



Urban Community School Religion Program Overview: Learning and Living the Gospels

Urban Community School (UCS) values religious education. The Ursuline Sisters of Cleveland founded the school in 1968. The curriculum is Catholic-inspired with a focus on developing values of peace and justice in children and places a strong emphasis on building tolerance and serving others. The program is inclusive of all children and their religious traditions.

Historically, the school offered a dual-track religion program in which Catholic students received the Diocesan Catholic religious teachings while all other students participated in an ecumenical religion program. In fall of 2019, we will merge the two tracks into a single religious track for all children. The program will be overseen by our Ursuline Mission and Religious Education Coordinator who ensures that all lessons are age and content-appropriate and align with the values of the Ursuline Sisters of Cleveland.

The religious program will be largely grounded in Gospel stories. Faculty members will build and teach lessons to be inclusive of students who are of multiple faith traditions so that every child has a place in the conversation and develops a sense of pride in their own traditions.

All-School Religion Activities and Reflections:

- Every day at UCS begins and ends with prayer.
- Each child receives 100 minutes of religious instruction weekly.
- Beginning in level 2, every student participates in a monthly half-day retreat aligned with the religion theme of the month and each retreat includes a prayer service.
- The school hosts a monthly prayer service for faculty, staff, and families in our chapel.
- All students attend a monthly, all-school prayer service with the following themes:
 - New School Year Prayer Service, Welcoming Diversity
 - October with Focus on Saint Francis of Assisi, Care for God's Creation
 - Thanksgiving Prayer Service, Gratitude
 - Christmas Prayer Service, Light and Hope in Darkness
 - Feast of Saint Angela Merici, Ursuline Commitment
 - Black History Month Prayer Service, Heroes and Heroines of Justice
 - Seder Meal and Prayer Service, Easter New Life
 - Earth Day, Creation and Nature
 - May Peace Day Prayer Service, Summer Safety and Blessings
- An intention basket will be placed near the entryway, adjacent to the distinguished statue of Christ welcoming our children into the school. All are welcome to add intentions and we remember them daily.

Catholic Catechetical Formation:

Given the recent changes to our relationship with the Diocese of Cleveland, our religion curriculum will no longer fulfill the catechetical formation that children receive either at diocesan elementary schools or in PSR programs. The minimum number of hours for catechetical formation is 32 hours per year. For example, we could offer it one time per week after school for the duration of the school year or build retreat days (four eight-hour days) into the calendar to satisfy the requirement. UCS will collaborate with a Director of Religious Education at a local parish to provide opportunities for our students to make their First Communion, Reconciliation, and Confirmation in their respective parishes. The parish is ultimately responsible for this preparation but UCS will collaborate in any way that is convenient for families.



Monthly Themes:

Every month, we will choose a school-wide theme and tailor the religion curriculum to each age level. Faculty will build the curriculum and the UCS administrative team will approve it. All students will participate in religion class and learn about each topic. We will also create a bulletin board near the distinguished statue of Christ in the front entryway as a daily reminder of our monthly spirituality theme.

Families will be provided with an electronic packet each month with age-appropriate content and questions to talk about with their child(ren). The packet will also include an outline of the stories and lessons that accompany the curriculum to help families talk about faith at home.

September • Welcoming the Stranger

- Each fall, we welcome new students, families, and staff. As a school community, we spend the first month of the year making sure that every new individual feels welcome.
- Our religion programming during this month focuses on making sure we create a safe school and community for all grounded in the Ursuline commitment to welcoming the stranger.
- We want our students to develop tolerance and learn to advocate for others, regardless of differences in race, religion, socio-economic background, or any other categories that divide us.

October • Life and Dignity of the Human Person

- We want our students to recognize that all people have a place in God's world.
- We focus on the call to treat others with respect and dignity. Alongside a social skills curriculum geared toward giving the students the skills to manage conflict with others, our religion programming stresses the dignity of all and views this dignity as the basic foundation for healthy, values-based sexuality education.

November • Call to Family and Community Participation

- We want our children to grow up to be leaders who stand up for others and accept responsibility to participate in their communities.
- Younger students explore ways to be advocates for one another in their own classrooms, at recess, etc.
- Older students look at the role of faith in the context of historic community leaders such as Martin Luther King Jr. and Mahatma Gandhi.

December • Religious Traditions

- We look at the celebrations of various faith traditions during the holiday season including Christmas and Hanukkah
- We want our students to understand the true spirits of these seasons and the stories behind them.
- We acknowledge the anniversary of Church Women in El Salvador and the Ursuline connection.

January • Dignity of Work and Rights of Workers, Rights, and Responsibilities

- We want our students to value work in school and beyond.
- Older students learn to think about their own rights and their ability to earn rewards in exchange for hard work.
- We encourage our students to focus on the important contributions of Cesar Chavez, Dolores Huerta, and Saint Angela Merici.

February • Solidarity

- We contemplate how our local actions impact people around the world.
- We want our students to be able to think globally about challenges in the world with a focus on awareness of the third world and developing countries.

March • Option for the Poor and Vulnerable

- We want our students to recognize our most vulnerable members in society and not view economic status as a measure of personal worth. The gospels teach us to put the needs of the poor and vulnerable first.

April • Care for God's Creation

- We want our students to respect and value the Earth as a gift from God and not a commodity to be bought or sold for personal gain at the expense of the Earth and its people.

May • Peacemaking

- We want our students to learn and practice the skills of non-violent conflict resolution and mediation (empathy, listening, and assertiveness statements) in their daily lives and begin applying these principles to problem solving in the real world.

