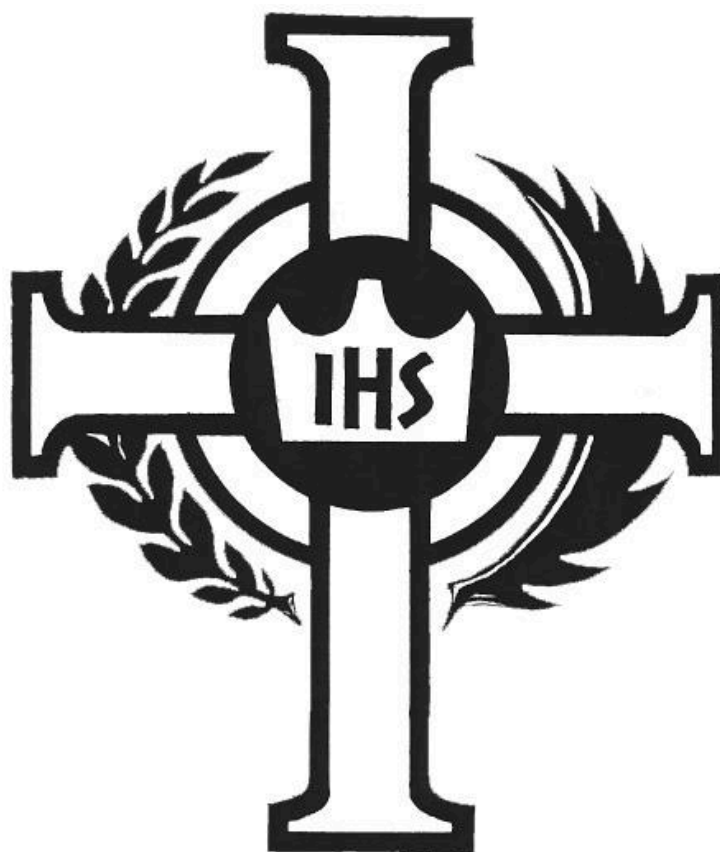


# **Christ the King Parish Old Lyme, CT**

## **2025-2026 FAITH FORMATION FAMILY HANDBOOK**



*Christ the King Parish is a family of faith, participating in the life of the local, national, and world communities through prayer, worship, and acts of love.*

*We make our journey through life in the company of one another while growing by the words of Jesus Christ, through the grace of the Holy Spirit, and in the spirit of Vatican II as taught to us by the Church.*

*- Parish Mission Statement*

# Welcome!

We are so glad your family is growing in faith with us. Our youth faith formation program is designed to provide education, retreats, liturgies, sacramental celebrations, and community building activities to support & enhance the faith development that occurs in the heart and home of each family.

## **Parish Staff**

Fr. Joseph Ashe - Pastor

Fr. Walter Nagle - Parochial Vicar

Kimberly Whitcomb - Parish Secretary

William J. Thomas - Director of Music Ministries

Erica Zapatka - Director of Faith Formation

Office Phone: (860) 434-1669

Office Fax: (860) 434-7140

Office Email: [ctkoldlyme@aol.com](mailto:ctkoldlyme@aol.com)

DFF Phone: (860) 575-1740

DFF Email: [dreChristTheKingOL@gmail.com](mailto:dreChristTheKingOL@gmail.com)

The office at Christ the King Church is open Monday through Friday, 8:00 am to 4:00 pm.

Erica does not have set hours but is typically at the Church Saturday 9:00am - 5:00pm & Sunday 8:00am - 3:00pm and 1 or 2 evenings a week from 4:30pm - 6pm. Please reach out to set up a meeting at any time.

## **Communication Policy**

CTK Faith Formation program uses email and Class Dojo (a free app) as their primary forms of communion. Parents are strongly encouraged to download the Class Dojo App as this has calendars and chat features for individual classes as well as the whole program and will provide you with the most up to date information including unexpected class cancellations and changes in programming. Email is used for more lengthy, non-time sensitive communication.

Erica can be reached at any time through chat on Class Dojo or by calling or texting the DFF phone number, (860) 575-1740.

The Christ the King website [www.christthekingchurch.net](http://www.christthekingchurch.net) has a Faith Formation Page which is updated as needed with information pertaining to the program including the faith formation calendar and upcoming events, details about our program, and opportunities for youth and families to grow in their faith.

Christ the King also maintains a Facebook page with announcements about upcoming events, posts about parish activities, and time sensitive announcements like weather cancellations.

Across from the parish office the Faith Formation Bulletin Board and Calendar is updated monthly with youth happenings, faith formation activities, and parish & diocesan events. Copies of important faith formation paperwork are also kept here for families to access.

## **Family Involvement**

From the Diocese of Norwich's Faith Formation Curriculum, "It is important to note that the parent(s) are "the principal and first educators of their children" (Catechism of the Catholic Church, No. 1653). The curriculum incorporates faith filled interactions to help parents with this mission. As a guide, the curriculum will introduce rituals and traditions that we encourage families to incorporate at home. Helping families make practicing their religion an extension of their personal relationship with God/Jesus/Holy Spirit."

Following the guidance from the diocese as well as our own culture at Christ the King, families are an integral part of our Faith Formation program. We host several family events as part of our faith formation program including prayer services, child & parent retreats, family days for each class, and social gatherings. Students are sent home with extension activities each week to help families build upon the lessons in class and our parish hosts many intergenerational activities in which entire families are encouraged to participate.

## **Curriculum**

Our curriculum follows the Diocese of Norwich guidelines which are available on their website. Each grade level explores the following topics in ways that are developmentally and theologically appropriate.

Knowledge of Faith  
Moral Life  
Liturgy & Sacraments  
Prayer  
Discipleship & Evangelization

A multi-experiential approach is used to ensure that each area is explored through various modalities (reading, writing, crafts, games, play, etc) in order to engage all types of learners. In addition to these topics the weekly scripture readings (lectionary-based) are also examined throughout the year.

All children are valuable members of our faith community and are invited to learn about their faith and grow in fellowship with their peers. For those who require individualized learning plans, lessons can be adapted and modified to meet their needs and additional support can be provided.

In addition to weekly classes, each grade will have the opportunity to attend a developmentally appropriate retreat at some point throughout the year and each grade will "host" a youth mass where they will fill the various liturgical ministry roles.

Finally all students will participate in an age-appropriate Safe Environment class as required by the Diocese. This class is held before our opening Mass on the 4th Sunday of September. Please see the Safe Environments Section of this handbook for more details.

## **Sacramental Programs**

Students in their sacramental preparation years, 2nd grade for 1st Reconciliation & 1st Communion and 8th & 9th grade for Confirmation have programs specifically designed to help them understand the meaning of their sacrament, why it is important, and what it means for them to receive it.

Reconciliation & First Communion are typically received in 2nd grade but if a student did not receive these sacraments at that time, special instruction can be provided and they can receive them within a year of beginning the instruction.

Reconciliation is received in January. A family prayer service is held and everyone attending has the opportunity to receive the sacrament of reconciliation.

First Communion is celebrated in May. This traditionally happens on Saturday morning during a special Mass just for the First Communion students and their families.

Confirmation is a 2 year program (beginning with the 8th grade in 2025/2026). Each year students are required to participate in a retreat, engage in service, and demonstrate their active participation in the parish through regular attendance at Mass and other spiritual, social, and service opportunities.

Confirmation is received in November or December. The Bishop typically celebrates this Mass and it is scheduled based upon his availability.

## **Faith Formation Expectations**

**In our parish, and most especially our youth programs, we believe that EVERYONE should be:**

**Safe  
Respected  
Loved**

We all have responsibilities to ensure that we create a program and atmosphere where this occurs. On the following pages are examples of how each of us contributes to making sure everyone is safe, respected, and loved. If each of us doesn't do our part, people can be hurt, have difficulty learning, become upset, fearful, or feel estranged. By following Christ's example and instruction we strive to make our parish a place where everyone is able to worship, learn, and grow.

To create an environment where everyone feels safe, respected, and loved each class has developmentally appropriate expectations for the students and teachers to follow. When students have difficulty following the classroom expectations we work with families to determine why and create a plan that will support that young person while ensuring that everyone else in the class also is safe, respected, and loved.

**If you know your child has difficulty with any of these concepts due to cognitive, emotional, or behavioral challenges please reach out to the DFF as early as possible so appropriate support can be proactively put in place.**

If a student or family member has concerns around classes or our program being a place of safety, respect, & love they should reach out to the teacher and/or the DFF as soon as possible so the concerns can be addressed appropriately.

**If a student's words or actions impede the safety, respect, or feeling of love of for themselves or anyone else in the class:**

**First,** the catechist will ensure everyone's immediate safety and address the situation directly with the student or engage the DFF to resolve the situation directly with the student.

**If that is unsuccessful** the catechist and/or DFF will contact the parent to create a plan to ensure the class environment remains a place where everyone is safe, respected, and loved.

**If the challenges continue** a parent may be asked to attend class with their child or an alternate learning arrangement may be designed to ensure everyone in the class remains safe, respected, and loved.

***At any time if the catechist, DFF, or pastor believes that continuing to have a child in the class is unsafe the parents will be asked to come immediately to pick up the student and create a plan for moving forward.***

Safe - Physically & Emotionally				
DFF & Parish Staff	Chartechists	Families	Students	Parishioners
Trained in Safe Environments and ensure that all adults and teens working with students are as well. Ensure students, teachers, & families are aware of all safety plans & materials Make sure our meeting spaces are safe, clean, and comfortable. Create & share the rules to ensure everyone's safety. Educate teachers about creating physically & emotionally safe learning spaces Support teachers, families, and students when safety challenges arise.	Trained in Safe Environments. Keep their meeting space clean and comfortable. Report any safety concerns to DFF and/or appropriate parish staff. Clearly communicate & consistently enforce class safety expectations. Follow through with fidelity any individual safety plans for students.	Are familiar with Safe Environments tennents and communicate them to their children as appropriate. Share with DFF & teacher any health or behavioral issues that your child has which may result in unsafe conditions. Are familiar with the rules and safety plans for faith formation Review & reinforce safety expectations with their children Share safety concerns with teachers and/or DFF. Work with DFF & teacher to resolve any safety issues .	Follow directions given by the adults. To the best of their ability, know and follow the safety plans and expectations for their class. Use language that is kind and appropriate. Help the teacher clean-up their meeting space. Tell a trusted adult when they don't feel safe.	Help maintain the cleanliness of our parish common spaces. Report safety concerns to parish staff.
Respected				
DFF & Parish Staff	Catchecists	Families	Students	Parishioners
Encourage feedback and input from many sources within the parish. Ensure that the curriculum is developmentally and	Teach classes in a developmentally appropriate manner that honors a variety of learning styles.	Make FF a priority in your family's schedule. Share learning or behavioral challenges with the DFF and your	Use kind and polite language and actions. Listen to your classmates and	Bring concerns to the DFF or appropriate parish staff Engage with FF

<p>theologically appropriate Communicate with families, teachers, and students clearly &amp; in a timely manner. Use language and actions that promote inclusion and understanding. Create &amp; share the rules that promote respectful behaviors Continually engage in new learning Create plans, policies, and activities that demonstrate best practice as advised by the diocese and recognized experts. Recognize that families are the foundation for faith formation and develop programs that will support and engage them. Be available to help &amp; support</p>	<p>Communicate with DFF, families, and students clearly and kindly Use language &amp; actions that support all students. Clearly communicate and consistently enforce group language and behavioral expectations. Engage in new learning about their faith Ask for help when needed</p>	<p>child's teacher. Model polite, clear, and kind language and behaviors. Teach and review behavioral and language expectations for FF Share your faith journey with your child/ren Engage in discussions and activities with your child/ren around their FF lessons. Participate in family FF events. Ask for help when needed</p>	<p>teachers. Participate in FF activities. Turn off your phone during class unless it's being used for a teacher approved activity. Ask for help when needed</p>	<p>student by asking them about what they did in class At Mass, smile at and share words of encouragement to young families and teens especially. Volunteer your time, talents, and/or treasure in the faith formation program.</p>
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### Loved

DFF & Parish Staff	Catechists	Families	Students	Parishioners
<p>Have an open door policy and create a peaceful yet engaging, safe space where all feel welcome. Be visible and get to know teachers, families, and students personally. Create opportunities for everyone to share their positive experiences and feel supported when they are down. Ensure the curriculum emphasises God's great love and teaches meaningful ways that students can experience it and share it. Provide support and consistently acknowledge appreciation to teachers and families. Pray for teachers, families, and students.</p>	<p>Be nurturing and supportive Build relationships with students and their families Consistently enforce classroom expectations Honor students' differences Ensure each lesson reminds students of God's love Pray together as a class Keep students and their families in your personal prayers.</p>	<p>Model &amp; talk about God's great love Demonstrate interest in your child's learning Participate actively with your child in faith formation activities Support your child's interests and passions and help them make connections to their faith. Pray together as a family Pray for your child, their teachers, and our parish.</p>	<p>Do your best at FF Share what you learn at FF with your family and friends. Use kind words and actions. If you hurt someone let them know you are sorry. Talk to God (Pray) and ask Him to help you share His Love with others.</p>	<p>Pray for our leaders, teachers, families, and students. Let families know you are glad they are here. Share your faith experiences with others.</p>

## **Yearly Parental Consent Form Photographs & Videos**

The two paragraph statements below are excerpts from the Diocese of Norwich Office of Safe Environments policy regarding *Electronic Communications, Internet, and Computer Use Policy, effective March 1, 2013*. Please read and on the signature page check the box next to the appropriate statement and sign.

1. No image of a minor who is involved in a parish/school/institution may be posted on a webpage associated with that parish/school/institution without the written permission of the responsible administrator of the program and the minor's parent. Such images must be removed immediately if the minor's parent refuses or withdraws their consent.
2. No personal information about minors involved in a parish/school/institution may be posted on a webpage associated with that organization or program (e.g., listing of names and contact information of sports participants or altar servers on an official parish website).

## **Safe Environments in The Diocese of Norwich**

Safe Environments refers to environments that are created and maintained in an effort to provide children, young people, ministers, and other people with the safest possible place in which to minister, study, and work.

The Diocese of Norwich and its parishes, schools, and other affiliated institutions are committed to providing safe environments for children, young people, and adults.

To assist in creating and maintaining safe environments, Bishop Michael R. Cote established the Office for Safe Environments. The responsibilities of this office include overseeing the creation and implementation of safe environments programs and policies. In the Diocese of Norwich, there are six components to the safe environments programs and policies:

### **1. Awareness and Education**

In creating any safe environment, awareness and education are essential. The Diocese has chosen the Praesidium programs *Armatus online* and *Called to Protect* as two of the avenues for raising awareness regarding the issue of child sexual abuse and how to prevent it. *Called to Protect* is a video-based and discussion- oriented program, and *Armatus* is online training. Both of these programs provide a foundational understanding of the risks, warning signs, and appropriate responses to child sexual abuse. It also discusses preventive strategies and how to implement them.

All priests, deacons, ministry leaders, and employees and volunteers who interact with children and teenagers on a regular basis have an obligation to attend this program.

In addition to these two programs, the Diocese has embarked upon several initiatives to raise awareness and increase education in regard to safe environments. These initiatives include:

- the writing and distribution of pamphlets, bulletin inserts, and other educational materials;
- articles in the *Four County Catholic*;
- postings on the diocesan website ([www.norwichdiocese.org](http://www.norwichdiocese.org));
- other programs and forums determined by the Office for Safe Environments.

### **2. The Pastoral Code of Conduct**

The Pastoral Code of Conduct is a set of guidelines for all Catholics to follow in creating and maintaining safe environments. It also includes provisions for addressing a lack of compliance with the Pastoral Code of Conduct and referrals in how to report sexual misconduct.

### **3. Electronics Communication and Computer Use Policy**

The proper relationship between adults and minors can easily become confused because of the easy, informal, and at times anonymous nature of many forms of electronic communication. Adults must make sure that their use of electronic communication maintains a proper professional relationship with minors, and does not create or give the appearance of an inappropriate relationship, or encourage inappropriate behavior. In using electronic communications, proper and healthy boundaries between adults and minors must always be maintained.

### **4. Comprehensive Screening**

Comprehensive screening refers to the screening process for employees, volunteers, and contractors affiliated with the Diocese of Norwich. It includes:

- a written application form with signed statement by the employee, volunteer, or contractor;
- checks of references listed on an application form;
- a personal interview with employee, contractor, or volunteer;
- observations of the person's conduct;
- a criminal background check of the contractor, volunteer, or employee.

### **5. Sexual Misconduct Policy**

The Sexual Misconduct Policy of the Diocese of Norwich addresses child sexual abuse and other issues of sexual misconduct by priests, deacons, employees, volunteers, and contractors of the Diocese of Norwich. It describes how to report allegations of sexual misconduct and how the Diocese will respond to allegations. This policy complies with the Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People, which was drafted by the United State Conference of Catholic Bishops in June of 2002.

### **6. Practical Matters and Other Concerns**

This component addresses practical matters that arise during awareness and education sessions and the implementation of comprehensive screening, the Pastoral Code of Conduct, and other safe environments measures. Practical matters and concerns include such things as safe environments conditions of usage for the use of parish facilities by people outside of the parish and resolving conflicts between diocesan safe environments policies and other professional codes of ethics and conduct.

### **Your help is needed!**

Creating and maintaining safe environments for children and young people is not the responsibility of one or two people. Each and every person can assist in providing safe environments for all of God's children. In fact, for these initiatives to be truly successful, we need the help and assistance of all Catholics. To find out how you can help in creating and maintaining safe environments for all of God's children, contact your local parish, school, or Catholic institution or contact the Office for Safe Environments.

If you would like to review the NO, GO, TELL Curriculum prior to the beginning of Faith Formation classes you can go to the Norwich Diocese Office of Safe Environments website

<https://www.norwichdiocese.org/NoGoTell> or contact Erica Zapatka, DFF or Susan Millerick, Safe Environments Coordinator, through the parish office.



## **Registering for Faith Formation Classes**

We welcome all children from kindergarten through ninth grade in our faith formation classes. All students in 2<sup>nd</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup>, and 9<sup>th</sup> grade, even those who attend a Catholic school, must register for Faith Formation classes in their parish in order to prepare for the sacraments of First Reconciliation and First Communion (received in 2<sup>nd</sup> grade) and Confirmation (received at the beginning of 10<sup>th</sup> grade). If your child has any special needs please know that we welcome them with open arms and will work to ensure that they are supported and able to learn about their faith in whatever way is most meaningful to them.

Online registration is strongly preferred using the MY HOME CHURCH family portal. Instructions for setting up an account and registering are available by the Faith Formation Bulletin Board. If you are unable to register through My Home Church, registration forms can be found in the narthex of the Church during registration weeks or online at the parish website, [www.christthekingchurch.net](http://www.christthekingchurch.net). All families/students must have a completed registration prior to beginning classes.

### **First time Registration:**

Any child/children who are registering for the first time at Christ the King must provide, at the time of registration, their Baptismal Certificate and/or First Eucharist Certificate if s/he did not receive their sacraments at Christ the King.

### **Registration Fee:**

Registration fees help to offset the expenses of Faith Formation and Sacrament Preparation programs and other activities for our parish families and youth.

There are **NO Faith Formation Fees for the children of our volunteer catechists** If you are interested in volunteering in 2025-2026, please contact Erica.

**NOTE:** Please do not hold up your family's registration because of financial issues. We will not deny any family faith formation due to finances and we are happy to make arrangements that will work for your family. Reach out to Erica or Fr. Joe to discuss this. All information is confidential.

#### **Registration Fees**

	1 Child	2 Children	3 or More
Before 6/1/25	\$75.00	\$100.00	\$125.00
After 6/1/25	\$100.00	\$125.00	\$150.00

#### **ADDITIONAL FEES FOR SACRAMENTAL YEARS (2<sup>nd</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup>, & 9<sup>th</sup>)**

**2<sup>nd</sup> grade** - 1st Reconciliation & Communion add an additional \$30 for robe rental & activities

**8<sup>th</sup> grade** - Confirmation Year 1, add additional \$40 for retreat & activities

**9<sup>th</sup> grade** - Confirmation Year 2, add \$50 for retreat, robe rental & activities

At Christ the King, we are blessed with a vibrant Faith Formation program run completely by volunteers. We have a great need for many types of volunteers. If you are debating the call to serve, please prayerfully consider offering your gifts and sharing your faith and talents with our children and parish community.

# Christ the King Faith Formation Handbook Signature Page for Academic Year 2025-2026

Family Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Child/ren's Name	Date of Birth	Grade (25-26 school year)

## Receipt of Handbook:

*My signature below indicates that I have received, reviewed, and understand the Christ the King Faith Formation Handbook including the information regarding expectation of creating an environment of safety, respect, and love and the plan for those who struggle with those expectations.*

Parent/Guardian Printed Name \_\_\_\_\_

Parent/Guardian Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_

## Registration Fee:

I have enclosed the following Registration Fee & Sacramental Fees (if needed):

\$ \_\_\_\_\_

- ☐ Cash
- ☐ Check # \_\_\_\_\_ (Made out to Christ the King)
- ☐ Parent/Guardian will volunteer on an ongoing basis during the 2025/2026 year, no payment needed.

## Custody Concerns:

- ☐ No custody issues that would impact my child/ren's faith formation experience &/or safety.
- ☐ We have the following custody issues that may impact my child/ren's faith formation experience &/or safety:

*Please provide a copy of any pertinent court orders.*

**Program Support:**

I am interested in volunteering in the following way/s:

- ☐ Catechist
- ☐ Catechist Support
- ☐ Substitute Catechist
- ☐ Special Needs Support

- ☐ Special Projects Organization
- ☐ Special Projects Support
- ☐ Office/Clerical Support
- ☐ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**Photo Consent:**

- ☐ I consent for photos and /or videos of my child/ren to be displayed within the church building, to be used in parish publications, and on parish social media.
- ☐ I consent for photos and/or videos of my child/ren ONLY to be displayed within the church building.
- ☐ I do NOT consent for any photos and/or videos of my child/ren to be displayed within the parish or in parish publications or social media.

This does not apply to ZOOM which occurs at all Masses and parish prayer events that occur in the Church.

Parent/Guardian Printed Name \_\_\_\_\_

Parent/Guardian Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_

**Safe Environments:**

I have received the following Norwich Diocese Safe Environments document:

- . No Go Tell Brochure

I understand that my child(ren) will review the age-appropriate **No Go Tell** curriculum at the beginning of each Faith Formation year. I understand that if my child(ren) does not attend the No Go Tell class, it is my responsibility to review this curriculum <https://www.norwichdiocese.org/NoGoTell> with him/her.

*Please sign this form as confirmation that you have received the information, read these documents, and understand what you, as a parent/guardian, can do to help maintain a safe environment for all in Christ the King's faith community.*

Parent/Guardian Printed Name \_\_\_\_\_

Parent/Guardian Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_

**For Office Use Only**

- ☐ Verified in Parish Soft
- ☐ Copied for Safe Environments Documentation
- ☐ Payment received

Initials

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_