Catholic school are expected to participate in this program.

PREP includes a minimum of **30 sessions** held between September and May, along with several required non-instructional days.

Preschool and Kindergarten – Classes begin Sunday, September 20, 2026
Classes are Sundays from 9:30 AM – 10:30 AM

Grades 1-8 – Classes begin Monday, September 14, 2026
First Session Grades 1-4: 6:00 PM – 7:00 PM
Second Session Grades 5-8: 7:15 PM-8:15 PM

Fee Schedule:

Full payment is expected at the time of registration.

A textbook is included in the registration fee. If lost or misplaced, a fee of \$25 may be charged for a new book.

Registration Deadline	Registration Fee	2 Students	3 Students	Sacramental Fee (2 nd and 8 th grade only)
June 13/20	\$65	\$90	\$115	\$30/\$50
August 1st	\$75	\$105	\$135	\$30/\$50
Anytime after	\$95	\$155	\$200	\$45/\$65

NOTE: No child will be denied participation in PREP due to an inability to pay the registration fee. If your family is unable to pay the full fee at the time of registration, please contact the PREP Office to discuss tuition assistance options.

New to the Parish or Transferring Students

- If your child is transferring from another parish Religious Education program or from a Catholic school, the following must be provided at registration:
- A copy of your child's **Baptismal Certificate**
- Documentation of prior religious education or Catholic school attendance (verification letter including attendance record)

These documents are due to the PREP Office no later than September 7, 2026.

2026/27 Parish Religious Education Program Calendar

(PreK/K Sundays at 9:30 am ** Session I from 6:00 – 7:00 PM ** Session II from 7:15 – 8:15 PM)

August 2026						
Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
						1
2	3	4	5	5	7	8
9	10	11	12	12	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30	31					

September 2026						
Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30			

October 2026						
Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31

November 2026						
Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30					

December 2026						
Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30	31		

January 2027						
Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	26	28	29	30
31						

February 2027						
Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28						

March 2027						
Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30	31			

April 2027						
Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	

May 2027						
Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
						1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30	31					

June 2027						
Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30			

July 2027						
Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31

Parent Orientation	Non-Instructional Days (Grades 1-8)	Sacraments/ Practices
PreK/K, PREP Class	Penance Services	March 6 = First Penance
Parent Meeting Nights	Retreats	April = Confirmation Practice
February = Penance/Communion	February 20 = 8 th Grade	April = Confirmation
February = Confirmation	April 24 = 2 nd Grade	April = Communion Practice
	Federal Holidays	May 1 = First Holy Communion
Children's Mass		May 2 = May Crowning

Parent Facilitated Catechesis -- Home Schooling for Religious Education

Parents are the primary educators of their children and the first teachers of the Catholic faith. They hold the sacred responsibility of forming their children to live as disciples of Jesus.

Responsibilities of Parents

Parents fulfill this role by:

- Teaching their child to live a moral life according to Catholic values
- Attending **Mass every Sunday** with their child
- Participating in sacramental preparation (Penance, First Holy Communion, Confirmation)
- Ensuring their child receives the **Sacrament of Penance at least once per year**
- Encouraging a positive attitude toward Religious Education
- Supporting and completing all program requirements
- Using provided family/parent materials for faith formation
- Praying regularly at home, including memorization of prayers
- Assisting with at-home assignments as needed
- Attending required family and sacramental meetings
- Ensuring attendance at PREP prayer services, grade mass, penance services, and non-instructional days

Parent-Facilitated Catechesis (PFC)

Families who choose the Parent-Facilitated Catechesis option must:

- Complete the online registration and submit required fees (same as in-person program)
- Pay sacramental fees for Grades 2 and 8, if applicable
- Parents choosing the Parent Facilitated Catechesis (PFC) option must submit a written letter to Father Sullivan explaining their reason for selecting PFC instead of in-person classes.
- Please note that PFC enrollment is approved for one semester at a time only (Fall or Spring).

Additional PFC Requirements

Families participating in Parent-Facilitated Catechesis (PFC) are also expected to:

- Attend all **grade-specific meetings**, penance services, grade-level Masses, and prayer services
- Attend all **required non-instructional days**
- One guardian and student participate in the **monthly PFC Workshop** on the first Sunday of each month from 5:00PM-6:00PM (October–May)
 - Up to **2 workshops may be missed**
 - If a workshop is missed you will need to coordinate with the DRE for a 1:1 makeup session
- Submit **interactive unit reviews weekly**
 - Students must remain **on pace with the in-person class**
 - Work submitted ahead of schedule will be returned and must be redone

**Students in Grade 7 and Grade 8 are also required to complete the materials for Confirmation preparation. Students in Grade 8 are required to attend the Confirmation retreat and Confirmation practice.

Preparation for the Reception of the Sacraments

- Preparation for the Sacraments—**First Penance, First Holy Communion, and Confirmation**—is an essential part of the PREP program.
- Each year, children grow in understanding the meaning and importance of the sacraments in age-appropriate ways. Immediate preparation for each sacrament includes a strong **parent and family connection** to help children prepare spiritually.

Grade 2: First Penance & First Holy Communion

To receive these sacraments, students must:

- Have completed **Grade 1 Religious Education**
- Be currently enrolled in **Grade 2**

Requirements:

- Parent attendance at **two sacramental preparation meetings**
- Student attendance at a **First Holy Communion retreat**
- Student attendance at a **First Holy Communion practice**

Grade 8: Confirmation

**CONFIRMATION IS NOT A GRADUATION.
CONFIRMATION MARKS THE BEGINNING OF A
COMMITMENT TO LIVE AS A DISCIPLE OF CHRIST.**

Confirmation is celebrated after successful completion of the Grade 8 curriculum and all preparation requirements.

Requirements:

- Parent attendance at a **Confirmation preparation meeting**
- Student attendance at a **Confirmation retreat**
- Student attendance at a **Confirmation practice**
- Completion of **10 Works of Mercy service hours** by April

Extended Learning Students (ELS) Program

Students who enter PREP without having received the Sacraments of Initiation and are beyond the typical age may require additional formation.

These students will participate in **supplemental sessions** in addition to their regular PREP classes to provide extra faith formation and support.

All materials and activities will be provided. **Family involvement is expected** as an essential part of this preparation.

Arrival, Lateness and Absences

Parents assume full responsibility for the transportation of their children to and from the parish site where Religious Education sessions take place.

Arrival

The Religious Education Sessions take place at the following times:

Preschool and Kindergarten – Classes begin Sunday, September 20, 2026

Classes are Sundays from 9:30 – 10:30 am

Grades 1-8 – Classes begin Monday, September 14, 2026

First Session Grades 1-4: 6:00PM – 7:00PM

Second Session Grades 5-8: 7:15PM-8:15PM

Absences

Regular attendance at PREP is very important to the ongoing faith formation of students. These sessions plus the required non-instructional days should take priority over all other after-school or weekend programs and activities.

All absences will require completion of assigned make-up work provided by the catechist. The homework should be given to both the student and parent and must be completed within one week of the missed class.

If a child misses more than two classes, arrangements must be made with both the catechist and the Director of Religious Education (DRE) to complete any missed classwork.

- Three absences will necessitate a conference between the DRE and the parent.
- Four absences will result in the child having to make up the sessions. The number of make-up sessions will be determined by the Catechist and Director.
- Five absences will necessitate a conference between Father Sullivan, DRE, and the parent
- Six absences may result in the repetition of the grade level.
- Special Note: Students in sacramental preparation (Grade 2 and Grade 8) may not miss more than three classes to be considered fully ready for reception of the sacraments.

In the case of a long-term illness confirmed by a doctor's report, the DRE and parent should make arrangements for religious education at home.

Notification Procedure for Absence

When a child is to be absent from a class, the parent must contact the PREP office no later than 3:00 pm the day of class. This should be done preferably through email but a phone call is acceptable.

Director of Religious Education
mspeca@thgoodshep.org
720-339-6430

Dismissal of Student before the End of Class

If your child needs to be dismissed early, the request for this early dismissal should be emailed prior to the scheduled session. This request should include: the name of the person picking up the child, the designated date and time, and the reason. The parent/guardian must come to the Parish Hall doors to pick up the child. The Director or appropriate adult will go to the session and walk the child out to meet the parent. For security reasons, the parent/guardian may not go directly to the classroom.

Communication with Parents and Students

Monthly newsletter emails will be sent to parents via email from the DRE. Please be sure to read these emails thoroughly as they will contain information about important news, notes, and upcoming events.

Class Cancellation

There will be no snow make up days this year.

If there is a class cancellation due to inclement weather or for other reasons, parents will be notified by text (with the phone number provided on the registration form) and email (with the email address provided on the registration form).

Communications between Catechists, Parents, and Students

All communication regarding a child's faith formation or behavior must be arranged through the PREP Director.

Parents should not directly call or email catechists. Any necessary communication with a catechist must include the Director in a "CC" on all emails.

For the safety of our students, there may be **no private or direct electronic communication with minors**. All communication must take place through parents or guardians.

Cell Phones

The use of cell phones and other electronic devices by students is not permitted during PREP class unless this is directed by the Catechist as part of the educational process. Cell phones brought into the Parish Hall should be turned off or in silent mode, and out of sight. A student in need of contacting a parent must ask the Catechist's permission. The Catechist will contact the DRE to help the student make a call to the parent.

Student Conduct

All students on parish grounds are expected to conduct themselves in a respectful and reverent manner toward our Lord, our pastor, their catechists, staff, and fellow students.

In the classroom, students are expected to follow directions, listen attentively, participate respectfully, and avoid disruptive behavior. Questions and discussions should always be handled in an orderly and respectful manner. At all times, students are expected to behave in accordance with the moral teachings of the Catholic Church. Failure to do so may result in dismissal from the Faith Formation program.

While we hope that students find learning about the Catholic faith engaging, meaningful, and enjoyable, it is important to remember that Faith Formation is also a serious and sacred responsibility centered on growing in relationship with God and understanding His teachings.

Students should also understand that every person is created in the image and likeness of God and must always be treated with dignity and respect. Teasing, bullying, embarrassing, or mistreating others in any way will not be tolerated, regardless of gender, ability, disability, or physical appearance.

Discipline

Our catechists are dedicated volunteers who generously give their time to share and teach the Catholic faith to the children of Good Shepherd Parish. We are deeply grateful for their commitment and ask that all students show respect and cooperation so that each catechist may effectively teach their planned lessons.

If a student's behavior becomes disruptive during class, the catechist may excuse the student from the classroom and refer them to the Director of Religious Education (DRE). Appropriate disciplinary action will be determined based on the nature and severity of the behavior.

In most cases, a first offense will result in a warning and communication with the catechist to ensure the behavior improves. A second offense, or a first offense involving a more serious issue, may result in a phone call or written communication to the parent or guardian from the DRE.

If disruptive behavior continues and a third offense occurs, the student may be removed from the classroom. Before the student is permitted to return, a meeting with the pastor and the DRE will be required. At that time, the parent may be asked to accompany the child to class for the remainder of the year, or alternative arrangements may be made for private catechesis.

Assessments and Progress Reports

Assessment in PREP is used to support each child's growth in faith and understanding. Students are evaluated on their grasp of the material taught through the parish curriculum and textbook at their grade level.

If a child needs additional support, the Director will work with parents and the catechist to determine the best approach.

Progress Reports

Progress reports are issued **three times per year** and reflect a child's overall participation in PREP, including:

- Attendance
- Participation and engagement
- Behavior and attitude
- Completion of at-home assignments
- Memorization and understanding of content

Supplies & Materials

All basic supplies (textbooks, pencils, crayons, etc.) are provided.

- Families may be asked to donate items for special projects
- **Textbooks should be brought to class each week** unless otherwise noted
- Our program uses the *Christ Our Life* series from Loyola Press

If a textbook is lost, please notify the catechist or Director. A **\$25 replacement fee** may apply.

Diocese of Harrisburg Youth Protection

The Roman Catholic Diocese of Harrisburg has adopted a *Youth Protection Program* as a tool of moral responsibility, pastoral life, and legal discipline. The safety of minors within the Church is a primary pastoral priority for all who participate in youth programs and ministries within the Diocese. Prevention and Education consist of four parts: (1) mandatory background certification and clearances (criminal record checks); (2) educational programs; (3) standards of conduct; and (4) compliance auditing.

All participants of the PREP program who have direct contact with children at Good Shepherd Parish are required to obtain clearances. This includes catechists, aides, and all volunteers (including parents who want to help out in the classroom for special projects or events). **The process for completing and documenting all the required background clearances is published by the Diocesan Office of Youth Protection and available on the Diocesan website at: www.hbgdiocese.org/safeyouth.**

All ADULT VOLUNTEERS are required to obtain clearances every 60 months (or every 5 years). All adult volunteers must obtain the following clearances:

- Report of criminal history from the PA State Police (PSP); and
- Child Abuse History certification from the PA Department of Human Services.

Additionally, a Fingerprint-based federal criminal history (FBI) is required if the adult volunteer is a current resident of Pennsylvania now, but has not been a resident of the Commonwealth for the entire previous ten-year period.

Please note: It is now State Law and not just Diocesan policy that prospective adult volunteers **MUST** submit clearances prior to the commencement of service.

VOLUNTEERS: No person under the age of 18 may be accepted into a volunteer position of any sort that involves oversight or supervision of other minors, except under the direct and continuous supervision of a person at least 21 years of age who has completed all the requirements of this *Program*.

Students (minors) aged 14-17 whose volunteer work meets the criteria above are not required to obtain clearance certifications, but they are required to complete the On Line Training, "Jesus Working Through You."

To ensure compliance with the requirement to obtain all background clearances for volunteers, each Vicar Forane (Dean) will have the responsibility to examine a current file during his annual visit to each parish. The file must show, to his satisfaction, that such background certification and clearances for volunteers are being performed on a comprehensive and timely basis.

Mass Requirements and Confessions

Participation in the Mass is an essential part of faith formation.

Except in cases of illness or serious circumstances, students are expected to attend **Mass every Sunday and on Holy Days of Obligation** in addition to their PREP classes.

Class attendance does not take the place of Sunday (or Saturday vigil) Mass at any time.

Both PFC and In-Person PREP students are expected to attend and participate in their **grade-level Children's Mass**. At each Children's Mass, a designated section will be reserved for students to sit together as a class.

According to the Catechism of the Catholic Church, "The first precept [of the Church] (You shall attend Mass on Sundays and holy days of obligation) requires the faithful to participate in the Eucharistic celebration when the Christian community gathers together on the day commemorating the Resurrection of the Lord [Sunday]." (CCC 2042)

Children's Mass is the 9:30 am Mass and is typically the third Sunday of the month from September through May. The link to the sign up sheet is:

ttsu.me/childrensmass2026-2027

There are six Holy Days of Obligation (days when, in addition to Sunday, Catholics are required to attend Mass):

- Nov. 1 – All Saints Day
- Dec. 8 – The Immaculate Conception
- Dec. 25 – Christmas
- Jan. 1 – Mary the Mother of God
- 40 days after Easter – The Ascension
- Aug. 15 – The Assumption

Confessions

We offer two Confession services each year, during the seasons of Advent and Lent. These services take place during your child's scheduled PREP class time.

If your child is unable to attend Confession at the scheduled PREP time, you can attend one of the Confessions that are held for all members of the Parish according to the schedule below:

CHAPEL – Entrance A
Saturdays: 3:15 pm – 4:15 pm
Any time by appointment

Parent & Student Handbook Acknowledgement Form

I acknowledge that I have received and reviewed the Good Shepherd Parish Faith Formation Parent & Student Handbook. I understand the policies, expectations, attendance requirements, behavioral guidelines, and program procedures outlined within the handbook.

By signing below, I agree to support and uphold the policies and expectations of the Faith Formation Program. I understand that participation in the program requires respectful behavior, regular attendance, completion of assignments, and cooperation with catechists, staff, and parish leadership.

I also understand that it is my responsibility to communicate with the Director of Religious Education (DRE) regarding any questions, concerns, absences, or special circumstances involving my child.

Student Information

Student Name: _____

Grade: _____

Signatures

Parent/Guardian Signature: _____

Date: _____

Student Signature: _____

Date: _____

**Please return this signed form to the Faith Formation Office by:
Monday, September 14, 2026**

Each student attending PREP class should sign his/her own Acknowledgement Form.