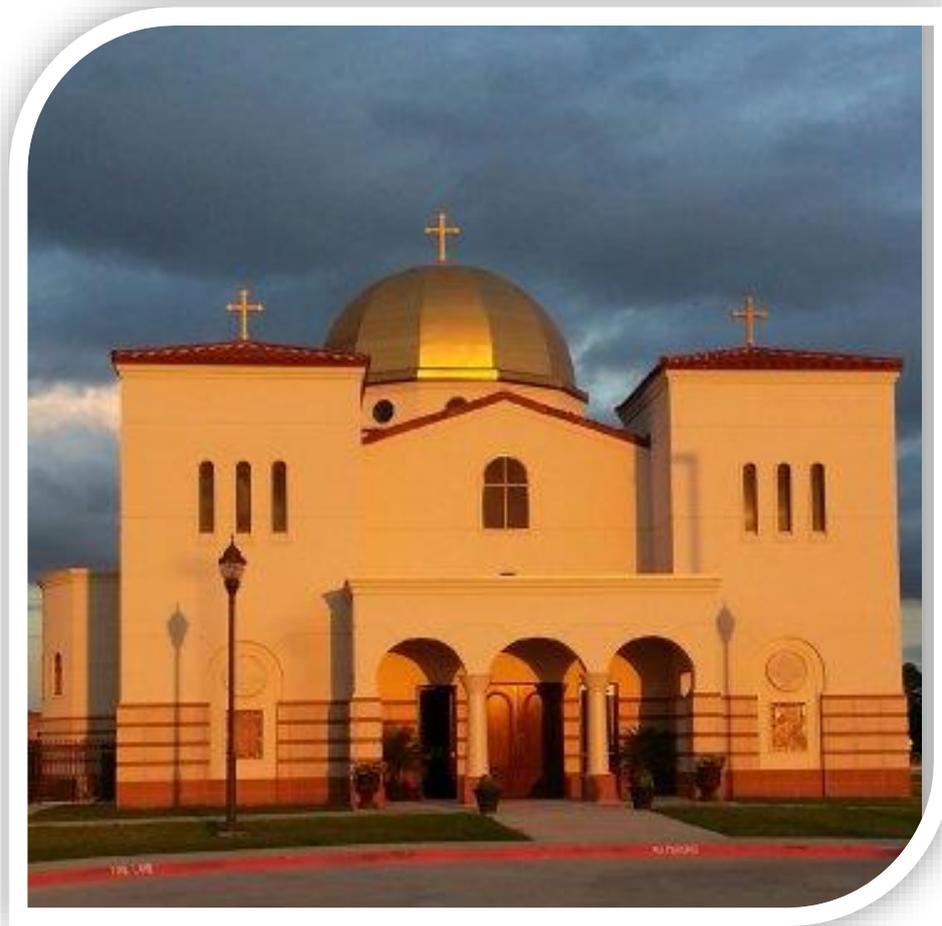


2018 – 2019 CHURCH SCHOOL PARENT INFORMATIONAL HANDBOOK



St. Anthony the Great Orthodox Christian Church
7202 FM 2920 | Spring, TX 77379

Dear Church School Parents,

As our parish continues to grow in size, we must mature in our organizations as well by creating new methods of communicating in order to maintain our warm and inclusive atmosphere. This handbook is intended to help clearly communicate the expectations and opportunities provided by our Church School Program.

Religious education is both a privilege and a necessity within the life of the Church. It is a privilege in that it involves education in the doctrines of our Orthodox Christian faith. It is a necessity because it helps develop a strong foundation so that our children are equipped to thrive and stay connected to the church in today's highly complex and ever changing world.

As a church family, we realize that the gift of Orthodoxy is a way of life that we must preserve and impart to the young people of our parish. We are called to express our identity as Orthodox Christians by practicing a loving and pious life to be examples to those around us and by spreading the love of Christ. We must maintain our faith that offers 2000 years of wisdom and worship.

Our Church School program strives to keep this faith alive for our children through regular lessons as well as extra Church School related events. Through the great lessons prepared by our teachers and the wonderful Christian example that they each set, our Church School is intended to ensure that our children are educated in all aspects of our faith, from the time they start as four-year-olds until they graduate high school. 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. To enhance the weekly lessons, we have many Enrichment Activities that will help our students to become active participants in our church family. Examples include the Youth Sunday Program and the Creative Arts Festival. These activities add depth and breadth to our regular Sunday classes and are explained further in this handbook.

While our parish is blessed with dedicated teachers, our program can only thrive if the home and school work together. Our goal is the same: to provide the best for each of the students because we care for them as children of God, and because today's children are tomorrow's church leaders and the life and joy of our church. You, as parents, can help with your support and encouragement. You are vital to our success!

I am excited about this Church School year, and I would personally like to thank our wonderful, dedicated teachers for their commitment and hard work in preparing meaningful lessons each week for our students. These teachers are our fellow parishioners who volunteer their time as a labor of love to our children so I ask that you offer them your help, support, and encouragement. Most of all, I would like to thank you for entrusting us with your children. Our staff is always open to your thoughts and ideas, and we welcome your involvement in the Church School Program. Together we can provide our children the opportunity for spiritual growth and development, which we pray will help guide them throughout their lives.

In Christ,

Adella Winder

Youth Director & Church School Director

CHURCH SCHOOL EXPECTATIONS

1. Always remember we are in Church where the teachings of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ should be followed at all times.
2. Church School begins immediately following Communion and ends at approximately 12:15p.m. Students will remain in their classrooms during instruction and will be directed to the Fellowship Hall when class ends.
3. Misbehavior and disrespect, especially any bullying of other students, will NOT be tolerated. Church school is a sacred space and time in a child's life and should be respected as such. If a child is disrupting the class, they may be sent back to their parents, at the teacher's discretion. For any offenses considered ongoing or serious, the student will be referred to the Church School Director or Parish Priest. This is not intended to be harsh, but to ensure that a large portion of class time is not spent on behavior management.
4. No texting or phone calls during class instruction are allowed, unless permitted by the teacher.
5. In order to participate in retreats, Teen SOYO, and Camp St. Raphael, students must be faithful in their Church School attendance and participation. Please try your best to attend as frequently as possible.
6. Students who have no absences throughout each 6 weeks period of Church School will be awarded for perfect attendance. If your child attends Sunday School at another parish on a particular Sunday, please let your child's teacher know so that your child will be counted present.
7. To ensure a rich Church School experience, it is just as important to participate in the Enrichment Activities, such as Youth Sundays, Christmas Caroling, Creative Arts, Bible Bowl, etc., as Church School itself. Participation in these activities is strongly encouraged!

IMPORTANT ASPECTS OF CHURCH SCHOOL

DIVINE LITURGY & COMMUNION

Participation in Divine Liturgy is the center of our faith, and students are encouraged to attend regularly. Also, when coming up for Communion, students should be respectful, waiting their turn without pushing or talking as to not distract others during this sacrament.

REGULAR ATTENDANCE

Encourage your child to attend Divine Liturgy and Church School regularly. Sporadic attendance brings limited understanding, often lack of understanding, and develops weaker bonds with classmates and teachers. Do you let your children skip school because, “they just don’t feel like going?” Consider religious education as important as secular education!

VALUING RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Each Sunday, ask your child what he or she is learning in Church School. Often your student will have little to say about the lesson. However, as you continue to keep an interest, you may begin to get more information from your children. Show your child by your interest and attitude how much you value their religious education. Your enthusiasm or your indifference can be very important!

KNOWING THE TEACHER

Meet your child’s teacher. All teachers are very accessible and truly want to know the parents of their students. If your child has a learning disability or any other difference that we may need to know about, please feel free to contact the Church School Director, and they will subtly and confidentially let your child’s teacher know.

BEING AWARE OF CHURCH SCHOOL POLICIES

Become familiar with the policies of Church School, which are outlined in this handbook. Realize that these policies are in place for the best interest of all students, parents, and staff members.

DISCIPLINE

As a church school, we are committed to uphold the principles of an Orthodox Christian way of life. It is expected that students are kind and respectful of others in the classroom, especially teachers. Misbehavior is not only disrespectful but also denies others in the classroom the gift of learning. We want Church School to be a fun and joyful experience for all!

COMMUNICATING PROBLEMS

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 Director.

REGISTRATION

All students attending Church School should be properly registered so that 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 students should register in grades corresponding to their public or private school grade.

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.

STEWARDSHIP

It is good for students to learn now that they can earn and contribute their own money back to the community. They are encouraged to participate in any stewardship, fundraisers, food drives, or volunteer opportunities provided by the church and Church School. In this way, we encourage them that stewardship to the Church is ongoing, even into adulthood.

PARTICIPATING IN ENRICHMENT ACTIVITIES

Participating in the scheduled Enrichment Activities of the Church School Program helps enhance the learning experience for students and brings a sense of belonging between classmates and within the church. These activities are designed to enhance and enrich the weekly lessons. Please refer to the Church School calendar for dates and times.

ENRICHMENT ACTIVITIES

CHRISTMAS CAROLING & CONCERT

In December, teachers, parents and students will be given the opportunity to go caroling at a local nursing home to spread the love of Christ and Christmas cheer! This will be on a Saturday morning (see the Church School Schedule). Students will also perform that Sunday in front of the parish to celebrate the Nativity of our Lord. We will begin practicing during Sunday School in November, and teachers may send music home for your children to practice. Please make every effort to attend both events!

CREATIVE ARTS

Children in grades 1-12 are invited to participate in the Annual Diocese Creative Arts Festival. They are encouraged to prepare a piece of art, whether it be a painting, drawing, photograph, poem, or creative writing piece, on the appointed theme for the year to be submitted before April 1st. The theme for Creative Arts 2019 will be:

"I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me." – Philippians 4:13

BIBLE BOWL

Across the archdiocese, Orthodox students ages 10-19 are welcome to participate in this annual event where they have the opportunity to study the Bible in depth and compete against other students their age at the Parish Life Conference in June. The 2018 Bible Bowl will be held in Ft. Worth, TX will be over Colossians, Philippians, and Ephesians. Winners of the local contest for the Teen Division, Ages 13-19, compete at the Archdiocese Level. The Bible Bowl is a great opportunity for youth to learn about their faith and the Word of God while creating lasting friendships with other children on their team.

ORATORICAL FESTIVAL

Throughout the archdiocese, Orthodox students ages 13-19 are welcome to participate in this annual event where they have the opportunity to write and make presentations on the given piece of scripture (see Philippians 4:13 under "Creative Arts") at the Parish Life

Conference, which will be held in Ft. Worth. Winners of the local contest for the Senior Division, Ages 16-19, compete at the Archdiocese Level. The festival is an exceptional opportunity for youth to express their faith.

SUNDAY OF ORTHODOXY

Students are encouraged to attend the Liturgy and bring an icon on the Sunday of Orthodoxy, which is March 17th this year. Children will process around the church at the end of the service with their icons to celebrate this Sunday known as the Triumph of Orthodoxy.

LAZURUS SATURDAY PALM CROSS MAKING

Even though this is not a Sunday School Sponsored event, this is an opportunity for all students to partake of Holy Communion with the fellowship of their classmates. A potluck lunch is held following the Divine Liturgy, and all those in attendance are taught how to make palm crosses for the following Palm Sunday as well as stuff eggs for the Pascha Egg Hunt.

OTHER CHURCH EVENTS

Children are encouraged to participate in other church events and organizations as well, whether it be volunteering at the Annual Garage Sale or attending a Teen SOYO Retreat. All forms of fellowship, service, and worship within the church are enriching to our lives as Orthodox Christians.

St. Anthony the Great Orthodox Church

School Calendar – Fall 2018

DATES	SCHEDULE
Sept. 9	First Day of Church School! TEEN SOYO MEETING AFTER CLASSES
Sept. 16	Sunday Before Elevation of the Cross Practice Singing before Class Begins
Sept. 23	Ask Abouna: PK & K
Sept. 30	~YOUTH SUNDAY~ Ask Abouna: Middle School
Oct. 7	<u>General Parish Meeting Following Liturgy</u> <i>Teen SOYO Basketball Retreat</i>
Oct. 14	Practice Singing before Class Begins Ask Abouna: 1 st & 2 nd
Oct. 21	~YOUTH SUNDAY~
Oct. 28	<i>Y.E.S. Trip at St. George (Teen SOYO)</i>
Nov. 4	Daylight Saving Time Ends ~ Clocks fall back Ask Abouna: 3 rd – 5 th
Nov. 11	Ordination of Dn. George at St. George Nativity Fast Begins Thursday Nov. 15th
Nov. 18	~YOUTH SUNDAY~ Joy club pizza party in the hall after class!
Nov. 25	<u>No Church School ~ Happy Thanksgiving!</u>
Dec. 2	Practice Singing before Class Begins Ask Abouna: High School
Dec. 9	Sat. Dec. 8 th ~ Caroling at Nursing Home followed by Staff Meeting
Dec. 16	Youth Sunday & Christmas Concert!

**We will begin practicing Christmas Carols on November 5th before class begins each Sunday in the large classroom.*

Church School Policy Agreement

The 2018 – 2019 Church School Parent Handbook can be found on the Church Website (www.StAnthonytheGreat.org), in the narthex, and on the information table in the Fellowship Hall.

I have read the 2018 – 2019 Church School Parent Handbook. I acknowledge that my child(ren) must adhere to the expectations stated in order to maintain an atmosphere conducive to Christian education and positive fellowship.

Student(s) Name: _____ Parent Name: _____

Parent Signature: _____ Date: _____

Please sign and return to a Church

CHURCH SCHOOL BEGINS SEPTEMBER 9TH!