

2024-25

Faith Formation Handbook & Registration



For Grade Levels Pre-K -12th*

St. Michael Catholic Church

1125 St. Michaels Road

Mt. Airy, MD 21771

410-489-7667



ST. MICHAEL CATHOLIC CHURCH, POPLAR SPRINGS
1125 St. Michael's Road | Mt. Airy, MD 21771
410-489-7667

Dear Parents,

It is a joy for me to welcome you to our Faith Formation program at Saint Michael Parish! Together, we are partners in educating your child in the Catholic faith, especially as they prepare for the Sacraments of Reconciliation, Eucharist and Confirmation. Thank you for the trust and confidence you place in us.

Jesus said "let the children come to me". In God's love, you have brought your child to life, and have accepted our invitation to assist you in the faith formation of your child. Our programs can communicate information and provide experiences for celebrating the sacraments, but the practice and example of your living out the faith is of equal importance.

Children in our middle school program, called "*Edge*", and teenagers in our high school program, "*Life Teen*", need to see a connection between what they learn on our campus and what they experience at home. Be assured that we are available to assist you in whatever way we can. We only ask in return for your active participation in the formation process by living your faith daily by good example, and by joining the parish community each Sunday for the celebration of Mass and the other sacraments. This is absolutely essential!

I also want to take this occasion to thank all of those who serve in our catechetical ministries. They are fellow parishioners who give their time and talent to assist you in the religious education of your child. I appreciate their generosity and love for teaching the faith.

Finally, please read the information contained in this booklet as well as paying attention to the dates on the calendar. If you have any questions, please contact the office.

In Christ,

Rev. Paul C Sparklin

Pastor



FAITH FORMATION STAFF

OPEN POSITION	Pastoral Assistant	
OPEN POSITION	Coordinator of Youth and Young Adult Ministry (Middle and High School Level)	
OPEN POSITION	Coordinator of Children’s Faith Formation (Elementary School Level)	
Andrea Squitieri	Administrative Assistant for Faith Formation	240-437-3670 asquitieri@smpschurch.org

Because our ultimate goal is heaven – for ourselves and for all those we love – we evangelize! St. Michael Faith Formation program is geared towards helping parents pass on the faith to their families and to ensure that their children have the tools necessary to freely choose salvation. Guided by this goal:

1. Our parish Faith Formation program is offered at times that support families’ attendance at Mass together.
2. We provide parents with “look-ahead” information about what topics are going to be covered each week through the scope and sequence (below) for elementary school and through the LifeTeen website for middle and high school as well as a synopsis of what was presented/discussed during SESSIONS.
3. We provide parents with information about additional resources that are available for parent and student enrichment through Flocknote, Word on Fire, Formed, Lifeteen and the Pflaum Gospel Weeklies site.

Pre-K (ages 4 & 5) Through 5th Grade Level

We offer Sunday and Tuesday in-house options for faith formation in addition to a Home Study option for those who choose to instruct their children in their home. We use Pflaum Gospel Weeklies for Pre-K (ages 4 and 5) through 5th grade level.

Our programs are designed to follow the scope and sequence for the individual grade-level curriculum guidelines established by the Archdiocese of Baltimore. Each grade level focuses on a specific aspect of our faith. You can find a copy of the AoB standards and indicators for each grade level every parish aims to adhere to on this webpage:

****Link to be included.**

Our Kindergarten and First graders will participate in Catechesis of the Good Shepherd. **Catechesis of the Good Shepherd (CGS)** provides a sacred space for Christian faith formation of children ages 4 to 12. It is like a mini retreat center for children, providing a place where they can form a personal relationship with Jesus, the Good Shepherd. Once the children are presented with the materials, they are encouraged to work with these materials that represent essential proclamations of the Christian message. The Catechesis is grounded in scriptural and liturgical study framed by Maria Montessori's principles of education. This allows children to hear the Gospel through the use of sensory-rich materials. The atrium is a special place where children can be with and enjoy God, listen to the Word, and to pray. It is designed to reflect the beauty of creation and God's abiding love.

This year on **September 15th, 2024, from 9-10:15am** we are holding an Open House for Faith Formation to come visit the classroom, meet your teacher and ask any questions you may have!

6th Through 12th Grade Levels



LIFETEEN is an international Catholic youth ministry and catechesis program that seeks to lead teens closer to Christ. The program emphasis will be on small groups led by adult core team leaders and peer ministers. Leaders are active in the life of the parish

and work each week by praying for the teens, connecting with them in a relational setting, and sharing the truth in a comfortable but content-filled program.

The catechetical resources are fully referenced with Scripture, the Catechism of the Catholic Church, Encyclicals, and sound doctrine from great saints. The curriculum guides follow the USCCB (U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops) Doctrinal Framework for High School Catechesis.

There are three kinds of sessions – Catechetical, Issue, and Social. Issues deal with specific “real world issues” that teens deal with (i.e. drinking, gossip, chastity, divorce, peer pressure, etc.). These sessions help teens see how their Catholic faith is relevant to every aspect of their lives. Socials build Christian community and friendships through both on-site and off-site fun. We encourage families to fulfill their Sunday Obligation of attending Mass by offering 5:00 pm Mass each Sunday that a LIFETEEN session is held and offer additional retreats, service, and worship opportunities throughout the year.

During EDGE and LIFETEEN, teens will encounter Christ in topics such as Prayer, Scripture, Mass, Creed, Morality, Sacraments, Person of Christ, Paschal Mystery, Church, Social Justice, Vocation, and Liturgy.

In the LIFETEEN **Confirmation program: Purpose**, teens (9th & 10th graders), will build on their learning. There are bi-weekly sessions over the course of the first and second year of the program. The Purpose sessions emphasize evangelizing young people and accompanying them as they become missionary disciples. The curriculum addresses three big questions, "Why believe in God?", "Why trust Jesus?", and "Why be a part of the Church?"

For those youth who are confirmed, we invite them to focus on developing parish, pastoral, and discipleship leadership skills. They will also participate in LIFETEEN, the emphasis being to build small group communities. Some will discern service as Peer Ministers for the Youth Programs. They will come to a greater understanding of which Catholic practices are most suited to their personalities and extra-curricular lifestyles. The goal is to enable them in the sustaining and fulfilling of their call both within and outside of the Parish, in college, and beyond.

Our St. Michael LIFETEEN program is open to all teens of different social and economic groups and different cultures and races. Teens are also encouraged to invite friends of different faiths, including the ‘unchurched.’

LIFETEEN sessions for high school (9-12th grade level) will be held bi-weekly on Sunday evenings, alternating with EDGE, as noted on the calendar from 5:00-6:30pm.

EDGE sessions for middle school (6th-8th grade level) will take place bi-weekly on Sunday evenings, alternating with LIFETEEN as noted on the calendar from 5:00-6:30pm.

LIFETEEN and EDGE Nights - ALL students (grades 6th-12th grade level) and their families will attend Family Mass from 5:00-6:00pm. After Mass, parents/guardians and

their teens are invited to a Potluck dinner from 6:00-6:30pm. Currently due to space constraints, siblings outside of LIFETEEN and EDGE are *not* invited to attend.

A Sign-Up Genius will be sent out prior to Potluck dinner dates. All families are asked to participate in at least 2 of the dinner sessions. After dinner, the parents are *highly* encouraged to stay for an adult session geared toward further enrichment in the Catholic Faith!

Teens will go into small groups during that time. Some sessions will include parents and teens learning about faith together. Dates of combined LIFETEEN and EDGE Mass/dinner/sessions are noted on the calendar.

OPTIONAL YOUTH NIGHTS- These nights are designed for FUN! We are planning themed nights and events that will engage and encourage the youth in fellowship. While they are not required, we hope that the teens will be excited to join.

This year on **September 15th, 2024, from 11:30-1:30pm** we are holding a **Back to School Session for EDGE and LIFETEEN Faith Formation 2024-2025!** This session is designed as a parent/guardian orientation to the Faith Formation calendar and curriculum. Lots of new and important information will be presented, along with opportunities to get to know the catechists, ask questions, tour the classrooms, and prepare for the year ahead! Students are also invited to attend but not required. EDGE and LIFETEEN Back to School Sessions will begin in the Fellowship Hall.

Kick off for EDGE will be on **Sunday, October 6th, from 5:00-6:30pm** in the gym.

Kick off for LIFETEEN will be on **Sunday, October 13th from 5:00-6:30pm** in the gym.

Confirmation Retreat will be **March 7th-9th, 2025**. (Detailed information in the Confirmation Program Handbook).

Confirmation **TBD** by the Archdiocese of Baltimore.

FOR THOSE WHO SERVE AS LAY MINISTERS TO OUR CHILDREN AND YOUTH

Expectations and Requirements:

All adult (18+) lay ministers MUST be Virtus trained for the protection of our children and youth. For Virtus training, go to: virtusonline.org and create your own account.

If you have further questions, contact Andrea Squitieri, our Virtus coordinator, at asquitieri@smpschurch.org

Youth between the ages of 14 and 17 who do ministry with children must complete “Worthy of the Call” training. “Worthy of the Call” training is done onsite by appointment. Contact our Virtus Coordinator (above).

FAITH FORMATION LEADERS & HELPERS

Completion of the Virtus training is the first step for faith formation leaders and helpers. Because ministry to our parishioners is such a vital component, preparation and training is the next step in our faith formation efforts.

Best Practices for Catechists (Faith Formation Leaders) & Helpers at St. Michael:

A catechist, from the Greek word “to echo,” is someone commissioned by the pastor to hand down its faith tradition.

Qualities of an effective catechist:

- A desire to grow in and share the Catholic faith
- Answering a baptismal call to discipleship and sharing the faith with others
- A commitment to a life of prayer
- Openness to greet children, to engage them in prayer, to witness to the joy of the gospel, to read the word of God in each session, to encourage faith-sharing, and to enculture children in Catholic teaching and traditions
- A commitment to entering into a partnership with parents, guardians, and staff

Requirements:

- Be a practicing Catholic, baptized, and confirmed in the Catholic faith.
- Use the Pflaum Weekly booklets given to you by staff and utilize the Pflaum website for elementary school children and LifeTeen resources for middle and high school
- Prepare lessons in advance, giving careful consideration to the developmental level of the persons being formed
- Work as a team with other faith formation leaders, helpers, substitutes, staff, and other lay ministers/leaders

- Arrive at least 10 minutes early to set up space and greet children and parents; notify appropriate staff as far in advance as possible when sick or otherwise unable to attend the session
- Possess basic understanding of Catholic teaching, scripture, Catholic tradition; be willing to learn more while attending periodic formation opportunities
- Be open to encounters with Christ
- Attend Mass weekly and on Holy Days of Obligation

Communication Guidelines:

- Provide good communication to families by sending a weekly email to parents with a brief synopsis of what happened in the session and future plans. You can only be so effective without parental involvement at home.
- Staff will send out a weekly email to parents and catechists with a link to the Sunday readings as well as other happenings at church
- Notify staff of behavior problems, session disruptions, and other incidents immediately. If you plan to take the group on a trip outside of the designated space, notify staff in advance; you'll need your emergency backpack, attendance folder, and possibly (depending on the destination) a walkie talkie.

Safe Environment:

- Lay ministry leaders and helpers 18+ must go through Virtus - AoB Child Protection Training. This is all online where you will be asked to fill out an application with references and complete a background check.
- A responsible adult will need to be in the room at least ten minutes ahead of session time.
- Do not let children leave on their own or with siblings under the age of 13. Wait for a parent, guardian, or siblings age 13 and above to pick them up.
- There will be a folder in the room with an attendance sheet and information for those in your session. Please take attendance and leave it in the folder in the room on a table.
- In case of an emergency, there is an emergency backpack in each room with contact numbers for staff members and faith formation catechists and aides who are scheduled to be in the building.
- Our Emergency Response Plan will be incorporated into our training for evacuation and shelter in place at the beginning of each school year. There will be a scheduled evacuation drill.

Safety and Security Emergency Response Plan (ERP):

Saint Michael Catholic Church has an approved, robust, all-inclusive, and highly effective ERP, put together by a team of industry experts with years of experience. As a catechist, you have a responsibility to safeguard our most precious gift, our children. According to the ERP, volunteers and catechists, *"are critical to the successful implementation of the ERP and are all considered Emergency Response Team Members"*.

ANSWERING THE CALL

How do I get involved?

St. Michael Ministry depends upon the support of the community to provide positive ministry to our young people. In the “Renewing the Vision” document, the Bishops of the United States state that ministry to youth is the responsibility of all the parishioners in a parish.

What do I do now?

If you are ready to get involved - and we hope you are - all you have to do is contact anyone on the Faith Formation Staff to discuss how your interests can complement our program needs.

There are many opportunities in and around faith formation efforts, so please prayerfully consider supporting the children of St. Michael in one of the roles below:

Sunday Morning / Sunday Evening / Tuesday Evening

Catechist/Faith Formation Leader (Grade levels PreK – 5)

Helper (Grade levels PreK – 5)

Substitute Catechist when needed (Grade levels PreK – 5)

Core Team Leader (EDGE – Grade levels 6, 7, 8)

Core Team Leader (LIFETEEN – Grade levels 9, 10, 11, 12)

Substitute Core Team Leader when needed (Grade levels 6 – 12)

Hall Monitors (1 or 2 needed per session Sunday, Tuesday)

Liturgical

Children’s Liturgy of the Word (CLOW) is offered for a ½ hour during the 10:30 am Mass. Contact Andrea if you are interested in leading or helping CLOW.

SACRAMENTS



Baptism

If you have a school-aged child who has not been baptized, please contact Deacon Cliff at dcncliffb@gmail.com to begin the process.

First Reconciliation (Penance/Confession)

The sacrament of reconciliation prepares us for the reception of First Eucharist. Parents attend a parent meeting in the fall and receive materials to prepare their child at home. **This preparation must be completed in addition to the regular faith formation sessions or home study curriculum.** Children may register for this sacrament if they were in faith formation the previous year and are **at least rising second graders**. The sacrament preparation is free standing for the purpose of allowing parents the option of waiting until they believe their child is mature enough to handle the meaning and significance of these grace-filled sacraments. Once they have received this sacrament, they then prepare to receive their first Holy Eucharist (Communion). Please submit a copy of your child's baptismal certificate if not baptized at St. Michael.

Father Paul will host a Parent Meeting on October 27 from 5:00-6:00pm. This meeting will be an introduction to the Sacramental Preparation of Reconciliation and provide information and valuable resources for the family to support their child prior to receiving the sacrament. **A Parent/Child Meeting will take place on November 17 from 5:00-6:00pm.** Father Paul will share lessons with the children on making good choices and forming a conscience, followed by what to expect in their sacrament preparation. **On January 11th, there will be a retreat led by catechists from 9:00am-12:00pm at the parish.** Children will be able to pray, visit stations where they will learn about the Reconciliation process, visit the Reconciliation room, and discuss and reflect on their preparation prior to receiving the sacrament. After the retreat there will be the opportunity to sign up for individual reconciliation times with Father Paul throughout the month and into February.

First Holy Eucharist (Communion)

This sacrament cannot be celebrated without the sacrament of Reconciliation being completed first. First Communions are held in April (after Easter) during Mass. **Father Paul will host a Parent Meeting on February 23 from 5:00-6:00pm.** This meeting will provide information and valuable resources for the family to support their child including the Introduction to First Eucharist Book. During this time, there will be an opportunity to sign up for First Communion Dates. **Father Paul will host a Parent/Child Meeting on March 23 from 5:00-6:00pm** for discussion about the

Liturgy of the Word and Liturgy of the Eucharist followed by sacramental preparation. **On April 26th, there will be a retreat led by catechists from 9:00am-12:00pm.** Children will have the opportunity to pray, discuss, and reflect on their sacramental preparation.

**** For those receiving First Reconciliation and First Eucharist, books have been purchased as a gift from the parish endowment for education.**

Confirmation

Faith Formation is essential to prepare us for the sacrament of Confirmation, which can be celebrated as early as 10th grade at St. Michael.

For teens: There is a teen OCIA process for those who have not been baptized or received first communion. Contact Andrea for help with completing the Sacraments of Initiation.

For adults: There is an adult Confirmation process for those who were not confirmed in their youth. Contact Andrea for help with completing the Sacraments of Initiation.

GENERAL INFORMATION & POLICIES

Attendance

Our programs are designed to follow the national scope and sequence for the individual grade level curriculum guidelines. Each grade level focuses on a specific aspect of our faith; therefore, it is important to maintain strong attendance throughout the program. If a session is missed due to illness or family obligations, it can be made up by asking the catechist what can be done at home for completion in accordance with Archdiocesan policy.

****Please be aware that Diocesan policy dictates that a child must have attended a minimum of one full year of faith formation sessions or been enrolled in a Catholic school faith formation class prior to the year in which they prepare for First Reconciliation, First Eucharist, and Confirmation.**

Parents and guardians who recognize the benefit of living a lifelong faith formation practice truly lead their children to faith through their own lived experiences. We invite all parents to reach out to us for more information on how to engage in this effort.

Pre-k through 5th grade dismissal policy

For the safety of all Pre-K through 5th grade level children, a parent, guardian, or a teen sibling 13 years or older must pick up the child at the assigned room. The teen sibling needs to be introduced to the catechist by the parent.

Cancellations

St. Michael follows the **Howard County Public Schools inclement weather school closing policy** on schooldays. If weekend activities and sessions are canceled because of inclement weather, a notice will be posted on the parish website. No decision will be made until 3:00pm unless Howard County has closed their schools early. We will post our Sunday session cancellations by 7:15am.

Catholic teaching on family life and morality component

The Archdiocese has required that all Christian Formation programs for youth contain the element of personal body safety and morality. The intent of the Archdiocese is to have parish programs ASSIST the parents/guardians in presenting this subject from a Catholic Christian perspective.

Kindergarten through 5th Grade ~ We use the RCL/Benziger Family Life Program which is taught both here in our faith formation sessions and in partnership with parents in the home. The home piece is called the Parent Connection.

Some updated curriculum pieces include personal body safety in regards to bullying, respecting others as fellow Christians, and raising awareness as to what is a healthy relationship and what is potentially not. The goal is to strengthen the dignity of the human person as one of God's creation. You are welcome to come in and review the materials.

Middle School and High School ~ EDGE and LIFETEEN include the family life component built into their curriculum called "Issue Nights." Parents are encouraged to discuss the issue notes previously emailed to them on the drive to and from the session. This is to foster open and honest communication in the session, at home, and in your teen's daily life. We will get your feedback on sensitive topics during the orientation.

ARCHDIOCESE OF BALTIMORE STUDENT HARASSMENT POLICY

I. Policy

It is the policy of the Archdiocese to prohibit discrimination, including harassment on the basis of race, color, gender, national origin, religion, age, disability or handicap or protected activity, (i.e. opposition to prohibited discrimination or participation in the complaint process) in its education programs and activities. Each Catholic school shall adhere to this policy with respect to students. (Employees are similarly protected from harassment by a separate Archdiocesan policy.)

II. Scope

This policy applies to all students in Archdiocesan elementary, middle, and secondary schools. The Archdiocese neither condones nor tolerates harassment of students at school, school-related activities or functions, or in any school-related setting. Harassment of students, whether engaged in by other students, teachers, administrators, or others, is prohibited. Violation of this policy is grounds for disciplinary action up to and including termination of employment, suspension, or expulsion from the program, depending on the nature and severity of the offense and the individual's disciplinary record.

III. Prohibited Conduct

For purposes of this policy, "harassment" means any verbal or physical conduct that shows hostility or aversion toward an individual because of his or her race, color, national origin, religion, age, disability, handicap, or protected activity, that:

- has the purpose or effect of creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive environment.
- has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual's performance; or otherwise adversely affects an individual's educational opportunities.

Harassing conduct includes, but is not limited to, epithets, slurs, negative stereotyping, or threatening, intimidating, or hostile acts. Sexual harassment includes unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature when submission to or rejection of such conduct is used as the basis for educational decisions or has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual's academic performance or creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive environment.

FAITH FORMATION SESSIONS – Pre-K – 5th grade level

October 1, 2024 - April 8, 2025

- **SUNDAY(PREK - 5th) Sessions 9:00am – 10:15am - Sessions begin October 6th.**
The last session will be April 6th.
- **TUESDAY(1st - 5th) Sessions 6:00pm – 7:15pm - Sessions begin October 1st. The last session will be April 8th.**

Please be sure to meet your child’s catechist in-person and partner with them in passing on the faith to the next generation. We can’t do this without you.

FAITH FORMATION SESSIONS – 6th - 12th grade level

October 6, 2024 - April 6, 2025

- **SUNDAY sessions for Middle School EDGE – Sessions begin on October 6th from 5:00-6:30pm** and are held bi-weekly, alternating with LIFETEEN, as indicated on the attached calendar. Last session will be April 6.
- **SUNDAY sessions for High School LIFETEEN- Sessions begin on October 13th from 5:00-6:30pm** and are held bi-weekly, alternating with EDGE, as indicated on the attached calendar. Last session will be April 6th.
- **EDGE and LIFETEEN Nights- Begin with Family Mass from 5:00-6:00pm followed by dinner from 6:00-6:30pm, and concluding with session time from 6:30-7:30.**
Dates are listed on the attached calendar.
- For those in the second year of our Confirmation program, there is a mandatory weekend retreat from March 7th-9th, 2025.

TUITION FOR IN-CLASS FAITH FORMATION

	PreK - 12 & Yr 1 Confirmation	Yr 2 Confirmation ONLY
1 child	\$110	\$210**
2 children	\$160	
3 children	\$210	**Covers cost of weekend retreat.
4+ children	\$260	

Payment is due at time of online registration. We cannot “hold” a spot without payment. Registrations are due by September 23, 2024.

For those receiving First Reconciliation and First Eucharist, books have been purchased as a gift from the parish endowment for education.

FAMILY/HOME STUDY

Offered to children who are 1st through 5th grade level

The Home Study option is designed to offer flexibility in scheduling time for faith formation. We use the Pflaum Gospel Weeklies, which are date/time sensitive. You need to pick up materials as they arrive every 8 weeks. Pflaum Gospel Weeklies are approved by the Archdiocese of Baltimore and by the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops. Like the Church’s lectionary, PGWs follow a 3-year cycle of Sunday Gospel readings so that each program covers several grade levels without repeating Gospel readings or curriculum material.

Parents are asked to attend the following group sessions with their children. We gather in the fellowship hall at **6:15pm** and spend about an hour on the topic of the night.

Books will be available for pick up at the first Home Study meeting.

Group sessions will be held in the St. Michael’s Fellowship Hall on the following dates:

October 22, 2024 - Home Study meeting

December 17, 2024 - Home Study meeting

February 18, 2025 - Home Study meeting

March 18, 2025 - Home Study meeting

April 8, 2025 - Home Study meeting

Please **put these dates on your calendar.** These sessions are integral to our Family Home Study program, and they are an opportunity for families to come and interact with others in the parish.

Tuition for Family/Home Study

<u>Grade Levels 1 – 5</u>	<u>Amount</u>
1 child	\$95
2 children	\$130
3 children	\$165
4+ children	\$200

Payment is due at time of registration. Registration closes on September 23, 2024.

For those receiving First Reconciliation and First Eucharist, books have been purchased as a gift from the parish endowment for education.

**REGISTRATION CAN BE FOUND ON OUR WEBSITE. IF YOU NEED TO
PAY BY CHECK OR NEED TUITION ASSISTANCE, PLEASE CONTACT
ANDREA SQUITIERI AT 240-437-3670.**