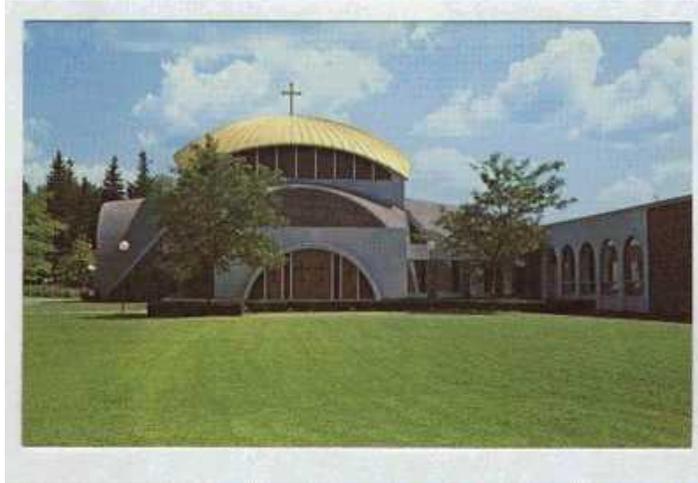


Sunday School Handbook/Curriculum 2016 - 2017



St. Sophia Greek Orthodox Church

**440 Whitehall Road
Albany, New York 12208
(518) 489-4442**

<http://www.stsophia.net>

GUIDELINES FOR APPROPRIATE BEHAVIOR IN SUNDAY SCHOOL DURING CLASSROOM INSTRUCTION

- **Turn off all cell phones upon entering Church.**
- **No texting or phone calls during class instruction is allowed.**
- **Before entering your classroom for instruction, take care of all of your personal needs, examples: take a drink or use bathrooms. There will be no entering or leaving the classroom during instruction unless it is an emergency to be determined by the teacher. Doing so is inconsiderate of the teacher and the rest of your class.**
- **No wandering in the halls during instruction.**
- **Be respectful of your teacher, he/she is not being paid, he/she is a volunteer.**
- **Be respectful of other students...treat others as you wish to be treated.**
- **Under no circumstances will any bullying of other students be tolerated.**
- **Always remember you are in Church where the teachings of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ should be followed at all times.**
- **When you come for Communion, wait your turn without pushing anyone and do not talk to anyone. Simply look straight ahead and think about what you are about to receive. Ask God for forgiveness before receiving Holy Communion.**

A MESSAGE TO PARENTS

St. Sophia Greek Orthodox Church of Albany, NY in its continued effort to design an effective and valid educational program for youth, proudly presents to you for your consideration and appraisal our Sunday School program. This booklet of our Sunday School program is designed to acquaint the parents of our students with the curriculum and purpose of Sunday School, and to impress upon all members the value of the St. Sophia Sunday School Program.

We believe that our efforts to create living, knowledgeable Orthodox Christians have been blessed by our Lord. Our Church today is proud of the spiritual caliber of its children and sees the children who pass through its doors as the future members of a congregation that is rich due to its members' conviction, and Greek Orthodox beliefs.

It is this program in conjunction with the dedication and love of the parents, family members and other community members that will secure our Church's future. The program to be effective requires parent support and commitment to achieve continuous participation of each child in all facets of our program.

INTRODUCTION

The general education our children receive today is simply not enough. In a world that becomes ever more complicated and morally complex, our children run the risk of lacking the spiritual and moral development to navigate their way through these treacherous waters. Our children must balance the advancement of their intellect through traditional schooling with the development of their moral character through education in the Greek Orthodox faith. It is here, in our Sunday School program, that we hope our children will not only make new friends and have fun, but that they will fundamentally build a moral compass that will guide them in later years to what is right and what is true.

OBJECTIVES

St. Sophia Greek Orthodox Church Sunday School program nurtures our most precious resource—our youth. Children raised in this program are taught the spiritual values of Greek Orthodox Christianity, and the rich customs and Traditions of the Greek culture. Our Sunday School, equipped with the latest and best teaching aids, a sound yet flexible curriculum, and staffed by qualified teachers, has the following three goals:

1. To educate our children spiritually and morally, in accordance with the teachings of Jesus Christ and the faith and traditions of the Greek Orthodox Church
2. To develop in our children the habit of attending church regularly, studying the Scriptures, and participating conscientiously in the worship and sacramental life of our church
3. To cultivate in our children a Greek Orthodox conscience and devotion to our ideals and to prepare them so that they become faithful and devoted dynamic members of our church, our community, and our country

ENROLLMENT

Currently, we have on average annually of between 120-130 children enrolled in our 11 Sunday School classes.

CLASSES

The Sunday School has grouped its children according to age and current grade level at their school to maintain continuity across groups. The minimum enrollment age is three years old (children of this age are placed in our nursery class) and runs through 10th grade.

TERM

The Sunday School term runs from the third Sunday of September and extends through to end of May.

Classes for the 2016 - 2017 Sunday School Year

September: 11th (classes begin in the church hall after registration for a welcome introduction with all classes)

September 11, 18, 25

October: 2, 16, 23, 30

November: 6, 13, 20

December: 4, 11, 18

January: 8, 15, 22, 29

February: 5, 19, 26

March: 5, 12, 19

April: 2, 23, 30

May: 7, 14

June 4 (last day of classes and GRADUATION CEREMONY)

FAMILY WORSHIP DAYS

These are the Sundays that generally fall on holiday weekends or weeks: Columbus weekend, Thanksgiving weekend, Christmas break, Winter Recess, Spring Recess, Holy Week, Greek Festival weekend and Memorial weekend. On these 8 Sundays, classes will not be held and students have the opportunity to worship with their families in church for the entire service.

Days classes WILL NOT BE IN SESSION for 2016 - 2017

October 9 (Columbus Day Weekend)

November 27 (Thanksgiving Weekend)

December 25 (Christmas Break)

January 1 (New Year Weekend)

February 12 (Winter Recess)

March 26 (Family Worship)

April 9 (Palm Sunday)

April 16 (Easter)

May 21 (Greek Festival)

May 28 (Memorial Day Weekend)

HOURS

Divine Liturgy begins at 9:30 am. All students are encouraged to be seated near the choir in church at that time. Sunday School begins at 10:00 am and students are required to be in their classrooms by that time and remain until they have been dismissed by their teacher (usually around 11:15-11:30 am).

FINANCIAL CONTRIBUTIONS

There is not additional tuition or a registration fee however, all parents must be members of St. Sophia Greek Orthodox Church. Students are encouraged to make weekly offerings to the donation tray at the Pangari in church when they light their candles.

LOCATION

Sunday School classes are held throughout the various classrooms and rooms in our community center

Pre-K = in the right side of the nursery classroom

Kindergarten = in the left side of the nursery classroom

1st and 2nd grade = in the Greek School Room

3rd and 4th grade = in Father Pat's Conference Room

5th and 6th grade = in the Damascos Room

7th and 8th grade = in the Philoptochos Room

9th and 10th grade = in the Culture Room or AHEPA room or Library

METHODS

Our Sunday School program seeks to do more than merely insist that students memorize subject matter. Instead, we encourage them to live out the values learned in Sunday School in their own lives. Our program is one of the valuable ways that our children will learn how to navigate the complexities of life. Given the positive impact of involvement in class, our Sunday School students are encouraged to participate actively – whether in class discussion, dialogues with our priests or, for the younger students, arts and crafts projects, prayer recitals, or singing hymns or songs. Where applicable, the classes will incorporate audio-visual aids including films, pictures, maps and pictures to make the learning process more vivid. We will further enrich our curriculum and Greek Orthodox heritage with a Christmas Program, Three Hierarchs and Greek Letters Day Program, retreats and field trips such as the Greek Independence Day Parade in New York City. We encourage all students in both our Greek School and Sunday School to participate in this patriotic and cultural experience.

2016 - 2017 School Year Teacher Staff - Director: Father Dennis L. Nagi, Ph.D.

Associate Director: Maria Sokaris

Pre-School: Tina Yavis and Anne Hadjioannou

Kindergarten: Matina Ziamandanis

1st and 2nd grade: Karen Pappis

3rd and 4th grade: Anastasia Vasilakos-Garrow

5th and 6th grade: Zoe Bousbouras

7th and 8th grade: Barbara Rustin

9th and 10th grade: Maria Ziamandanis

QUALIFICATIONS

The entire staff possesses the following necessary qualifications: Member of the Greek Orthodox faith, Knowledge of the Greek Orthodox faith, Enthusiasm for teaching, Affection for children, Patience and understanding, and Solid moral character.

PARENTS' RESPONSIBILITY

We cannot over emphasize the importance of your participation in your child's religious life. It is up to the parent to guide, encourage, and direct the growing child into the arms of the Church. It is of utmost significance that this be the understanding of the parent as the first and predominant Role Model. If your child sees both parents coming to Church, he/she will understand what families do. If you bring God into your home, he will be more readily known in your family. Here are some ways that you help the Sunday School staff help your child:

- Please review with your children the guidelines for appropriate behavior in Sunday School found in the front of this booklet.
- Please bring your child on time. Remember, they can't drive themselves!!
- Please have your child attend as regularly as possible; consistency is vital to the flow of information and to your child's feelings of group membership and acceptance.
- Please discuss your child's lesson with him/her after Church and during the week.
- Children are great imitators. What they see their parents do, they will also do.

CONCLUSION

This, in its brief outline, is our Sunday School at Saint Sophia Greek Orthodox Church – its goals, its program and its teachers. We are proud of our progress, but recognize the many hurdles we approach – from incorporating modern teaching technology into our classes to making the role of Orthodoxy increasingly relevant to our children's lives. However, we meet the challenge readily and welcome the thoughts and involvement of our larger community of parents, family members and friends in this endeavor.