

2020-2021 St. James' Church School Plan

This year, St. James' Church School will be facilitated through an "at-home" model. Several factors went into making this decision:

1. Youth gatherings are currently not permitted, per instruction from the Bishop. We do not have a predictable timeline for when this restriction will be eased.
2. We know that our classroom spaces are not large enough to implement appropriate social distancing, especially considering the number of students in each class. We want to do everything we can to ensure the safety of the students, teachers, and greater church community.
3. We desire to implement a model that will continue to function predictably, even as the status of the pandemic changes.
4. We seek to reduce the amount of Zoom meetings and required screen time for students, as we are aware that several K - 12 schools will be utilizing a virtual model which will require heightened screen time. However, we know that connecting with the church community is important and wish to provide opportunities for guided instruction and conversation.
5. We aim to provide an authentic church school experience regardless of the model used, ensuring that all families have access to the materials they need.
6. We understand the importance of our established curriculum and want to do everything possible to ensure that students are given the opportunity to learn all of the material.

What does the program look like?

This year's church school experience will include at-home lessons and activities, corresponding lesson videos created by teachers, and monthly Zoom meetings for each class. Each at-home lesson should take only 10 - 15 minutes to complete.

Each family will be provided with lessons and materials to facilitate learning at home. All lessons come directly from our established curriculum, however lessons have been re-written and modified to better suit an at-home learning environment.

Age-appropriate lessons will be available for the following age groups: PreK - 1st, 2nd - 5th, and 6th - 12th. All lesson activities and required craft supplies will be provided to each family.

Lessons for PreK - 1st and 2nd - 5th should be completed with an adult. All readings, lessons, discussion questions, activities, and prayers are provided for you on an easy-to-use, single page guide.

6th - 12th grade lessons are designed to be completed individually, with a "Family Talk" section included for inspiring conversation with parents. Lessons are contained in a workbook-style resource, with all readings, reflections, and activities included.

In addition to the written lesson, you will have access to pre-recorded teaching videos brought to you by St. James' teachers! Each video will contain a snapshot of the lesson for the week, providing the readings and background information.

Each student will have the opportunity to meet with teachers via Zoom 1x month. These monthly meetings will allow for virtual guided instruction, conversation, and fellowship for students and teachers.

Why an at-home parent led model vs. a virtual teacher led model?

We like to think that Christian formation happens best at church with formal teachers but, in reality, most of what people learn about faith is learned at home. If ever there was a year to inspire regular family formation, this is it!

I know it may seem daunting to schedule family formation into your already busy lives. The hope is that as time goes on, incorporating family formation seems less like a schedule to keep and more like a treasured experience to have. Remember, formation time does not have to be long. The lessons themselves will take only 10-15 minutes. However, the impact of learning about and discussing faith together as a family is huge!

We also know the importance of having outside influences when raising a child in faith. This is why we've decided to schedule monthly Zoom meetings that provide an opportunity for youth to talk with their peers and their teachers about these important concepts. Regularly produced teacher-led instruction videos will provide you with more support as you discover faith at home.

What materials will I need?

PreK - 5th grade families will need to provide a few basic art supplies such as paper, scissors, glue, and tape. All other materials will be provided.

Each student will be provided a Book of Common Prayer and a Bible, unless you plan to use your own. If you do not have your own copies at home, simply indicate your need on the registration form and the church will provide you with one!

The church will provide standard NRSV bibles. (These are the same bibles that are used in the classrooms.) You may prefer to purchase your own student bible that could be used for church school as well as personal use. Here are a few recommendations!

[Spark Story Bible](#) (Younger children)

[Spark Story Bible Preview](#)

This bible is not a literal NRSV translation. It includes 150 important stories from the bible, rewritten for sharing bible stories with younger children.

[NRSV Spark Bible](#)

[Spark Bible Preview](#)

This bible contains interactive elements throughout, "Did you know?" background information, and activity suggestions. It has a simple layout and color scheme.

[NRSV Adventure Bible](#) (Preview available on Amazon)

This bible looks fun, is full-color, and has plenty of illustrations. It includes commentary throughout to provide ample context for each passage. Note: this bible does contain commentary from a biblical literalist perspective.

[NRSV Student Bible](#) (Preview available on Amazon)

This bible is written in an easy to use format and contains helpful background information. This bible is geared towards 6th grade - college age, however this bible would also be a good option for adults.

When and where can I pick-up my box of lessons and materials?

Family boxes of lessons and materials will be available on August 30, September 6, and September 13th from 11:30am - 12:30pm during "social distance communion". Boxes will be labeled and placed in the pews for families to collect. Please be sure to register by August 21st so that I know what to pack in your box!

How many lessons are sent home at a time?

As our curriculum is already divided into four units, one unit at a time will be sent home to families. The first unit consists of 8 lessons and runs September 13 - November 1. Materials for the second unit will be available before it begins on November 8.

What is the schedule for monthly Zoom meetings?

The specific schedule and time will be announced at a later date. Keep an eye on the weekly "Education Update" email for up-to-date information.

What is the plan for returning to in-person instruction?

As of right now, we do not have a plan to return to in-person instruction until 2021-2022. Our goal was to create a program that would function regardless of the stage of the pandemic. If we reach a point that in-person instruction seems viable and youth gatherings are permitted by the Bishop, we will update you accordingly.

I'm not sure about teaching my child about faith...

I guarantee that you already have everything you need to share the love of God with your child! If you're concerned about practical knowledge, don't worry. Each lesson already contains any background information you may need. In fact, don't be afraid to read it right off the page! It is common for church school teachers to learn more about their own faith as they teach their students. Don't be surprised if this happens for you as well! We hope this is a time of renewed spiritual connection for your whole family!

Do I need to register this year?

Yes! Even though we are not meeting in person, our annual parochial report requires an accurate count of how many youth are involved in the church school program. Additionally, the form contains vital information that will allow Lauren to prepare the take-home boxes.

Please complete your registration by August 21st.