

# **St. Francis Xavier Church Faith Formation**

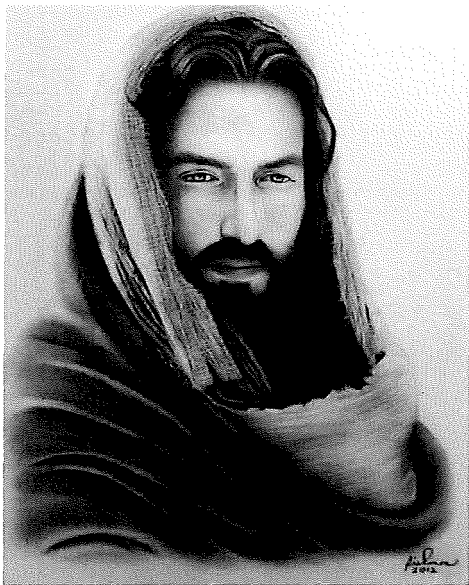
Policies for Traditional Faith Formation,  
Homeschool Option and Discipleship Groups

2022-2023

**Department of Youth Formation and Ministry Handbook**

The St. Francis Xavier Faith Formation program is committed to help people of all ages foster a deepening and growing relationship with Jesus Christ.

To enable the faithful into that growing relationship we have developed this handbook to lay out framework of our Faith Formation program.



**Jesus Christ is calling us to be counter cultural in order to have the reign of God be present here in our parish, community and world.**

*Hear, O Israel! The LORD is our God, the LORD alone! Therefore, you shall love the LORD, your God, with your whole heart, and with your whole being, and with your whole strength. Take to heart these words which I command you today. Keep repeating them to your children. Recite them when you are at home and when you are away, when you lie down and when you get up.*

*(Deuteronomy 6:4-7)*

# St. Francis Xavier Church

## Department of Youth Formation and Ministry Handbook

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*Train the young in the way he should go,  
and when he is old he will not depart from it.  
Proverbs 22:6*

## Basic Guidelines

### Respect

Here at St. Francis we have been blessed with wonderful facility. We ask the respect of all to keep our building looking great for generations to come. In addition and even more importantly, than our building everyone needs to respect their peers, classmates, catechists, parents and others who share and use our facilities. Students that are disrespectful to their peers, volunteers or parish staff or vandalize the property of St. Francis Xavier will be dismissed from class or activities, and will need to be picked up by a parent. ***Students that continue any of the previously mentioned behaviors will have a meeting with parents and parish staff or Pastor and may be dismissed from the program.***

### Parking

At the St. Francis Xavier Faith and Education Centers, please do not park on the grass, in front of the garage, on the playground or on the playground entrance. It is illegal to park in fire lanes which are in front of the building and the west side of the Parish entrance. Cars parking in fire lanes may be subject to ticketing and/or towing.

### Entrances

St. Francis Xavier is a secure building; therefore the only two sets of doors that may be used during Faith Formation are the front main doors and the west side doors by the Chapel. Only in the event of an emergency may all other doors be used.

### Weather Cancelations

Minnesota weather can be unpredictable!

**General Rule:** If School District 877 is closed on a Wednesday, sends students home early on a Wednesday, or evening activities are canceled, then Faith Formation classes are cancelled.

Notification will be posted on the main page of the STFXB.org website, along with an email sent out to parents.

### Medical Information

Parents are asked to document all medical information on their registration forms, Youth Ministry permission slips, and field trips forms. This information is confidential and is accessed only by the Faith Formation Staff and adult volunteers whom have direct contact with a student, such as a catechist, mentor or chaperon.

### Cell phones

The use of cell phones is a constant distraction for the individual, adult volunteer and the group as a whole. In an attempt to keep distractions to a minimum please follow these guidelines.

#### **Faith Formation Classes/Discipleship groups (D Groups):**

All cell phones must not be used during class time or D Groups. The catechist/leader reserves the right to collect phones in the beginning of their time together in the attempt to keep distractions to a minimum. If phones are used during these times and they become a distraction to the class, the catechists/leaders reserve the right to confiscate the phone and a parent must come in to the Faith Formation office to reclaim the phone for their child. Leaders of D Groups can return phones to parents when they pick up their child.

**Youth Group, NET Lifelines, Archdiocesan Youth Day and other ministry events:**

We ask that cell phones not be used during youth group or other similar events. For events at our facility; as youth enter the building, there is a bowl/basket that they can place their cell phone in while they are attending the event. This option is a free choice and encourages them to fully partake in the event with as little distraction from the outside world as possible. They are free to go to the container at any time to check or send messages if needed.

**Retreats, Camps, Steubenville Trip, Mission Trips and other similar events:**

No cell phones are allowed! This is a hardline rule. These events are designed to remove the youth from the busyness of their life; as well as the audible/visual noise of the world in which they are immersed in every day. If it is discovered that a youth has a phone, it will be confiscated and the phone will be returned to the youth at the conclusion of the trip. If the youth does not willingly hand over the cell phone, the youth will be sent home at the expense of the parent.

## **Clothing**

Attire worn by students and adults during Faith Formation and all St. Francis Xavier sponsored events, must fit the following guidelines. Pants must to be worn at waist level above the hips. Dresses, skirts and shorts can be not shorter than an inch above the knees. Shirts may not reveal cleavage, midriffs or undergarments and must also cover both shoulders. Clothing may not contain vulgar wording or images, advertising for tobacco or alcohol products, and must be anti-discriminatory. Swimsuits: males need trunks worn at waist level and a shirt, females need one piece and do not reveal cleavage. Students in violation of our clothing policy will be asked to where a cover up shirt that we provide.

## **Bullying**

Bullying will not be tolerated on any level. Bullying can be, but not limited to name calling, teasing, emotional or physical abuse. Students who may be bullying other students or adults, will be dismissed from class or activities, and will need to be picked up by a parent. Students who persist in bullying behavior will be dismissed from the program.

## **Alcohol, Drugs & Tobacco**

The St. Francis Xavier Church and the Faith and Education Centers are tobacco free, therefore; tobacco products are not allowed, including E-Cigs and vapes. Illegal drug use and illegal drug possession on the property of St. Francis Xavier is not permitted, this also includes the illegal use of prescribed medications. Local authorities will be notified for those who use or possess illegal drugs, or use tobacco products on any St. Francis Xavier Property. Students who possess illegal drugs or tobacco products will be dismissed from the program.

- The consumption of alcohol (adult or student) is never acceptable during Faith Formation or Youth Ministry events.

## **Weapons**

St. Francis Xavier bans weapons on all property and church sponsored events. Weapons include but are not limited to: guns, knives, brass knuckles, etc.

- **First offense:** Students who possess weapon(s), will be dismissed from class or activities, and will need to be picked up by a parent.
- **Second offense:** *Students who violate this rule for a second time will be dismissed from the program.*

## **Animals**

Only service animals (animals pertaining to a person with disabilities) are allowed on St. Francis Xavier property

**\*\*All the above guidelines pertain to all Formation and Ministry programs and events offered or affiliated with St. Francis Xavier.**

# **Church of St. Francis Xavier Human Sexuality and Sexual Identity Policy**

In accordance with the teachings of the Catholic Church and the guiding principles provided by the Catholic Bishops of Minnesota, the Church of St. Francis Xavier is committed to providing a safe environment that allows all people to flourish personally, intellectually, spiritually, and pastorally. Catholic teaching permeates and shapes all the ministries and activities of a parish, including its parochial school, faith formation, and youth ministry. The innate dignity of each person as created by God is to be protected and respected at all times.

Each person is created by God with a body and soul (cf. Gen 1 :27) and the dignity and identity of each person is found in this creation and the likeness God (cf. CCC, 364). God uses the body to reveal to each person his or her sexual identity as male or female; the harmonious integration of a person's sexual identity with his or her sex is an expression of the inner unity and reality of the human person made in the image and likeness of God (cf. CCC, 364-365). The differences between men and women are equal and complementary.

The Church of St. Francis Xavier, in all of its ministries and activities, based upon these principles will carry out its teaching and practices in the following manners. St. Francis Xavier Catholic School, St. Francis Xavier Youth Ministry, and St. Francis Xavier Faith Formation are all included in this policy.

1. All policies, procedures, resources, employee training, volunteer training, and assistance given to families will be consistent with the Church's teaching on the dignity of the human person, including human sexuality.
2. Student's name and pronoun usage will correspond to his/her sex (see definitions below).
3. Student access to facilities and overnight accommodations will align with his/her sex.
4. Eligibility for a single-sex curricular and extracurricular activities will be based on the sex of the child.
5. Expressions of a student's sexual identity are prohibited when they cause disruption or confusion regarding the Church's teaching on human sexuality.
6. The consciences of students and employees will be respected with the assurance of their inviolable right to the acknowledgment that God has created each person as a unity of body and soul, as male or female, and that God-designed sexual expression and behavior must be exclusively oriented to love and life in marriage between one man and one woman.
7. Administration will communicate with parents and guardians their child's behavior at school, faith formation, and youth ministry and inform them of any concerns relating to the physical,

emotional, social, and spiritual health, safety, or welfare of their child, except when advised otherwise by law enforcement or social service agency.

This policy was discussed and voted upon by the Church of St. Francis Xavier's corporate board on October 14, 2020.

### Definitions

**Sex** refers to a person's biological identification as male or female based upon physical characteristics present at birth.

**Sexual identity** refers to a person's identity as male or female that is congruent with one's sex.

**Sexual binary** refers to the God-given gift of the human family created male or female in the image and likeness of God.

**Transgender or gender non-conforming** is an adjective describing a person who perceives his or her sexual identity to be different from his or her sex and publicly presents himself or herself as the opposite sex or outside the sexual binary. Such public expressions that are intended to communicate a sexual identity different from one's sex include, but are not limited to, utilizing pronouns of the opposite sex, changing one's name to reflect the cultural norms of the opposite sex, wearing a uniform designated for the opposite sex, and undergoing surgery to change the appearance of one's reproductive or sexual autonomy.

## Parent Responsibilities

*"Therefore, take these words of mine into your heart and soul. Bind them on your arm as a sign, and let them be as a pendant on your forehead. Teach them to your children, speaking of them when you are at home and when you are away, when you lie down and when you get up, and write them on the doorposts of your houses and on your gates, so that, as long as the heavens are above the earth, you and your children may live on in the land which the LORD swore to your ancestors he would give them." (Deuteronomy 11:18-21)*

### Parent Participation

You are the most important part of your child(ren's) faith! Your view point of the faith will be their viewpoint of the faith. The importance you place on the faith will be the importance that your child(ren) placed on the faith. Without your involvement, there is very little that we can accomplish during the 1.5 hours each week that they are at Faith Formation. It is our expectation that parents partner with St. Francis Xavier Faith Formation Department by:

**Grades 1-5:** Attending parent and family nights, teaching home lessons, and engaging in a discussion about what they learned in their group; along with praying with your children and regularly bringing them to the Sacraments of Reconciliation and Eucharist (Mass).

**Grades 6-8:** Helping your child(ren) stay accountable with assignments & attendance, Works of Mercy and retreat attendance and engaging in a discussion about what they learned about in

class each week; along with praying with your children and regularly bringing them to the Sacraments of Reconciliation and Eucharist.

### **Mass Attendance**

It is our expectation that parents uphold their Baptismal promises, and that families attend weekend Mass. Faith Formation students should be able to discuss in class their experience at Mass including the content of the readings and homily. Regular weekend Mass attendance is expected for any youth desiring to complete their full initiation as a Catholic Christian in the Sacrament of Confirmation.

*The Eucharist is the "source and summit of the Christian life." (CCC1324)*

### **Sacramental Documentation**

During Sacramental preparation years, parents are responsible to provide documentation of Baptism. Due to space constraints, St. Francis does not keep Baptismal Certificates from First Communion to Confirmation.

### **Parent E-mails**

Parent E-mails and the website will be the primary form of communication between the Faith Formation Department and Faith Formation families. Please supply your e-mail address to the Faith Formation department so that you are kept informed.

### **Child Care**

Child care is available to those volunteering or attending the Family Formation Parent Nights on Wednesday evenings. Parents need to provide the necessary supplies to accommodate your child's needs.

### **Medical Information**

Parents are responsible to document all medical information on their registration forms, Youth Ministry permission slips, and field trips forms. This information is confidential and is accessed only by the Faith Formation staff and adult volunteers whom have direct contact with a student, such as a catechist.

## **Volunteers**

St. Francis Xavier programs cannot survive without the assistance of numerous volunteers. The best way to connect with your child is to be involved with the activities that they are involved in. We strongly encourage you to volunteer with a program. There are many opportunities to assist with the Faith Formation and Youth Ministry such as:

- † Catechist, Discipleship Group Mentor
- † TFC Leadership Team Adult Mentor
- † Middle School Youth Group Adult Chaperon, Various other Chaperoning opportunities
- † Mission Trips/Adult Driver & Leader
- † Child Care during Faith Formation
- † Hall Monitor or Adoration Volunteer during Faith Formation



St. Francis Xavier and the Archdiocese are dedicated to the protection of youth and vulnerable adults. Therefore ALL adult volunteers must complete the Essential 3, listed below.

**Essential 3** - To be completed every three years

**Volunteer Code of Conduct**

All volunteers at St. Francis Xavier must sign a Volunteer Code of Conduct which will be kept on file.

**VIRTUS**

According to the Archdiocese of Minneapolis and St. Paul all volunteers over the age of 18 working with minors and vulnerable adults, must complete the VIRTUS Training. Online training is offered free of charge through the Archdiocese. Please register at [Virtusonline.org](http://Virtusonline.org), or contact the Faith Formation Department.

**Background check/MVR**

According to the Archdiocese of Minneapolis and St. Paul all STFX volunteers over the age of 18 working with minors and vulnerable adults must complete a background check at the expense of STFX every three years. In addition, those adults that will be driving youth must also have MVR check done yearly and must carry valid Driver's License and insurance. The minimum level of insurance required is \$100K/\$300K personal liability.

**Mandated Reporting**

All Catechists, Faith Formation staff and other adult volunteers are mandated reporters. If a student shares information or evidence that merits that they have been hurt in any way by an adult it must be reported to local authorities.

**Catechists/ Discipleship Mentor**

We encourage Faith Formation parents and members of the parish, to invest time with our youth as a catechist or Discipleship Leader. A catechist/ D Group leader is a mentor and teacher, who instruct 6th through 12th grade students in the Catholic traditions of the church. A catechist/D Group Mentor is not necessarily 'all knowing' of the faith, but is willing to teach their existing knowledge while continuing to learn, grow and explore the Catholic faith. To become a catechist/D Group Mentor you must: be confirmed in the faith, practicing your faith by attending Sunday Mass every weekend, attend a VIRTUS class (See page 6 for more information), attend training when offered, complete a background check and uphold the Volunteer Code of Conduct. Confirmed adult catechists may choose 6th-9th grade levels, while a Discipleship Leader works with 9th through 12th grade youth. Confirmed high school catechists may assist adult catechist/D Group Leaders in the 1st-12th grade, but may not teach 6<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> grade levels on their own.

For more information on how to volunteer, please contact the Faith Formation Office.

## Sacraments

*Sacraments are outward signs of inward grace, instituted by Christ for our sanctification.  
(Catechism council. Trident., n. 4, ex St. Augustine, "De Catechizandis rudibus")*

### Baptism

*Through Baptism we are freed from sin and reborn as children of God;  
we become members of Christ, are incorporated into the church and made sharers in her mission. (CCC 1213)*

At the time of baptism, parents and sponsors, make promises before God and the church, to raise their children in the faith. Parents are the primary religious educators of their children collaborating with the Faith Formation Program. Individuals must be baptized in order to receive any other sacrament in the Catholic Church. Those with inquires on Baptism need to contact the Faith and Education Center Office.

### First Reconciliation

*"It is the movement of a "contrite heart," drawn and moved by grace to respond to the merciful love of God who loved us first." (CCC 1428)*

Typically, First Reconciliation is celebrated in the second grade. The sacrament is generally celebrated during the months of December or January, and must happen prior a student's First Communion. Those whom may have missed this sacrament will need to make arrangements with the Director of Faith Formation or Pastor.

### First Communion

*"The Eucharist is the sum and summary of our faith: "Our way of thinking is attuned to the Eucharist, and the Eucharist in turn confirms our way of thinking." (CCC 1327)*

Preparation begins following First Reconciliation in the second grade. First Communion is celebrated typically in April or May, depending on the date of Easter. Those whom may have missed this sacrament will need to make arrangements with the Director of Faith Formation or Pastor.

### Confirmation

*Confirmation is a Sacrament that strengthens us and obliges us to witness to, spread and defend the faith (CCC 1303).  
Confirmation is not a graduation from a life of Christian learning, a mere cultural passage into maturity or an opportunity to choose whether or not to remain Catholic. Confirmation completes our full initiation as Catholic Christians (CCC 1306) and strengthens our ability to be missionary disciples through the reception of the gifts of the Holy Spirit.*

For St. Francis Xavier students, Confirmation is typically celebrated in the Easter Season. Confirmation preparation is open to students in grades 8-12. Youth desiring to be Confirmed in the faith must willingly apply to begin the journey towards Confirmation. (See Confirmation Handbook) Students enrolled in Faith Formation are not considered enrolled in Confirmation just because they are attending FF. Confirmation preparation is separate from Faith Formation, however is built off of it. Pre-requisites for Confirmation may begin as early as the summer of 8th grade and as late as the fall of 12th grade. Application/Commitment forms may be submitted as early as the summer of 8th grade and as late as the fall of 12th grade. Those whom may have missed materials, requirements and sacraments will need to make arrangements with the Director of Faith Formation and/or Pastor prior to their receiving the Sacrament of Confirmation.

# Traditional Faith Formation

## Registration/ Information

All the above Basic guidelines pertain to Faith Formation in addition to the following:

### Registration

Registration for Faith Formation will be open from the mid to end of April through the end of August. We will take students on a first come first serve basis, with priority to students of Catechists first, Parishioners second and Non-Parishioners last. Based on the numbers of volunteer catechists we have will determine how many classes there will be per grade. Any students registered after classes are full may be put on a wait list.

### Calendar

The Faith Formation calendar will be available at the time of registration. It will be published on the STFX website Faith Formation page. Note: The calendar is subject to change during the course of the year, due to unforeseen scheduling conflicts. Generally speaking the Faith Formation year begins in September and ends in May.

### Tuition

The tuition collected in our program sustains our programs supplies books and some building costs. If possible we ask that tuition be paid in full with the registration form. If you need tuition assistance or would like a payment plan, please contact the Pastoral and Formation Assistant.

### Tuition Fees:

1st - 5th Grades: \$125 per family

1st Reconciliation and 1st Communion - 2nd Grade students pay an additional \$50 for Sacramental Prep

6th - 8th Grades: \$125 per student

**Additional costs:** All 8<sup>th</sup> grade students need to attend a 3 day/2 night retreat. STFX an 8<sup>th</sup> grade retreat in February at the cost of \$150 per student. Registration for these retreats are on our Confirmation webpage. Optional retreats for 8<sup>th</sup> grade are available if the student is unable to attend their scheduled retreat, cost of optional retreats may be different from ours. Approved optional retreats are NET Ministries or Dunrovin. Please contact Faith Formation Department for more information.

## Class Time Information

### Class Times/Locations

Regular class times are from 6:30 - 8:00 p.m. and are held at the Education Center. Occasionally there may be special events and circumstances which will require a time shift or extension or a change of location. Please refer to the schedule for special class times and locations.

### Attendance

Attendance will be taken at the beginning of every class by the Catechist. Absences can be reported to the Pastoral and Formation Assistant at 763-489-9225 or [Jody.klaphake@stfxb.org](mailto:Jody.klaphake@stfxb.org)

### Late arrivals/Early departures

It is our expectation that students will be in class for the entire time of 6:30 - 8:00. Late arrivals not only affect the student that is late but also the Catechist and the rest of the class. Students with excessive tardiness will be addressed by the Faith Formation Director or the Pastor. Early departures are also very distracting to the class and catechist. In the event that your child(ren) need to leave early from class please send a note with your student for his/her catechist, as well

as informing the Pastoral and Formation Assistant.

Pastoral and Formation Assistant:

Jody Klaphake - 763-489-9225 or e-mail at: [Jody.Klaphake@stfxb.org](mailto:Jody.Klaphake@stfxb.org)

*A side note: The Power of Parents! More and more extra-curricular activities seem to be encroaching on Wednesday evenings which used to be considered off-limits. This puts parents and students in a very difficult position and makes them have to choose between their faith and their favorite activity. The more that parents stand strong and hold Wednesdays as 'off-limits' the more likely that those charged with setting schedules will avoid Wednesday evenings.*

## Emergency Plans

In the event of severe weather students and adults will be directed to severe weather areas in our buildings. If there were a fire or fire alarm everyone in the building must evacuate to one of the three outside meeting areas. Meeting Area #1 is the main parking lot by the preschool playground. Meeting area #2 is the main playground behind the Education Center. Meeting area #3 is on the Truck Apron by the Adoration Chapel. Depending on where a particular class meets they should use the closest outside exit and meet in one of the three outside meeting areas.

## Weather Cancellations

Minnesota weather can be unpredictable!

**General Rule:** If School District 877 is closed on a Wednesday, sends students home early on a Wednesday, or evening activities are cancelled, then Faith Formation classes are cancelled.

Notification will be posted on the main page of the STFXB.org website, along with an email sent out to parents.

## Classroom Breaks

Since class time is one and a half hours per week, students in Grades 6- 8 will not have regular scheduled classroom breaks. It is up to the discretion of the catechist to have classroom breaks when needed.

## Beverages, Food & Snacks

No food or drink are allowed during class time. This is distracting to the other students and has created more work for our maintenance workers. No gum is allowed. If anyone is chewing gum or brings food or a beverage, they will be asked to dispose of it. **Exception:** water in a spill proof container is allowed.

**On special occasions,** food is used for celebrations. Only prepackaged individually wrapped food is allowed. Due to food allergens, candy, food and snacks containing peanut products are not allowed.

## Restrooms

All restrooms in the Faith and Education Centers are separated by sex and age. Only Faith Formation students and student volunteers are allowed to use the restrooms located in classrooms as well as the Mathew, Mark, Luke and John Hallways. Adults may use the restrooms located at the Education Center entrance, Chapel entrance, and the office area.

## Outdoor Activities, Playground, Mary Garden & Outdoor Stations

Catechists are approved to take their class outside during class time for activities, lessons and prayer, weather permitting.

## Programming

**Purpose:** Faith Formation is simply to assist parents in their roles as primary educators to teach the truths of the Catholic Faith to their children. St. Francis Xavier's Faith Formation program goes from First through Eighth grade. Although we understand that formation in the faith is a lifelong process. Therefore, we encourage parents to continue their own education in the faith along with educating and supporting their children.

**Preschool/Kindergarten:** CGS-Catechesis of the Good Shepherd

**First through Fifth Grade:** The primary curriculum for first through fifth grade children is A Family of Faith by Sophia Institute. Two Wednesdays per month, parents and their children come to the Education Center for catechesis. Parents and students will be involved in various activities and teachings. The other two weeks, parents will teach their children the home lessons from the Parent Guide. In addition to the Parent Guide and Student Activity books provided; families will need a Catechism, Bible and other items specific for the year's themed focus.

**Sixth Grade:** Students spend class time working through the basic stories of the Bible from Genesis to Acts, learning the stories and characters in Salvation history. Resource material for catechists is the Encounter program by Ascension Press.

**Seventh Grade:** Students study the basic teachings of the faith through Christ Our Life by Loyola Press.

**Eighth Grades:** Students use the Chosen series by Ascension Press. This curriculum is designed to engage youth and meet them where they are at and address some of the questions they may have.

### Other Opportunities during class time

It is important to offer a variety of opportunities during Faith Formation to engage the youth in the faith. The following opportunities are incorporated into the FF program during class time.

#### Adoration

*Adoration is the acknowledgement of God as God, Creator and Savior, the Lord and Master of everything that exists. Through worship and prayer, the Church and individual persons give to God the adoration which is the first act of the virtue of religion.*

*The first commandment of the law obliges us to adore God. (CCC 2096, 2628)*

St. Francis Xavier is blessed to have an Adoration in the Christ the King Chapel at the Education Center. Adults are encouraged to spend one hour a week with our Lord present in the Blessed Sacrament. For those praying in the chapel, we ask everyone to respect the designated quiet areas in and around the chapel, which includes the entrance.

In addition to the Adoration Chapel, we offer Faith Formation classes the opportunity to spend time with our Lord in Adoration at a special location in the Education Center during class time once per month.

### **Advent & Lent Prayer Services**

During Advent and Lent, each grade participates in a prayer service designed to help the youth enter more deeply into the liturgical season that we are in. Focusing on the life of Christ and what He has done for us. Some prayer services are located at the church.

### **Confession**

All students will have the opportunity to go to confession at least once during the year. However, it is strongly encouraged that parents take their child(ren) to the Sacrament of Reconciliation on a regular monthly basis.

### **Vocation Nights**

When available, we invite religious sisters and seminarians to come out to our facility to meet and talk with the youth and to share about these important and beautiful vocations.

### **Deanery Events**

Occasionally, STFX may partner with other parishes that are in our Deanery to have well-known speakers come and talk with the youth on a specific topic like chastity or other important topics facing the youth. Deanery events will always fall on a Wednesday evening but may have extended time periods. Deanery events include other Catholic churches in Wright, eastern Carver and northwestern Hennepin counties.

### **Retreats**

Retreats are wonderful opportunities to step away from life's busyness and spend time reflecting more deeply on one's relationship with God and into a closer relationship with others. All Middle school and High School Students will need to attend mandatory retreat(s) each year.

#### **Middle School retreat**

All 6th and 7th grade students are required to attend the Day retreat. This retreat is 5-6 hours long, located at the Education Center and will be listed on the FF calendar. Students MUST attend the entire retreat from start to finish. If a student is unable to attend, another retreat must be attended as a make-up with an equal or greater amount of time.

Suggested make-up is attending two Souled Out nights; however, a retreat offered somewhere else may be acceptable. Check with the Director of Formation and Youth Ministry for approval. If there is a cost for an optional retreat, it will be at the expense of the parents.

#### **Eighth Grade Retreat**

All 8<sup>th</sup> grade students will need to complete a weekend retreat during their final year of Faith Formation. We have a class retreat each year in February for the 8<sup>th</sup> graders. The retreat is 3 days/2 nights in length. Students MUST attend the entire retreat from start to finish. If a student is unable to attend, another retreat must be attended as a make-up with an equal or greater amount of time. The fee for the optional retreat is at the expense of the parents.

Approved optional retreats are NET Ministries and Dunrovin.

\*\*Parents need to provide proof from the retreat center that their child attended the retreat in full.

#### **Confirmation Parent/Teen Day Retreat**

All 8<sup>th</sup> grade students and their parents are required to attend a day retreat.

## Curriculum Requirements

### Assessments

While there is no formal assessment in grades 1-5; we will know how well the students are doing by assessing their understanding of the faith during the Family Formation nights. The parents are responsible for the home lessons and making sure this is taking place. Students in the second grade may be asked to meet with the Pastor for an assessment in their knowledge of the Sacraments of Reconciliation and the Eucharist if their catechists are concerned they have not obtained a sufficient readiness for the sacraments.

For students in grades 6 -8, through the year the Catechists and High School D-Group leaders work with the teens to help them understand the teachings of the faith at their level and how to live out their faith every day. This is viewed as support and partnership with the parents, the primary teachers of the faith, in leading their children closer to God. Therefore, we have no formal assessment process for the youth.

### Catholic Prayers

It is our expectation that students learn their Catholic prayers. In order to align with the Archdiocesan religion standards, students *may* be tested on memorizations of the Catholic prayers. These prayers build off of each grade level and also incorporate many of the prayers shared during Mass. It is our expectation that parents uphold their Baptismal promises, and review these prayers at home with your child(ren). List of prayer that are expected are: Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory Be, Meal Grace, St. Michael Prayer and Guardian Angel.

### Retreats

All retreats and/or makeup retreats must be completed prior to the end of the year or Confirmation.

### Safe Environments

We strive to create the safest possible environment for all our students and adults. Each year all of our students need to complete the Safe Environments classes and materials. These materials will be offered on a regular night of Faith Formation during the year.

### Works of Mercy Hours

Beginning in the sixth grade, Faith Formation students need to complete at least 10 hours per year of service up until Confirmation. Work of Mercy hours need to be documented and turned into the Faith Formation Office. Works of Mercy hours do not include regular family chores, fundraisers, or services where payment is exchanged. Check the policy online for descriptions of types of service that qualifies and for the online form for submitting hours.

<http://stfxb.org/faith-formation/formation-youth/works-of-mercy/>

# Homeschool Option

*“It is in the bosom of the family that parents are by word and example... the first heralds of the faith with regard to their children.” (CCC 1656)*

## Guidelines

Parents wishing to homeschool their children will need to contact the Faith Formation Director. It is expected that the curriculum used is the same curriculum that is used in the Traditional Faith Formation program. Parents wishing to use a different curriculum must get approval from the Pastor. In addition, home study students will need to participate in some events/retreats determined by the Pastor and DRE, as well as an accountability of completed lessons with the Pastor or DRE. The Works of Mercy requirement is also expected to be fulfilled.

## Faith Community

Middle School and High School students in the Homeschool program are a vital part of our parish and the future of our faith. In order to truly be formed in the Catholic faith, it is necessary that these students see and understand how they are part of the Body of Christ. Students participating in the Homeschool program will connect with the larger faith community by participating in some of the youth ministry events here at St. Francis Xavier; Middle School students will attend Souled Out once a month while the High School students will attend Lifted each month. If, for a grave reason this will not work for the student, then an appointment should be made with the pastor to work for another solution that will draw these students deeper into their community of faith.

## Registration/Fees

All homeschooling families will need to register with the parish. The fees for homeschooling will be the regular Faith Formation fee and any additional fees for workbooks, videos and other supplies that will be provided by St. Francis Xavier Faith Formation Dept.

# Discipleship Group

## General Information

All the Basic guidelines listed below pertain to Discipleship Groups:

### Respect

Discipleship Groups meeting in homes are expected to respect the property of the owner of the house. In addition, and even more importantly than the property, it is expected that everyone needs to respect their peers, leaders, and parents. It is very important in a discipleship group to trust each other; therefore, things discussed within the group should be kept confidential. Youth that are disrespectful to their peers, leaders or vandalize the property of the home owner will be dismissed from the group and need to be picked up by the parent. In addition, a meeting will be set up with the parents and leaders to discuss the behavior. Students that continue any of the previously mentioned behaviors will have a meeting with parents and Director of Youth Formation and Ministry and/ or Pastor and may be dismissed from the program.

### Weather Cancellations

Minnesota weather can be unpredictable!

**General Rule:** If School District 877 is closed on a Wednesday, sends students home early on a



Wednesday, or evening activities are cancelled, then the Discipleship group may be cancelled. Contact Discipleship leader to verify.

## **Medical Information**

Parents are asked to document all medical information on their registration forms, Youth Ministry permission slips, and field trips forms. This information is confidential and is accessed only by the Discipleship Leaders and parish staff and any adult volunteers whom have direct contact with a student.

## **Cell phones**

The use of cell phones is a constant distraction for the individual, adult volunteer and the group as a whole. In an attempt to keep distractions to a minimum please follow these guidelines.

### **Discipleship groups (D Groups):**

All cell phones must not be used during D Groups. The leader reserves the right to collect phones in the beginning of their time together in the attempt to keep distractions to a minimum. If phones are used during these times and they become a distraction to the group, the leaders reserve the right to confiscate the phone and return it to parents when they pick up their child.

## **Registration**

Registration for a Discipleship Group will be open from the mid to end of April through the mid-May. Space is limited and is first come, first serve after the leader's child(ren) are reserved a spot.

## **Calendar**

The Discipleship Group calendar will be available when D Groups are formed and begin to meet. Generally speaking the Disciple Groups run all year, however they may meet less frequently during the summer. Discipleship leaders and the Director of Youth Formation and Ministry work together to create the calendar. Note: The calendar is subject to change during the course of the year, due to unforeseen scheduling conflicts.

## **Group Information**

### **Group Times/Locations**

Regular group times are generally on Wednesdays from 6:30 - 8:00 p.m. and are held in the home of the D Leader or a parent. There must always be two trusted adults present when youth are present. However, the group has the ability to change the day and time to best serve the needs of the group. Occasionally there may be special events and circumstances which will require a time shift or extension, change of day or a change of location. D Leaders are expected to communicate with youth and parents these changes. Previously schedule changes should be reflected on the calendar.

### **Attendance**

Attendance will be taken at the beginning of every group by the D Leader. It is expected that youth attend these groups regularly with very little absences. If there becomes a situation where a youth's attendance begins to become a problem the D Leaders will first address it with the youth. If not resolved, the D Leaders will contact the parents and discuss any ways that may improve the attendance issues. If issues are still not resolved, the youth may need to step back from the D Group.

### **Late arrivals/Early departures**

It is our expectation that youth will be in attendance for the entire time of the D Group. Late arrivals not only affect the youth that is late but also the D Leaders and the rest of the group. Youth with excessive tardiness will be addressed by the D Leaders. Early departures are also very distracting to the group and D Leaders. In the event that your child(ren) need to leave early from the group please contact the D Leaders.

*A side note: The Power of Parents! More and more extra-curricular activities seem to be encroaching on Wednesday evenings which used to be considered off-limits. This puts parents and youth in a very difficult position and makes them have to choose between their faith and their favorite activity. The more that parents stand strong and hold Wednesdays as 'off-limits' the more likely that those charged with setting schedules will avoid Wednesday evenings.*

## **Programming**

Purpose: Discipleship Groups are designed to engage each youth and draw them closer to God and their faith. It is a group that will form close relationships that support each other through all four of the high school years. Discipleship Leaders encourage and challenge the youth to authentically live their faith in their everyday life, by the choices they make, dedicating themselves to a regular prayer life and regular Mass attendance. It is a group that challenges youth to live out their Baptismal call to become disciples of Jesus Christ. Our purpose is to also assist parents in their roles as primary educators to teach the truths of the Catholic Faith to their children. We encourage parents to discuss with their child(ren) what they personally discussed at their Discipleship Group, yet respecting the privacy of others in the group. Formation in the faith is a lifelong process. Therefore, we encourage parents to continue their own education in the faith along with educating and supporting their children.

**Ninth through Twelfth Grades:** The High School Discipleship program uses the YDisciple program, along with other trusted curriculum; including Bible Studies from Mark Hart and Ascension Press, Decision Point by Dynamic Catholic, YOU by Ascension Press, Beginning Apologetics, Altaration by Ascension Press, and other approved curriculum. This curriculum is designed to engage youth and meet them where they are at and address some of the questions they may have.

### **Other Opportunities during group time**

It is important to offer a variety of opportunities during their time together to engage the youth in the faith. The following opportunities are incorporated into the D Groups program during group time.

#### **Adoration**

*Adoration is the acknowledgement of God as God, Creator and Savior, the Lord and Master of everything that exists. Through worship and prayer, the Church and individual persons give to God the adoration which is the first act of the virtue of religion.*

*The first commandment of the law obliges us to adore God. (CCC 2096, 2628)*

St. Francis Xavier is blessed to have an Adoration in the Christ the King Chapel at the Education Center. Adults are encouraged to spend one hour a week with our Lord present in the Blessed Sacrament. For those praying in the chapel, we ask everyone to respect the designated quiet areas in and around the chapel, which includes the entrance.

In addition to the Adoration Chapel, we offer D Groups the opportunity to come to the Education Center and spend time with our Lord in Adoration at a special location in the Education Center during group time. It is encouraged that the D Leaders bring their group to

Adoration when transportation allows. Permission forms would be needed for D Leaders to transport youth.

### **Church**

The D Groups also have the opportunity to gather at the church if they want to pray in front of the Tabernacle. This is coordinated between the D Leaders and the Director of Youth Formation and Ministry.

### **Vocation Nights**

When available, we invite religious sisters and seminarians to come out to our facility to meet and talk with the youth and to share about these important and beautiful vocations. D Groups are welcome and invited to attend these events when able.

### **Deanery Events**

Occasionally, STFX may partner with other parishes that are in our Deanery to have well-known speakers come and talk with the youth on a specific topic like chastity or other important topics facing the youth. Deanery events will always fall on a Wednesday evening but may have extended time periods. D Groups are encouraged to attend these events when able. Deanery events include other Catholic churches in Wright, eastern Carver and northwestern Hennepin counties.

## **Curriculum Expectations**

### **Assessments**

There is no formal testing for youth involved in D Groups. The D Leaders will assess each youth's knowledge of the faith through their weekly gatherings and discussions. D Leaders will also be given the requirements of what the youth need to know and make sure they know the information during the year, if and when the youth choose to receive the Sacrament of Confirmation.

### **Homework**

Due to the nature and purpose of what a D Group is trying to accomplish, youth may be encouraged to pray, journal, read Scripture or other forms of prayer and reflection, as well as attend Youth Ministry events on their own time and outside of D Group time. This should NOT be viewed as homework but part of incorporating the faith into our everyday lives, as well as helping the youth develop a regular prayer life.

### **Safe Environments**

We strive to create the safest possible environment for all our youth and adults. Each year all of our students need to complete the Safe Environments classes and materials. These materials will be offered on a regular night of D Group during the year.

## Youth Ministry Opportunities

Events are posted in the parish bulletin, on the website and Faith Formation flyers.

### Middle School

#### **Souled Out**

Monthly Youth group for grades 6-8. It is held at the Education Center from 7-10 pm on Fridays during the school year. There is no cost for this event.

#### **Mystery Squared/G Force**

Summer youth group for all youth entering into 6-8th grade in the fall. Mystery Squared/ G Force are held on some Wednesdays during the summer at the Education Center from 3:30pm to 5:45pm. Watch the bulletin for dates. There is a small fee of \$5 to cover cost of food and supplies.

#### **Winterblast**

This is an overnight lock-in at the Maple Grove Community center for grades 6-8. It is typically held in December.

#### **Extreme Faith Camp**

This is a weeklong faith camp typically held in June or July. There are many fun activities and faith experiences that engage middle school youth in the life of the church.

### High School

#### **LIFTED**

Monthly Youth group for grades 9 -12. Dates and times will be announced. There is no cost for this event.

#### **Steubenville/Mission Trips**

Each year, there is a high school trip planned including a Steubenville Youth conference and a retreat. Sometimes there is a mission trip combined with the trip. See website for more info.

#### **Teens For Christ Leadership Team (TFC)**

This is a group of High School youth that dedicate their time and talent to evangelizing their peers. They host all Souled Out events and Lifted nights. They also perform the Living Stations during Lent and help at the 10th grade Retreat.

#### **March for Life**

All High School are invited to attend the March for Life. Each year we rotate between a road trip to Washington D.C and staying local and attending the St. Paul, MN march. This is a great way for the youth to see how their faith can make an impact on their world. See website for more info.