

## *Oak Park Catholic Religious Education*

We are excited to announce an update to all the Religious Education programs in the Oak Park area! Historically there were separate Religious Education offerings in each of the four Oak Park Catholic Churches as well as the Family Mass Community. Over the past few years, there has already been some collaboration between those Religious Education departments. This year, that collaboration will be even stronger.

With a unified Religious Education, families will be able to discern which Religious Education model works best for them, empowering parents to truly be the first teachers of their children. Religious Education will be more responsive to unique situations. Some classes have a Montessori style learning environment with experiential opportunities. Others have a more traditional classroom and use a text book. One has families coming together to share prayer and engage faith.

Catholic families across Oak Park and surrounding areas will be able to get to know one another better, creating a broader community and stronger sense of identity.

Sacramental preparation for First Communion, First Reconciliation, and Confirmation are a part of this collaboration. While most children will receive sacraments at their home parish, with a unified preparation program, families can now select the day and time of the classes that work best for them.

This unified Religious Education is a part of *Spirit and Light: A Catholic Collaborative for Living Faith*. It is a catechetical resource for the Catholic Community in Oak Park and the surrounding areas. Its mission is welcoming all and sharing Christian faith within the Catholic context.

Here is a listing of our 2023-24 program offerings.

PREP (Preschool Religious Education Program) is designed to give pre-school children (ages 3-5 years - PK3, PK4 and K) an introduction to basic Catholic Christian Principles.

PREP (PK3, PK4 and K) at St. Giles Campus in the Gleeson Building, Rooms A & B  
Classes offered on Sunday during Mass at 10:30 am

CATECHESIS OF THE GOOD SHEPHERD (CGS) is a faith formation program based on the Bible, the Liturgy of our Church, and the educational principles of Maria Montessori. Children and Catechists gather to further experience their relationship with Jesus, the Good Shepherd, and their life in the church. The CGS program has three multi-age levels for children in grades Pre-K through 6th.

CGS - LEVEL I - 3 to 6 Years Old (PK3, PK4 and K)  
CGS - LEVEL II - 6 to 9 Years Old (Grades 1, 2 and 3)  
CGS - LEVEL III - 9 to 12 Years Old (Grades 4, 5 and 6)

At Ascension Campus in the Parish Center; and at St. Giles in the Dore Parish Center (Level I and Level II) and the Gleeson Building (Level III).

Classes offered at various times on Sunday mornings, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday afternoons and evenings, and Saturday mornings. See upcoming registration for more details.

FAMILY RELIGIOUS EDUCATION is an opportunity for the entire family, parents and children in Grades 1-6, to grow in faith. The child along with parents attend a monthly meeting where there is time for family conversation as well as age-appropriate activities. The remainder of the month, students work with parents at home using a text book.

Family RE - Catechesis (Grades 1-6) at St. Giles Campus in McDonough Hall  
Monthly Meetings on Sundays from 9:00 to 10:15 am

TRADITIONAL RELIGIOUS EDUCATION (TRE) is a text-based faith formation program for Grades 1 – 8. The program is designed for students to learn about our Catholic faith, teachings, and traditions.

TRE (Grades 1-8) at Ascension Campus in the School Building  
Classes offered on Sundays (9:00-10:15 am) or Tuesdays (6:45-8:00 pm)

MIDDLE SCHOOL MINISTRY is a religious education opportunity for 7th and 8th Grade students. Learning occurs primarily through discussion and activities at tables with a table leader. Students meet in person twice a month and have an at-home activity once a month.

Middle School Ministry (Grades 7-8) at St. Giles Campus in McDonough Hall  
Meet twice a month on Wednesdays (4:30-5:45 pm **or** 7:00-8:15 pm) with a monthly at-home activity

SPRED (Special Religious Development) is a program of the Archdiocese of Chicago whose purpose is two-fold: the inclusion of the developmentally disabled into the liturgical and community faith life of the parish and the formation of a small faith community where both special friends and their catechists nurture their faith. Ages 6-10 years old.

SPRED at St. Giles Campus  
Classes are offered twice a month on Wednesdays from 6:00-7:15 pm

*Registration for SPRED will not be online - Contact the Spirit and Light RE Office for more information and registration.*

**Sacramental Preparation** is a parish-wide endeavor, with children from the Religious Education programs and our parish schools coming together to prepare for these most important steps in their faith journey. The First Communion, Reconciliation, and Confirmation preparation sessions are in addition to the Religious Education classes and school religion curriculum. Preparation sessions will be available at Ascension and St. Giles churches. The children will ordinarily receive sacraments at their home parish, but with a unified preparation program, families can choose which site, day and time for preparation sessions will work best for them.

*Spirit and Light* is a team of people: coordinators of various programs who are responsible for their specific areas yet support one another. The entire team is here for the children, families and all parishioners. Please feel free to contact them.

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## Commonly Asked Questions

Q: Where will the classes be held?

A: Family RE, Middle School Ministry, and PREP will be on the St. Giles campus. Traditional Religious Education will be on the Ascension campus. Catechesis of the Good Shepherd will be on both the Ascension and the St. Giles campuses. Additionally, preparation for First Communion, Reconciliation, and Confirmation will be held on both the Ascension and St. Giles campuses.

Q: If I am a member of Ascension and St. Edmund Parish, can my child attend Religious Education on the St. Giles campus?

A: Yes. Any child can attend any Religious Education offering.

Q: If I am a member of St. Catherine of Siena-St. Lucy and St. Giles parish, can my child participate in sacramental preparation on the Ascension campus?

A: Yes. Families can choose the sacramental preparation that is best for their child and the family schedule.

Q: How do I best choose a Religious Education class for my child?

A: There are a number of considerations. How does my child best learn? How much structure does my child need? How involved do I, as a parent, want to be? What day and time allow for consistent participation? To help sort this out or find out more information about a particular program, contact the appropriate person on the *Spirit and Light* team.

Q: Does this unification of Religious Education change my current status as a parishioner at a particular parish?

A: No. Where a person is a parishioner is not impacted by this unification.

Q: How is this paid for?

A: The Religious Education tuition covers some of the costs. As a vital ministry in the Catholic Church, Religious Education will be supported by both parishes. As in years past, there will be opportunities for families to help defray the program costs via small fundraising projects in the upcoming year.

Q: Is there a benefit to volunteering in the Religious Education program?

A: Yes! Adults have the joy of sharing their faith and witnessing the students grow in theirs. Volunteers in our programs are participating in creating the Church of the future. Additionally, catechists, assistants, table leaders, and mentors in the programs get 50% off their child's Religious Education tuition.

Q: Is *Spirit and Light: A Catholic Collaborative for Living Faith* just Religious Education?

A: No. The unified Religious Education is a part of *Spirit and Light*, but the collaborative also includes adult faith formation, evangelization, and other opportunities. An example is Faith and Fellowship, which is adult catechesis for those with severe mental illness.