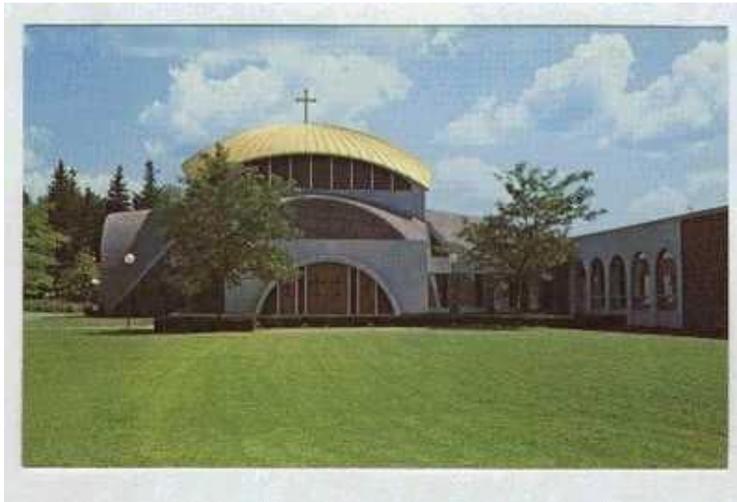


Sunday School Handbook/Curriculum 2017 - 2018



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

- **We ask you to turn off all cell phones upon entering Church.**
- **Texting or phone calls during class instruction is not allowed.**
- **Before entering your classroom for instruction, please take care of all of your personal needs, for example: take a drink or use the bathrooms. We prefer to have all children remain in the classroom during instruction unless it is an emergency.**
- **We do not allow wandering in the halls during instruction.**
- **Please be respectful of your teacher, he/she is not being paid, he/she is a volunteer.**
- **Please be respectful of other students. Treat them as you wish to be treated.**
- **Bullying is unacceptable behavior and will not be tolerated.**
- **Always remember you are in Church where the teachings of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ should be followed.**
- **When you come for Communion, please wait your turn without pushing anyone and do not talk to anyone, or chew gum, candy, or cereal. It takes discipline, so think about what you are about to receive, and ask God for forgiveness.**

A MESSAGE TO PARENTS

St. Sophia Greek Orthodox Church of Albany, NY in its continued effort to design an effective and valuable educational program for our 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 members of our congregation.

It is this program in conjunction with the dedication and love of the parents, family members and other community members that will secure our children's future ground in the faith of our forefathers. The program in order 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 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 90-100 children enrolled in our Sunday School classes.

CLASSES

The Sunday School has grouped our 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 8th grade. Due to a lack of committed volunteers classes may be grouped into the following: Grades Pre-K/Kindergarten; First/Second; Third/Fourth; Fifth/Sixth; Seventh/Eighth.

TERM

The Sunday School term runs from September 10, 2017 through June 3, 2018.

FAMILY WORSHIP and COMMITMENT DAYS

These are the Sundays that fall throughout the year as directed by Fr. Pat. Please be aware that on any assigned Family Worship Day, we are all requested to participate as a family or as indicated by the Church School schedule. Commitment Sundays are a new concept in which designation classes will be asked to remain in church for the worship service and be assigned duties which center around the life of the Church. Some will be asked to serve in the altar to experience the fullness of the Divine Liturgy, while others will be asked to hold candles, and others will be assigned other duties. It is our desire to immerse fully our children into our procedures and way of the Church. These special Sundays will be announced in the classroom and attended by the assigned teacher.

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 the conclusion of the Gospel reading. We ask that our students be present in order to follow a series of special sermons designed for them.

FINANCIAL CONTRIBUTIONS

There is no tuition or a registration fee however, all parents are expected to be members of St. Sophia Greek Orthodox Church. Students are also 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 which we be determined at a later date and is dependent upon class size.

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, our youth retreat, and when possible a field trip.

2017 - 2018 School Year Administration:

Director: Matthew Pappis

Associate Director: Zoe Bousbouras

STAFF QUALIFICATIONS

The entire staff possesses the following necessary qualifications: Member of the Greek Orthodox Church, Knowledge of the Greek Orthodox faith, Enthusiasm for teaching, Affection for children, Patience and understanding, and Solid moral character. Each year our staff and teachers must also attend a class offered on *Child Protection*.

PARENTS' RESPONSIBILITY

We cannot emphasize enough the importance of a parent's participation in the religious life of their child. 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 involved in the life of the Church, he/she will understand what families do. If God is part of the life of a parent's life, it is only natural the children will be more attuned to a religious life. Prayer is very important and the easiest way to involve the entire family. Reciting the Lord's prayer is a vital foundation for the future. 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.
- Pray with your children and invite the priest at your convenience whenever possible. Above all remember, Children are great imitators. What they see and hear their parents do and say, 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.