

History of Curriculum

- ▶ Each Diocese was mandated to have a safety curriculum for minors in parish and schools in 2005.
- ▶ Archbishop Curtiss gave his blessing to develop our own faith-based curriculum.
- ▶ Local group of diocesan experts (school, parish RE, youth ministry, clergy and mental health) gathered to develop the curriculum.
- ▶ Today over 67 Dioceses are using the curriculum and several other countries



Circle of Grace ...

Philosophy

- ▶ The love and goodness of God that surrounds us and all others.
- ▶ The recognition that God is always with us and is there to help us in difficult situations.
- ▶ Holds our very essence in mind, heart, soul, body and sexuality encompassing all of your senses.



Circle of Grace
Prayer

Imagine the following :

Raising your hands above your head

And then bringing your arms slowly down

Keeping them outstretched

*Extending your arms in front of you then
behind you*

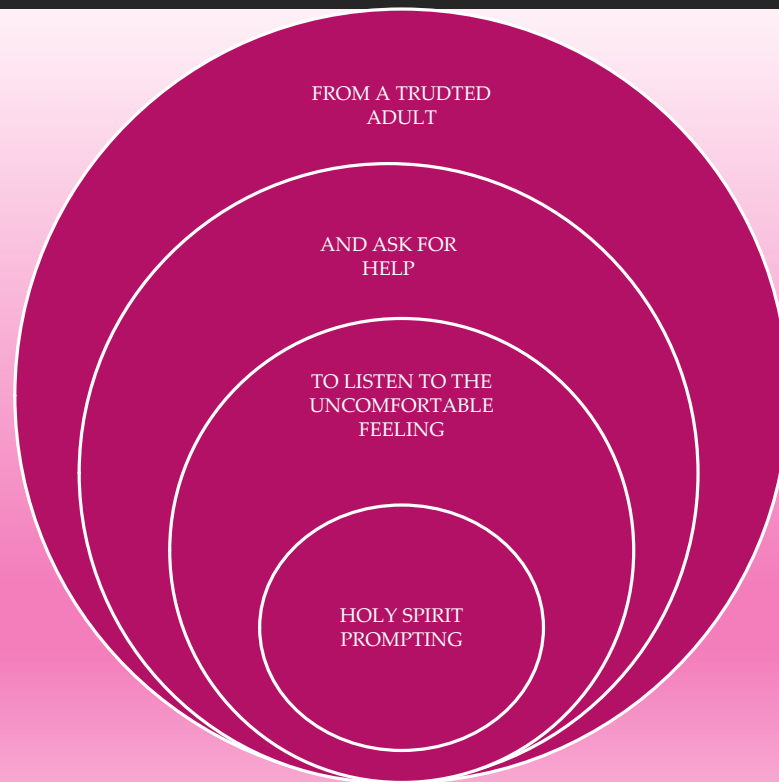
slowly reach down to your feet.

Knowing that GOD is in this space with you .

This is your Circle of Grace

You are in it.

Circle of Grace Concept



Summary of the Key Concepts of “Circle of Grace”

God gives each of us a Circle of Grace (see below) where He is always Present:

Raise your hands above your head, then bring your outstretched arms slowly down.

Extend your arms in front of you and then behind you embrace all of the space around you slowly reach down to your feet.

Know that God is in this space with you. This is your Circle of Grace; you are in it.



God is Present because He desires a relationship with us

- God is with us when we are happy and sad. God does not cause bad things to happen to us. He loves us very much.
- God desires to help us when we are hurt, scared or confused (unsafe).
- Having faith may not take away all of life's struggles. It is because of these struggles, God promised to always be present; providing guidance and comfort in our time of need.

God helps us know what belongs in our Circle of Grace

- Our feelings help us know about ourselves and the world around us.
- God helps us know what belongs in our Circle of Grace by allowing us to experience peace, love or contentment when something or someone good comes into our Circle of Grace.

Summary of the Key Concepts – Continued

▶ **God helps us know what does not belong in our *Circle of Grace***

- God desires to help us when we are hurt, scared or confused (unsafe).
- The Holy Spirit prompts (alerts) us that something does not belong in our *Circle of Grace* by giving us “a funny or uncomfortable feeling” that something is not safe. This feeling is there because God wants us to be safe.

▶ **God helps us know when to ask for help from someone we trust**

- God gives us several trusted adults, in addition to our parents, to talk to about our worries, concerns or “funny/ uncomfortable feelings” so they can help us be safe. If a parent or trusted adult is not available or unable to help us, God wants us to go to another trusted adult until we get the help needed to be safe.



How Does the *Circle of Grace* Concept Protect Kids and Youth?

Each grade/ alternate lesson or retreat has three components: Sacredness (made in God's image), boundaries/ violations and how to seek help from a trusted adult. Teaching these three components together maximizes the child and/or youth to bring the concern forward.

It gives the children/youth and adults a framework and language to address all safety concerns not just sexual abuse.

It gives children/youth an opportunity to tell us about whatever makes them uncomfortable which many times is before inappropriate touch has occurred.

An offender is alerted when a child or youth states "you are in my *Circle of Grace*." This is a clue that the child/youth has had safety education and may deter further contacts.



Circle of Grace is Relational

- ▶ God is in our *Circle of Grace* because He desires a relationship with each of us!
- ▶ *Circle of Grace* is taught in the context of a relationship with self, God and others.
- ▶ Moral development and discernment matures with real “face to face” relationships not with “technology” relationships.
Therefore, it is important to teach it in person verses online or video.

TEACHES “SAFETY AND DISCERNMENT”

FAITH

- ▶ Circle of Grace teaches youth that God wants them to be safe
- ▶ Listening to the Holy Spirit’s prompting is key to identifying healthy and unhealthy boundaries
- ▶ Our faith gives us great teachings on healthy boundaries (Ten Commandments, Beatitudes, TOB)

RELATIONSHIPS

- ▶ Circle of Grace helps youth identify “trusted adults” in addition to their parents
- ▶ Having a conversation with a safe adult they trust is vital when discerning if a behavior or person is safe
- ▶ Youth need to ask themselves key questions to help with their discernment i.e., What would my family or God think?

Key Qualities to Effectively Teach Circle of Grace

- ▶ Truly believing, as the prayer expresses, God is that close to us and is all around us. If you do not believe what you are teaching, youth won't believe it either.
- ▶ Courage to examine, as adults, what things/people we let in our Circle of Grace that negatively impacts us.
- ▶ Understanding that this is a **safety curriculum** that incorporates our faith.
- ▶ Understanding youth will more deeply embrace their faith when they know the adults care about their safety
- ▶ Model a “trusted adult” by integrating the Circle of Grace philosophy and concept into their lives.
- ▶ Create ways to incorporate the Circle of Grace concept throughout the year which will assist youth in navigating many struggles they face.



2023 Updated Circle of Grace Curriculum

*HELPING THE YOUTH MEET THE CHALLENGES OF
TODAY'S CULTURE*

Snapshot of the Traditional and Alternate K-8 Lessons

Traditional Kindergarten –Grade 8

Traditional Lessons have all the components needed for the USCCB audits.

- ▶ **The Administration section** has the full vocabulary plus additional resources
- ▶ **K-3** includes sacredness, boundaries of each Circle of Grace and has a 2- part lesson to meet the developmental needs of the youth. Grade 3 has a pre and post assessment.
- ▶ **Grade 4** - Technology and social media
- ▶ **Grade 5** - Stress and pressure in our Circle of Grace
- ▶ **Grade 6** – Social media influences on our relationships. Has a pre and post assessment.
- ▶ **Grade 7** is on bullying and disrespect; includes a student code of conduct
- ▶ **Grade 8** is navigating today's culture using the 10 commandments

Alternate and Retreat for Grade 5-8

Alternate and Retreat lessons have all the components needed for the USCCB audits. They are topic specific. Leaders can pick a topic that most relates to their students.

- **Honoring Relationships**
- **Consequences of Technology**
- **Circle of Grace and New Age Spirituality**
- **Navigating an “Anything Goes” Culture**
- **Modesty**
- **Retreat- Puzzles: Recognizing the Big Picture of God’s Love for Us**

Second Grade Example

Activity – **Circle of Grace Cards** *Have the children sit together in groups of 3 or 4.*

Give each group a set of cards and a copy of the Circle of Grace Logo.

Have children take turns drawing a card from the top of the pile and decide if this is something he or she would welcome in their Circle of Grace or something he or she would like to keep far outside his or her Circle of Grace. If the card shows something loving and kind they should put it in the Circle of Grace Logo (begin or continue a pile). If it shows something scary, mean, or unhealthy, he or she should put it outside the Circle of Grace Logo (begin or continue a pile). If the child is not sure, the child should put the card outside the pile until he or she asks for help from the leader (trusted adult).

Examples of the Cards

Multigenerational family

Bully

Drinks

Gun

Family praying

Phone

Youth gaming

Man with binoculars

Example of Photos for Activity



Code of Conduct for Children and Young People



I understand that I am created by God and live in the love of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

I understand that God does not want or cause bad things to happen.

I understand that God is with me even when I am hurting or sad.

I understand the *Circle of Grace* that God gives me and others.

I understand that I can help stamp out “bullying” by not being a silent bystander.

I understand that speaking out and taking positive actions when bullying occurs makes a difference.

Because of this understanding when I interact with someone, either in person/ using technology such as texting and social media, I will strive to:

- Have my actions be safe and show respect toward myself and others.
- Have my words and actions represent the truth.
- Identify and maintain appropriate and healthy boundaries and relationships.
- Talk with my parents/trusted adult if I have concerns (bullying) or if there is a question that these boundaries are violated.

Student _____ Teacher (Initial) _____

Parent _____ Date _____

Snapshot of the Traditional & Alternate 9-12 Lessons

Traditional Grade 9-Grade 12

Traditional Lessons have all the components needed for the USCCB audits.

- **The Administration section** has the full vocabulary plus additional resources
- **Grade 9-** NOTICE when Boundaries go wrong. It will have a pre and post assessment.
- **Grade 10-** Levels of Intimacy and Influences
(*difference between relationships and on-line connections*)
- **Grade 11-** Social Media
- **Grade 12-** Love and Theology of the Body

Alternate and Retreat Grade 9-Grade 12

Alternate and Retreat Lessons have all the components needed for the USCCB audits. They are topic specific. Leaders can pick a topic that most relates to their students.

- **Action needed when concerns won't go away**
- **Modesty**
- **Human Trafficking**
- **Circle of Grace and New Age Spirituality**
- **Navigating an "Anything Goes" Culture**
- **Navigating Uncomfortable Situations with Peers**
- **Retreat- Our Path to Wholeness Through Holiness**

Grade 12 – Activity: How Healthy are Your Relationships?

Choose a relationship in your life. Put a “T” (true) or an “F” (false) by each of the following statements. These actions can be in person or using technology (texting or social media). Any “F” should be discussed with a trusted adult.

- Never embarrasses you or puts you down
- Shows respect by their words and actions
- Respects your freedom to choose your friends.
- You feel comfortable disagreeing with them.
- You feel comfortable saying, “No,” to a request from them.
- Never ask you to keep a secret that makes you feel uncomfortable.
- Respects your property.
- Respects your privacy.

Navigating Uncomfortable Situations with Peers Activity

Activity: Scenario Navigation Skits *Divide youth into small groups. Each group will create a short skit reflecting a scenario that could be uncomfortable or unsafe. These skits will be performed for the large group as part of the next activity. You can assign each group a scenario from the Sample Scenario handout or encourage youth to come up with a scenario on their own, perhaps from their own experiences. Remind students that their skit must be kept appropriate, and that they can come to you if they have questions. Note: If youth are coming up with a scenario on their own, be sure that you approve it and know what their topic will be before they present.*

Large Group Discussion/Review:

Gather the youth back together for the presentation of the skits. Remind youth that it is important to be quiet and respectful during each performance, and that this is a safe space.

Ask the following questions after each skit, allowing time for youth to respond:

1. What are some reasons that this scenario was uncomfortable or unsafe?
2. What boundaries were being crossed?
3. How would you respond in this situation? What are some steps to either get out of the situation or to make it safe?

Navigating Uncomfortable Situations with Peers

Sample Scenarios

1. You and your friend are at a school sporting event. Your friend says she's bored and invites you to leave with her and drive around in her car. You decide to join her. After she drives around for a while, your friend reaches underneath the driver's seat and pulls out a bottle of alcohol. She takes a swig and offers you some.
2. You and your boyfriend/girlfriend are chatting through a social media app while being apart over a school break. Your boyfriend/girlfriend says that they really miss you and want you to send a provocative picture of yourself. This person promises they would never share it with anyone else, and that you would send the picture if you really loved him/her.
3. While taking your dog for a walk around the park, you recognize a girl from your school arguing with a boy who looks about her age. He grabs her arms and yells in her face before storming away. When you approach her and ask if everything is alright, she responds "Oh, yeah. I'm fine. That's just my boyfriend."
4. While scrolling through your social media feed, you see a recent post from one of your friends. It appears to be a picture of deep scratches across your friend's wrist, and you suspect this person has been "cutting" or committing self-harm.

Religious Formation, Youth Ministry and Schools



The Traditional, Alternate and Retreat Lessons have all you need.

They include:

- ✓ Philosophy and Goals
- ✓ Key Concepts of the Circle of Grace
- ✓ Leader Guidelines
- ✓ Pertinent Vocabulary for lesson
- ✓ Pre and Post Assessments in Identified Grades
- ✓ Easy to follow Lessons
- ✓ Lesson Evaluation
- ✓ Copies of Prayers
- ✓ Handouts and Parent Take Home Sheets
- ✓ Curriculum is available in Spanish

Implementation of Curriculum

Administrators and Directors

- ▶ A review of the curriculum each year with those who teach the lessons is essential.
- ▶ Administrator/Director section has additional resources.
- ▶ General parent letter needs to be sent out before teaching.
- ▶ Each grade teaches 3 critical components: sacredness, boundaries and action plan. For this reason, **each grade/lesson must be taught in its entirety**. Other curriculum/ videos cannot be used.
- ▶ Action Card is helpful for leaders to know what to do if there is a disclosure or concern.
- ▶ Be aware that the content may trigger past issues for some catechists/teachers.
- ▶ It is helpful for churches/schools to be aware of the concept.

Religious Formation, Youth Ministry and Schools

Catechist/Youth Minister/Teacher

- ▶ Review the lessons ahead of time.
- ▶ Have handouts and materials ready.
- ▶ Teach the lessons once you had a chance to know your youth.
- ▶ Grades with two parts need to be taught closely together.
- ▶ Combining grades is acceptable, assess what grade best fits the group.
- ▶ Know what action needs to be taken if a youth discloses or you have concerns.
- ▶ Breathe!! Know that the most important quality to teaching COG is to have a passion to keep youth safe!

Family Faith Formation Curriculum

Getting Started:

- ▶ Family Faith Formation has three parts:
 - 1- Family gathers for opening prayer and discussion
 - 2- Separate parent and student session
 - 3- Family gather for discussion and closing prayer
- ▶ Plan on this session being about 60-90 minutes
- ▶ Circle of Grace gathering needs to be every year
- ▶ Use the manual with comprehensive guidelines on how to implement
- ▶ Should only be used when parents and children are present together for the session



Family Faith Formation



A Guide to the Curriculum Manual:

- **Administrator and Director Section**
Includes introduction, parent letter, key circle of grace concepts, Suicide prevention information and much more.
- **Family Gathering**
Guidelines and outlines for five choices of the *Circle of Grace* family gathering that include a to-do list, agenda, prayer activities and topics for family discussion.
- **Adult Sessions**
Includes suggested topics for discussion and adult formation
- **Youth Lessons**
Lessons adapted for Family Faith Formation use only.
K-Grade 2 and Grade 4-5 are combined.
- **Resources**
Includes support material for parents and leaders



Circle of Grace Resources

PARTNER'S WEBSITE, TRAINING VIDEO, PARENTS FIRST, BROCHURES AND MUCH MORE

Circle of Grace Partners Website

www.cogpartners.org

Because *Circle of Grace* is copyrighted, we ask that you only share the diocesan username and password with those leaders who you would normally have access to the full curriculum. Examples would be principals, religious formation directors, youth ministers and theology teachers.

- As partners, you have the right to make as many copies of the lessons and materials as you need for use in your programs. Lessons and resources can be downloaded and emailed to those teaching the lessons, as well as parent letters for each grade.
- No part of the Circle of Grace curriculum (lessons, resources or any materials) can be posted or shared on any website or platform that is not secured or password protected.



The Website includes:

- ▶ K-12 Traditional Curriculum with Alternate Lessons (English and Spanish)
- ▶ Parent Letters (English and Spanish)
- ▶ Family, Faith and Circle of Grace Curriculum (English and Spanish)
- ▶ Administrator/Director Resources
- ▶ Implementation Resources (training video. PP, Key Steps)
- ▶ Parents First (English and Spanish)
- ▶ Youth Working in Ministry Training Booklet
- ▶ Template for Logo
- ▶ Power Point on Digital Citizenship
- ▶ List of COG partners
- ▶ Frequently asked Questions

Parents First

Parents First is a grade specific new letter for parents only

Talks about human sexuality in context of our Catholic faith and Circle of Grace concepts

Is designed as a guide for parents to talk to their children about human sexuality.

It is a parent resource only and not used in the classroom.

- ▶ Parents First should be given to the parents directly, in-person or email, so parents can decide when to discuss it with their child.
- ▶ Each newsletter has sections on Church teaching, growing in virtue, guidelines for answering your child's questions, practical suggestions and resources .
- ▶ Topics include made in His image, male and female, purity of heart, preparing for puberty, power for good, spirit and flesh, true liberty and many more.



**THE CIRCLE OF GRACE
MISSION IS THAT ALL
YOUTH WILL EXPERIENCE
A WELCOMING, SAFE AND
PROTECTED
ENVIRONMENT THAT
ALLOWS THEM TO
EMBRACE THEIR
CATHOLIC FAITH AND
ENGAGE IN HEALTHY
RELATIONSHIPS**



Questions??