

St. Joseph Church
Charlton, MA

The EDGE Handbook



CATHOLIC MIDDLE SCHOOL YOUTH MINISTRY

2007-2008 Season

WHAT IS The *EDGE*?

When young adolescents hit grades 6, 7 and 8 lots of interesting things begin to happen; bodies are growing rapidly, reasoning skills increase, boys are starting to take an interest in girls and vice versa and both are starting to think about what it's like to be a teen or an adult. They are not really children anymore, but they are not adults either. They are in a place we'll call.....

The EDGE

Our EDGE Program is a Catholic youth ministry/religious education program aimed at these young adolescents. It is designed to meet their educational, spiritual, emotional and social needs. In the past, educating our middle school youth in their Catholic faith has been the only component for this grade level, but it had been inadequate. The classroom approach does not meet the communal, spiritual, psychological or social needs that a middle school youth ministry program can incorporate into the process. The EDGE solves the problem by creating an environment where the youth are part of a community rather than an isolated classroom.

Middle School youth have unique challenges that the Catholic Church must meet, or we run the risk of spiritually losing them. This stage is critical because youngsters in middle school are making decisions that will spiritually impact them for a lifetime. A solid middle school youth ministry allows for an easier transition to high school ministry and LIFE TEEN.

Why do we need a middle school youth ministry?

The operative word during adolescence is change. And there is lots of it; physical change in appearance, their beliefs and attitudes as well as their ability to process information and data. Other than infancy, this is where most of the change takes place. Middle school youth seek to be mature and self-supporting but ultimately rely on their parents. Educators, psychologists and youth ministers have stated that middle school might be one of the last opportunities we have to positively impact and assist a child in his educational, spiritual, emotional and social development. So that's why we need this ministry.

An Overview of *The EDGE*

1. THE LITURGY EXPERIENCE

The Eucharist is central to our faith as Catholics. The 5:30 p.m. Sunday LIFE TEEN Mass is a teen liturgy. Contemporary liturgical music, homilies geared toward young people, dramas and skits that bring gospel messages of Jesus home to middle school and high school youths are part of this youth liturgy. It is highly encouraged that families with middle school youth attend this Mass.

2. EDGE NIGHT

EDGE Night will occur on scheduled Tuesday evenings throughout the year. While we are aware of the numerous activities that compete for your child's time, we highly recommend that you make their EDGE Night a commitment. During an EDGE Night, religious topics are discussed as well as issues that effect middle school youngsters. The EDGE also has social and recreational activities rolled into the program that are designed to create a greater sense of community among our middle school youth and for the kids to have fun and enjoy themselves in a church setting. Activities such as game night, barbecues, movie nights, ice skating etc. can be held.

3. SERVICE ACTIVITIES

Service activities and projects are a vital aspect to faith development in a middle school youth. Service projects are an excellent way for middle schoolers to know they are needed NOW, not just when they are older. It helps the child to see that they can make a difference.

Weekly experiences during EDGE Night will be incorporated. Your child and his small group (with their adult coaches) will participate in a service activity that will give them the opportunity to put their Catholic faith to work by ministering to the less fortunate, the lonely, the hungry etc. By doing so, they will see first hand how blessed they are by God. Your child's group will be scheduled to meet at the Masonic Home to volunteer as a group to interact with the elderly residents at the Home. The group going to the Masonic Home changes every week. Parents will be responsible for transportation for their child to and from the Masonic Home. Also, the youth will be given community service projects that they will work on during an EDGE Night. An example of this would be our Thanksgiving Food Drive or Change Collections for a given charity.

* see attached page for directions for drop off and pick up at Masonic Home.

4. PARENT'S COMPONENT *(see that attached sheet for details)*

On a scheduled basis, parents will take turns participating and helping with their child's group during an EDGE Night. When your child has been assigned to a team, you will be scheduled to be at an EDGE Night for 1-2 Tuesdays during the school season.

HOW AN *EDGE NIGHT* WORKS

At the beginning of the year, the youth will be assigned to a group with an adult core member. Sixth graders are grouped with sixth graders, seventh graders with seventh graders and so on. The kids stay with their group and core member for the entire year. This permits the core members to foster a supportive relationship with the middle school youngster over the year. Core members (or coaches as well call them) will be assisted by one parent every week (look for your schedule to come home with your child). There should always be two adults per group.

The *EDGE* sessions are broken into 4 parts; Gather, Proclaim, Break and Send.

GATHER

The *EDGE* Coordinator and the team coaches model hospitality and create a welcoming climate that the children will witness and eventually will model to other middle school kids. An opening prayer is said.

PROCLAIM

The purpose of "proclaim" is to teach the main message in the program for the evening. The youth may be called upon to participate in this process. This is the part of the evening where the "lesson" is given.

BREAK

The 3rd part of the evening is the young people taking the main message proclaimed and breaking it open and applying it to their life. During this portion of the evening, a number of concepts can be utilized such as: small group discussion, handouts with questions or an individual or group activity.

SEND

The youth return to the large group environment and offer concrete suggestions and applications.

They are then challenged to live out the message at home, at school in clubs, and in church.

Announcements are made and a closing prayer is said.

IMPORTANT EDGE RULES

THE *edge* RULES

Parents' information regarding rules and expected behavior at an *edge* event is listed below. The youth should have these rules explained to them by their parents. The rules will also be explained to them at their first *edge* Night and they will be required to sign an *edge* rules agreement at their first *edge* Night. This agreement states simply they agree to respect others, stay on task, keep hands and feet and materials to themselves and will arrive on time for *edge* Nights. If *edge* coaches witness behavior that deviates from these rules, action will be taken as explained in the discipline section.

Guidelines for Behavior

Respect Others

- a. Listen while others are speaking (we are always sitting facing forward)
- b. Use positive words/tone

Stay on Task

- a. Stay in designated area(s) (no use of soda machine during an EDGE Night)
- b. Participate in group discussion or activity
- c. Stay focused (no headphones or computer games shall be brought to EDGE)

Keep Hands, Feet and Materials to Oneself

- a. Respect personal boundaries

The dreaded "D" word: Discipline

Any disruptive behavior that distracts from or interrupts an EDGE event cannot be tolerated. Our group gathering is too large and our volunteer coaches are not equipped to deal with repeated disruptive behavior. When a child knows what the rules are, he/she is less likely to try to get away with something. We expect to be firm but fair.

Following is a 3-step process that will be used by the EDGE Coordinator in response to any persistent behavior problem. Note: this is a guideline and discretion is used by both the Coordinator and Pastor.

1. First Offense-child will be taken aside and given a verbal warning by the EDGE Coordinator or assistant and/or asked to do a special assignment.
2. Second Offense-child will be removed from his/her group and asked to shadow the Coordinator or Assistant for the remainder of the evening. A form letter, like that which follows, could be sent to the parent informing them of the problem. Child will be allowed to return to his group the following week.
3. Third Offense-child will be asked to call his/her parent to pick him up immediately. Child will not be allowed to return to the EDGE program unless a parent accompanies him weekly. Home study will be made available.

(sample form letter)

St. Joseph Church

EDGE Program

P.O. Box 338

Charlton City, MA 01508

Dear Parent of **EDGE** Youth:

I regret to inform you that _____ behavior during the **EDGE** Night on _____ was not consistent with the rules as set forth in the **EDGE** Handbook. Adherence to these rules is imperative for smooth running group gatherings.

We ask that you discuss the following problem _____ with your child prior to the next **EDGE** Night. Please refer to your **EDGE** Handbook to review the rules with your child.

In the event that the problem behavior persists, your child will be asked to immediately call you from the **EDGE** Event to be picked up and taken home. At which point, your child may only return to the program if accompanied by a parent each week. Home study material will be made available if you prefer.

We pray that this problem can be resolved. Please call me anytime if you wish to discuss this matter further.

Sincerely,

Cheryl Kingston

Coordinator **EDGE** Program

Masonic Home Community Service

Parents please note that the youth will be doing a weekly public service activity at the local Masonic Rest Home. Each week a different team (**see your schedule**) will be scheduled to meet at the Masonic Home with their team and coach and parent assistant (check to see if you are listed as a parent assistant on the day your child's group is scheduled to be at the Masonic Home) to work and play games with the residents. The youth will be involved with playing games (cards, board games etc), reading to the residents or otherwise helping their Activities Department. Community service is an important part of our youth ministry. It shows the youth that they are needed now.

DIRECTIONS:

On the day that your child's team is scheduled to be at the Masonic Home, please drop them off promptly at 6:20 p.m. at the **NEW RECEPTION** area at the Masonic Home. If you are driving to Masonic Home from the center of town, take your first left onto the property and your immediate right. The reception area is under the portico. Juniper Building. Youth will be met in the reception area by their coach and Ann Marie Clem, Masonic Home Activities Coordinator. Pick up at the same location at 8:00 p.m. in the same area.

*please sign and return the release and consent form that was sent home for your child

EDGE INCLEMENT WEATHER POLICY 2007-2008

Call 508-248-7862 x227. I will make every attempt to record a message on my message machine if a class is cancelled.

Also....

If an EDGE Night is to be cancelled, I first make every attempt to contact the Charlton Middle School before the close of the school day so that an announcement can be made. Those students not attending the Charlton Middle School will be contacted via telephone message. If school dismisses early, there will be no EDGE Night.

Cheryl Kingston 508-248-1658 or 248-7986 (work) or 508-864-3698 (cell)

In past years, strange weather has "popped" up out of nowhere causing me to make the decision at the very last minute. This will require me to place a note on the church hall door. I apologize, in advance, if this arises and time does not permit us to call all 140 students and coaches.



Release and Consent Form

*St. Joseph Church, Charlton, MA
Diocese of Worcester, MA*

Name _____ Age _____

Address _____

Phone # _____ Cell # _____

Parent/Guardian:

I, _____, the undersigned give my son/daughter, _____, permission to attend any and all EDGE events that would be held at another location other than St. Joseph's Church in Charlton, MA during the period of 10-01-07 thru 09-30-08. By signing this consent form, I also give my child, mentioned above, permission to attend EDGE at St. Joseph's Church in Charlton, MA throughout that aforementioned time period.

I give permission for my son/daughter to be evaluated, diagnosed, treated and/or medicated in accordance with standard medical practice by licensed medical personnel should an emergency occur. I relieve the EDGE Director, chaperones/Coaches, St. Joseph's Church in Charlton, MA, and the Diocese of Worcester, MA of all responsibility and consequences that may arise as a result of this treatment.

I will not hold the EDGE Director, St. Joseph's Church of Charlton, MA, chaperones/Coaches, or the Diocese of Worcester, MA or any representative of any event liable in the event of injury/illness. Further, I agree to accept all financial responsibility as a result of the scheduling of any such treatment for an injury/illness.

My child agrees to abide by all the rules set forth by the EDGE Director, St. Joseph's Church of Charlton, MA, and chaperones/Coaches for all events. I understand that neither the EDGE Director, nor the chaperones/Coaches, St. Joseph's Church of Charlton, MA, or the Diocese of Worcester, MA will be held liable if my child fails to cooperate with the said regulations and that any infractions of these rules may result in immediate transportation home. If it is determined that the youth should be sent home, the parent/guardian will assume all expenses for return transportation.

Parent/Guardian's

Signature _____ Date _____

Youth:

As a member of St. Joseph's Church of Charlton, MA and the Diocese of Worcester, MA, I understand and agree to abide by the rules set up by the EDGE Director, chaperones/Coaches and St. Joseph's Church Charlton, MA for each and every event held in the time frame mentioned above. I also understand and agree that I and/or the EDGE Director or chaperones/Coaches will have to notify my parent/guardian at the time of any serious infractions requiring my dismissal from any event. I also understand that I will be sent home at my own and or parent/guardian's expense.

Youth

Signature _____ Date _____

(see back for more)

Name _____ Age _____

Medical Information (print clearly)

List allergies to food, medicine, insects, animals, etc.

My child is on the following medications---Dose/Time taken.

List and explain any medical conditions you think we should be aware of. i.e. diabetes, asthma, seizures, etc.

Insurance Carrier _____

Policy holder _____

Policy # _____

Child's doctor _____

Doctor's phone # _____

In case of emergency please notify (only if information is different than what is on the opposite side of this form)

Name _____

Address _____

Phone # _____

Cell # _____

Relationship to child _____

Parent/Guardian's signature _____

Date _____

1. Occasionally during an EDGE night the youth are offered candy, sweets and/or food (i.e. pizza, ice cream). If it is your desire that your child not participate in this offering, please indicate by checking no. _____ NO
2. On occasion your child may be photographed or videotaped for an EDGE related event and even used in our website or newsletter. You have the right to object to the publication of said pictures of your child. If you do not wish for your child to be videotaped or photographed Please check no. _____ NO