

St. Peter's Religious Education Student/Parent Handbook 2025-2026



CONTACT INFORMATION

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Dear Parents,

Welcome! Thank you for enrolling your child in our Religious Education program and for the privilege that you have thereby afforded us of sharing in the wonderful work of both educating your child in the faith and opening up an awareness in your child of the love that God has for each one of us!

This handbook includes many resources to assist you throughout the coming year, including RE program policies, Mass and class attendance, contact information, and protocols for drop-off and pick-up.

Our program represents the efforts of many people, all who make a generous commitment of time and talents to support the work of educating St Peter's Parish children in our faith. Remember to thank them for witnessing to the truth, and be generous with your support, too!

If you have questions, concerns, or suggestions regarding the program or your child's experiences here, please call, email, or visit me to discuss.

Thank you, and may God richly bless you and your families.

Sincerely in Christ,

Heather Olson
Director Of Religious Education
St Peter's Catholic Church

ENROLLMENT POLICY

It should be understood by all families/households of the parish of the obligation to enroll their children 1st-10th grade, in either the parish Religious Education program or a parochial school each year as part of the ongoing spiritual formation and religious education for the child. Skipping years between sacraments is an unacceptable practice. It shall be the policy of St. Peter's Church and its Religious Education Programs that there be an evaluation of any student entering grades two through ten who was not associated with a Religious Education program or Catholic school in prior years. It shall be the responsibility of the Director of Religious Education to conduct an evaluation of each applicant to determine the student's level of faith formation and to explain the process for completion of the sacramental preparation.

REGISTRATION/TUITION

Religious Education registration forms can be found and filled out on the parish website. Registration is necessary prior to your child attending and must be done every year.

Tuition is \$50 per student or \$150 max per family and needs to be paid the first night of class.

PLEASE NOTE: Families with a parent volunteering as a catechist will receive a discount from their tuition fees.

No family or child will be turned away for financial reasons. Fee assistance and payment plan options are available. Contact the Director of Religious Education if you need assistance.

CLASS SCHEDULE/TIMES

Classes meet each Wednesday from September-April. Classes meet at the Religious Education Center (St Francis Worship Center) 238 S 6th St.

- **K-8 Classes are from 6:00-7:00pm**
- **Confirmation 9 & 10 are from 7:15pm-8:15pm**

Please do not drop your child off any earlier than 10 minutes prior to start.

COMMUNICATION

There are 2 primary modes of communication:

- 1) Email - Please make sure your email address is up-to-date and checked regularly
- 2) Facebook - St Peter's Catholic Church

LEARNING ACCOMMODATIONS/HEALTH RELATED PROBLEMS

If your child has learning accommodations or health related problems, this information should be noted on their registration form. All information will remain confidential, but this information will be passed onto the Catechist, which will be helpful to them in teaching your child. Please feel free to call the DRE with further information, so we may have all the tools to better assist your child.

DROP OFF AND PICK UP

Drop Off – The chapel door will be unlocked 15 minutes prior to the start of class. The door will be locked promptly at 6:15pm/7:30pm while classes are in session for safety. Please try to avoid tardiness. If your child(ren) is late and the doors are locked please have your child go to the side door (between chapel and garages) and ring the doorbell. If your child(ren) will be late please text the DRE so we know they will be coming.

Pick Up - All students in grades K-4th need to be picked up in the chapel by a parent/adult. All 5th-10th grade students will be walked out the door of the chapel by their Catechist.

ATTENDANCE

Regular attendance is important to the ongoing faith formation of students. **To assure quality Religious Education for your child(ren) attendance is expected.** Much care, planning and time by volunteers goes into preparing for Wednesday evenings. Sports, practice and other extracurricular activities are not reasons to miss classes. Parents are expected to make this evening a priority. Excessive absenteeism may result in repeating coursework or postponing a sacrament and will require a meeting with the DRE and pastor. Special circumstances, such as an extended illness, will be excused.

Attendance is taken at the beginning of each class. **If your child must miss, notify Heather Olson, by phone or email, by 5 p.m.**

CLOSINGS & CANCELLATIONS

Emergency closings or cancellations will be announced via email and on our Facebook page. If on a Wednesday classes at Council Bluffs Public Schools are canceled or an early dismissal is announced due to inclement weather, then classes are automatically canceled as well. Cancellations and postponement of classes and other events are also at the discretion of the DRE.

COMMUNICABLE DISEASES

Students with a condition which may be passed onto others in the classroom must be excluded from attending RE classes until no longer contagious. These conditions include, but are not limited to:

1. Fever – students should remain home until 24 hours after a fever breaks.
2. Infections – students should be kept home for a minimum of 24 hours after starting antibiotics.
3. Vomiting – students should remain home until 24 hours after the last episode.
4. Diarrhea – students should remain home until 24 hours after an episode.
5. Covid = stay home until symptoms are gone and/or follow current CDC guidelines.

NUT/FOOD ALLERGY SAFETY

Allergy safety is important for student safety. We try to minimize or eliminate the risk of exposure for our students while they are at class. To help minimize the risk of exposure we will:

- Not serve any foods that contain nuts.
- Catechists will be informed of any student with a food allergy in their classroom.
- If a parent would like to bring in a snack for a special occasion please make sure to ask for any food allergies in your students' classroom.

Parents are encouraged to have any allergies noted on the registration form so they can be communicated with the Catechist.

BEHAVIORAL EXPECTATIONS/DISCIPLINE/LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

A welcoming and respectful environment is necessary to provide an atmosphere that is conducive to sharing and learning. Courtesy, cooperation, and respect is expected of each student. Students are required to follow the rules and regulations discussed herein, as well as the rules set forth in their respective classrooms.

- to respect the authority of the catechists and staff,
- to respect the other students in the class and to not interfere with their learning,
- to come to each session prepared to learn,
- to respect all property,
- Students may not enter a classroom without a teacher, or other adult member present,
- Students will not be allowed to use cellphones or any other electronic devices,
- Students should not run in the hallway.

The children in our program are here to learn about their faith. At times, some children are unable to control their behavior which may disrupt the class. If a child displays behavior that is inconsistent with the rules and values established in the classroom and/or the program for the good of all the following steps will be followed:

If behaviors are not able to be corrected in the class by the catechist, the student will be removed from the classroom. If a student is removed from class more than once, parents will be contacted by the DRE. Parents may be asked to attend class with the student if the behavior persists. If repeat offenses occur a meeting will be scheduled with the DRE and plans made to ensure behavior modification before the student can return to class.

CELL PHONES/TABLETS/PERSONAL DEVICES/TOYS

All personal electronic devices must be out of sight and not in use once students enter the building for catechesis. Youth are strongly encouraged to leave these devices at home. St. Peter's Church is not responsible for the safety of these items. Devices that are out will be held by the catechist, hall monitor or director until the session is over.

CATECHETICAL VOLUNTEERS

Catechists are men and women who are members of our parish family. In this ministry, catechists work as assistants to the parents who are the primary catechist. It is our role to help the parent's journey with their children as they deepen their faith and love for our Lord. This ministry is indeed challenging, but, as most catechists will state, it is as rewarding a calling and ministry as there is. If anyone wishes to become a catechist, classroom assistant or substitute, please contact the Director of Religious Education who will be able to further discuss the opportunities and areas of need in our parish's program. All volunteers are required to complete on-line VIRTUS training and a background check to help provide a safe environment for children.

LITURGY OF THE MASS

We expect families to regularly attend Sunday Mass. Students receive instruction on the liturgy of the mass. All students need to sign in at Mass on the Mass sign in sheet located on the clipboard on the back table of the church. Throughout the RE year, students will also attend grade level masses with their catechists and classmates. Families are encouraged to attend these Masses. If a class night coincides with a Holy Day of Obligation, students will attend mass and families are encouraged to attend as well.

"As members of the Christian community, all are called to participate actively in the liturgical prayer of the Church. Religious Education therefore must involve the student in his/her faith community and in that community's liturgy. Liturgy itself educates, it teaches, it forms community, and it forms the individual. It makes possible worship to God." (U.S.C.C.B., "Basic Teachings for Catholic Religious Education")

SAFETY/SECURITY PLAN

St. Peter's wants every student to be safe and accounted for when under our supervision. All students who attend our program will enter the chapel doors and remain in the chapel until their teacher has arrived. At dismissal all students will walk with their teacher to the chapel to be dismissed. For the safety of everyone in our building, the doors are closed and locked promptly at 6:15pm/7:30pm and remain locked while class is in session. No students are allowed to enter classrooms until their teacher is present.

FIRE/SEVERE WEATHER HAZARDS, ALARMS

Catechists are provided with instructions on how to lead the children in emergency situations. During emergency situations, silence and order will be maintained at all times. In the case of a tornado or weather related emergency, all students, catechists and others present will be held in designated safe areas of the building until the all clear is given. In the event of an emergency, parents will need to check with the RE Office before any child can be released. Students cannot be released directly by the catechist without first verifying departure with the office.

- All catechists are versed in the proper procedures for emergencies.
- In the case of a tornado warning, all students and staff will go to designated areas and take cover until the warning is lifted.
- No personnel will remain in the office to answer or buzz in visitors.
- Parents/guardians are encouraged to take shelter for their own safety. We encourage parents/guardians to allow students to remain with the shelter at Religious Education Center while the warning is in effect.
- St. Peter's is not responsible for any injury occurring to parent/guardian or student choosing to leave the building during a tornado warning.
- Personnel will remain until parents have claimed all children.

SICKNESS OR EMERGENCY SITUATIONS DURING CLASS TIME

Emergency information is on file in the Religious Education Office. The information must be kept current at all times. **If there is a change in your child's health information (allergies, medications, etc.) or contact information, please let the RE Office know immediately.**

The RE Office will not dispense any medications. Students are present for 60 minutes each week. Any medication (with the exception of emergency medications, ie: Epipen) a student would need should be dispensed before or after class at home. The DRE must authorize exceptions to this policy.

In case of illness or injury, parents will be contacted by phone. If the parent cannot be reached, emergency phone numbers will be called in order to obtain necessary help for the child. In the event of an emergency which requires immediate medical attention, the parent will be notified and the child will be transported by ambulance to the hospital, if necessary, at the parent's expense.

SACRAMENTAL PREPARATION

First Reconciliation/Communion Preparation:

Students receive special, intense preparation for First Reconciliation and First Holy Communion . This is done in cooperation with the parent/guardian. Students will receive the sacraments only if they are adequately prepared. St Peter's families in both the Religious Education Program and Saint Alberts School celebrate reception of the sacraments jointly.

Please note that classes and expectations are required for all public and parochial school students.

Meetings are scheduled during the year so that parents may deepen their own understanding of the sacrament being received, and help prepare their children for receiving these sacraments.

First Reconciliation/First Communion Student Requirements:

- Students must have completed first grade religious education or been enrolled in a parochial school. These Sacraments require two years of preparation; therefore, first grade attendance is mandatory to receive First Reconciliation and First Communion in second grade.
For example if a student missed first grade they will receive the sacraments in third grade.
- Students must be baptized. If student was not baptized at St Peter's, Parents will provide a copy of their child's baptismal certificate.
- Students must have made their First Reconciliation before they can receive First Communion.
- Students must attend mass weekly. Please have your student sign in on the table in the back of the church. If Mass is attended at a different church please have your child bring a bulletin from that church to class.
- Students must attend all scheduled events.

First Reconciliation/Communion Parent Meeting - Wednesday, August 27, 2025 7:00pm in the social hall

High School Faith Formation and Confirmation Preparation:

The sacrament of Confirmation is conferred during the sophomore year of high school. Preparation for the sacrament takes place during the freshmen and sophomore years with classes being held every Wednesday Sept-April. Students must have received the sacraments of Baptism, Reconciliation and Communion. If received at a different parish parents will need to provide certificates Confirmation Handbooks are distributed to all freshmen and sophomore Confirmation candidates at the start of the formation year and the handbooks outline all requirements/expectations for that year.

Freshmen Parent/Candidate Meeting - Wednesday, August 27, 2025, 6:00 pm in the social hall

Sophomore Parent/Candidate Meeting - Wednesday, August 27, 2025 6:30pm in the social hall

****please note that meeting attendance and candidate expectations and classes are required for all public and parochial school students**

St Peter's Parish Parent and Student Handbook
Acknowledgement of Receipt Form

Dear Parents/Guardians,

Thank you for taking the valuable time to read through the St Peters' Parish Parent and Student Handbook. We believe that this step helps us establish the partnership needed to promote your child's success in the Religious Education Program.

Your check marking the handbook policy box on the registration form indicates that you have received a copy of the handbook, have read the entire content, and accept the policies, regulations, and procedures contained in the manual and agree to abide by them.

Thank you!