

St. Anthony the Great Orthodox Christian Church

2023–2024 Church School Parent Handbook



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ChurchSchool@St.AnthonytheGreat.org

Welcome

It is a privilege to be part of such an amazing team in our Church School Department. Our teachers devotedly volunteer their time because they love the Lord and want to share that love with the children of our church. Our desire is to develop a foundation in the Orthodox Christian faith so that our children are equipped to thrive and stay connected to the church in today's complex and ever-changing world.

We are called, as Orthodox Christians, to practice a loving and pious life to be an example to those around us of the love of Christ. Our Church School program strives to keep this faith alive for our children through regular, interactive lessons as well as extra Church School related events.

The various Church School activities help to ensure that our children are educated in all aspects of our faith. The program is multifaceted and encompasses Scripture, Tradition, Worship, and Discipleship to help students more fully participate in the Divine Liturgy, the Sacraments, and the life of the Church. It is a sacred privilege to serve you and your children. Our prayer is that peace and joy is ever present in our learning, our dedication to our families, and our love for one another.

Our Church School program thrives when the home and school work together. You, as parents, can help with your support and encouragement. You are vital to the goals for our children! Our staff is always open to your thoughts and ideas, and we welcome your involvement in any Church School activities. Together we can provide our children the opportunity for spiritual growth and development, which we pray will help guide them throughout their lives.

It is a pleasure to be with your children, working with you, to help them grow in their faith. Thanks for allowing us to spend this precious time with them!

The Church School Leadership Team
Julie Beekman, Viviane Khalaf, Co-Directors
Penny Bradley, Vasiliki Damati, Chrissy McGee, Amy Sherman



Church School Procedures

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact your child's teacher or the Church School Directors.

REGISTRATION—All students attending Church School should be properly registered so the staff can be adequately prepared for each student. Any student who will be four years of age by September 1st of the current year will be admitted to the Pre-School class. All other students should register in grades corresponding to their public or private school grade.

SCHEDULE—Church School begins immediately following Communion and ends at 12:15pm. Students will remain in their classrooms during instruction.

CHANGING ADDRESS, PHONE OR EMAIL—Please notify us if your address, phone number, or email address changes during the year. It is important that we be able to contact you when necessary.

DIVINE LITURGY & COMMUNION—Participation in Divine Liturgy is the center of our faith, and students are encouraged to attend regularly. The children line up for Communion first and should be respectful, waiting their turn without pushing or talking, as to not distract others during this sacrament.

ATTENDANCE—Families are encouraged to attend regularly. Special recognition will be given to the class with the best attendance percentage each month.

DISCIPLINE—It is expected that students are kind and respectful of others in the classroom. Misbehavior and disrespect, especially any bullying of other students, will NOT be tolerated as it denies others in the classroom the gift of learning. We want Church School to be a fun and joyful experience for all! A child who is disrupting the class may be sent back to the parents at the teacher's discretion.



Church School Expectations

Always remember we are in Church where the teachings of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ should be followed at all times.

BE AWARE OF CHURCH SCHOOL POLICIES—They are outlined in this handbook. Realize that these policies are in place for the best interest of all students, parents, and staff members.

ATTEND REGULARLY—We encourage the children to attend Divine Liturgy and Church School regularly. Sporadic attendance brings limited comprehension, a lack of understanding, and weaker bonds with classmates and teachers.

MEET THE TEACHER—Our teachers are very accessible and truly want to meet you. Make it a point to introduce yourselves to your child's teacher. They will be extremely grateful! Parents are always welcome to help. Talk to your teacher to see how you might be able to assist.

COMMUNICATE CONCERNS—We encourage you to first communicate any issues or concerns to your child's teacher. After this, specific concerns should be addressed with the Church School Directors.

PARTICIPATE IN ENRICHMENT ACTIVITIES—Participating in the scheduled enrichment activities of the Church School Program, such as Youth Sundays, Creative Arts, Fun Festivals, Summer Fun Game Day, and other varied social activities helps enhance the learning experience for students and brings a sense of belonging between classmates and within the church. Participation in all activities is strongly encouraged!

VALUE RELIGIOUS EDUCATION—Each Sunday, ask your child what he or she is learning in Church School. Show your child by your interest and attitude how much you value their religious education. Your enthusiasm, or your indifference, can be very important!



Health Safety Protocols

Disinfectant wipes and hand sanitizer will be available in each classroom. The tables and chairs will be wiped down after class each week. We will adjust our protocols following CDC guidelines.

Church School Mission Statement

The mission of the **Saint Anthony Orthodox Christian Church School** is to partner with parents to provide a strong foundation in Orthodox Christian education for our children by developing a belief in God's presence in their lives, leading them to make a full commitment to follow Christ's example, and integrating them fully into the life of the church.

Church School Core Values

WORSHIP—Encouraging children to participate in community worship through the Divine Liturgy, cultivating a personal prayer life, and reading of the Scripture.

COMMUNITY—Sharing in the total life of the church by gathering together in fellowship with others in the church family and showing love for one another in Christ.

DISCIPLESHIP—Understanding what it means to be a follower of Jesus. Learning that loving God and loving your neighbor is a way of life.

SERVICE—Using our God-given gifts and talents to serve the needs of others in and around the community in the name of Jesus Christ.

WITNESS—Enabling our youth to express their faith to be true witnesses for Christ and the Orthodox Faith.



Enrichment Activities

Children should always be supervised by their parents unless the children are actively involved in a Church School sponsored activity.

YOUTH SUNDAYS—Once per month our children in grades 3-12 help during the Liturgy with greeting, reading the Epistle, passing the offering baskets, serving the bread, and singing a communion hymn. They are then dismissed to their church school classes.

FALL SEMESTER

BACKPACK BLESSING—In mid August students are encouraged to bring their backpacks to church to be blessed after the Liturgy. It's the start of the new school year!

FALL FESTIVAL—This fun family time is the last Sunday of October. The children change into their costumes and play a variety of carnival games. There are prizes and, of course, candy!

CULTURAL CHRISTMAS COOKIES—To increase cultural awareness, delicious Christmas cookies from the various cultures in our church are offered for sale in the Hall on the same Sunday as the Christmas Presentation.

CHRISTMAS PRESENTATION—In late December, after the Liturgy, the students present a Christmas presentation and have a special Christmas get-together in the Hall including a visit from St. Nicholas.

SPRING SEMESTER

SUNDAY OF ORTHODOXY—All children are encouraged to bring an icon for the procession around the church at the end of Liturgy to celebrate the Triumph of Orthodoxy.

CREATIVE ARTS FESTIVAL—Children in grades K-12 are invited to participate in the Annual Diocese Creative Arts Festival. They may prepare a piece of art, (a painting, drawing, photograph) or a written piece (poem or essay), on the theme for the year, to be submitted by the last Sunday before April 1st.



Enrichment Activities

Children are encouraged to participate in all of our church events as all forms of fellowship, service, and worship within the church are enriching to our lives as Orthodox Christians.

SPRING SEMESTER (continued)

SPRING FESTIVAL ON LAZARUS SATURDAY— A picnic lunch is held following the Divine Liturgy, and the children participate in an Egg Hunt. All those in attendance may make palm crosses for the following Palm Sunday (lessons are given to learn how), and the children may participate in additional activities.

MYRRH BEARERS—All girls in grades K-6 may participate in the Holy Friday Lamentations service as the myrrh bearers. All they need is a white dress!

SUMMER SEMESTER

We love your children so much that we do continue to provide opportunities for them to get together even during the summer!

JOY FELLOWSHIP SUNDAYS—On 4 Sundays throughout the summer we offer a brief half hour Church School program for children who completed grades PK-6. The children get to spend time together to learn, and participate in an activity.

VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL (VBS)—VBS is offered in June and is always a fun time of stories, singing, crafts, and activities. For all children who completed grades PK—6. Our teens volunteer to help with the children. It's an awesome time!

CAMP ST. RAPHAEL—Although not a church school event, every July we strongly encourage all children who are 9 years old through 12th grade to go to camp. Most children have a blast and want to go back!

SUMMER FUN GAME DAY—On a Sunday in July, we sponsor a special game day after the Liturgy. We serve a light lunch and have fun playing games together!



2023-2024 Church School Calendar

These dates may change.

Fall Schedule for 2023

September 10 *First Day of Fall Semester Classes*
 October 29 *Fall Festival* (after Liturgy)
 December 17 *YOUTH SUNDAY*
Christmas Presentation (No Classes)

Spring Schedule for 2024

January 7 *First Day of Spring Semester Classes*
 March 24 *YOUTH SUNDAY* (Sunday of Orthodoxy procession with icons) and *Creative Arts Festival* (Project Due Date)
 April 27 *Spring Festival* (Lazarus Saturday)
 April 28 *Palm Sunday* (No Classes)
 May 3 *Holy Friday Lamentations Myrrh Bearers, Luminaries*
 May 5 *Pascha* (No Classes)
 May 12 *Mother's Day*
 May 19 *Last Day of Spring Semester*

Summer Schedule for 2024

June 2 *JOY Fellowship*
 June 9 *YOUTH SUNDAY* (Graduation Sunday)
 June 17-21 *Vacation Bible School (VBS)*
 June 30 *JOY Fellowship*
 July 7-13 *Camp St. Raphael* (dates may change)
 July 14 *JOY Fellowship*
 July 28 *Summer Fun Game Day*
 August 11 *JOY Fellowship*

Youth Sundays are once a month. The children help with activities during Liturgy and love to sit up front and participate with Father as he gives a children's homily.

*Check the weekly email blast, the Sunday bulletins, and the **Church School Chat** Newsletter for any updates and changes to the Church School calendar.*

