Dear St. James Confirmation Families,

It is with great joy that I present to you our new Confirmation program. Our team has worked to offer a program that will help our young people live out our mission to Be Disciples and to Make Disciples.

It is my hope to see young people on fire for Jesus and his message of salvation. Our team is confident that the sacrament of Confirmation will serve as a springboard into lifelong Discipleship. St. James expects that a young person who attends our Confirmation Program will receive:

- A deep understanding of Scripture
- An understanding of the Catechism of the Catholic Church
- A personal relationship with Jesus Christ that will guide them through life

I am proud that both our Religious Education Students and St. James Students will be using the EDGE and Purpose Confirmation program. You can find more information about the program on the following pages.

We look forward to journeying with you toward the sacrament of Confirmation at St. James.

Your Servant in Christ,

Fr. Matt Foley
Pastor St James Parish
**Attendance**
We expect families will attend as many sessions as possible. Attendance will be kept for safety reasons. There is not a minimum number of classes required for the Sacrament of Confirmation. We have 24 sessions geared specifically for Confirmation that are essential to the faith development of our young people.

**Time/Frequency**
Confirmation prep will be almost every Sunday from 3:15-4:45 pm in the School Parish Center. There is no “requirement” for the number of sessions needed to attend. It is our experience that the more sessions a student attends, the more likely they are to stay Catholic forever.

**Confirmation Grades**
Confirmation preparation at St. James will be for grades 6-8.

**Mass Expectation**
We will not keep a record of Mass attendance. We have purposely placed Confirmation to end 15 minutes prior to the Sunday 5 PM Youth Mass. We invite you to join us to praise God, and to pray as a community journeying together in faith.

**Service Expectation**
We will offer monthly service opportunities and will encourage your son or daughter to be committed to lifelong service of others in the name of Jesus. We will also have summer service camps. We believe in honor, duty and service for neighbor and the glory of God. We will not be counting service hours, but we expect everyone to participate in some of the service opportunities that will be offered.

**Small Groups**
Small groups are an integral part of the Confirmation process here at St. James. They will be split by grade and gender, and the groups will have a chance to journey together for three years as they grow in faith.

**Retreat**
The Archdiocese of Chicago requires each student to attend a retreat experience before being Confirmed. Each year, we will offer a weekend retreat experience at the St. Iakovos Retreat Center in Kansasville, WI. Your child is only required to attend one weekend throughout their 3 years in Confirmation preparation, but they are invited to attend as many as they would like.

**Saint Name**
We strongly encourage the student in March of their seventh-grade year to research and pray about which Saint they would like to adopt, and we will provide resources to help make this decision. All Saint names will be due by the end of November in their eighth-grade year, the third year of their formation.
**Sponsor Information**
All students will be required to have a sponsor to stand by them as they make their confirmation. Requirements of the sponsor are as follows:
- Must be 16 years of age
- Be a Catholic who has been confirmed and has already received the most holy sacrament of the Eucharist and who leads a life of faith in keeping with the function to be taken on
- Must not be the father or the mother of the one to be confirmed (Can 893)

All sponsor info is due by the end of January of the seventh-grade year, the second year of formation.

**Bishop Letter**
Each student will be required to write a letter to the bishop. In this letter, they will ask the bishop to grant them the Sacrament of Confirmation. All Bishop letters will be due by the end of March of the eighth-grade year, the third year of formation.

**What is the EDGE and Purpose Curriculum?**
The Curriculum we will be using is EDGE from Life Teen
Click here to see more information about EDGE; [https://lifeteen.com/edge-ministry/](https://lifeteen.com/edge-ministry/)

**Within the EDGE program is PURPOSE**
Click here to see more about Purpose: [https://purposeconfirmation.com/videos/welcome-to-purpose](https://purposeconfirmation.com/videos/welcome-to-purpose)

**PURPOSE** is 24 sessions focusing on the Sacrament of Confirmation a walkthrough of the Catechism with semesters that will focus specifically on the Church, the Creed, Scripture, Sacraments, prayer, social justice, and more. Through all three grades will attend the same nights, they will be exposed to all topics in their three years of formation.
Here’s a link to a rundown of the 24 session: [https://purposeconfirmation.com/table-of-contents](https://purposeconfirmation.com/table-of-contents)

**Homeschool Options, High School Options, and Open Doors Ministry**
We are excited to work with families to craft a “homeschool” option. There are many different “programs” to choose from and we can work with you to select one that fits your family’s needs. We also make accommodations for children with special needs and high school students. To find out more information about this, please contact Jonathan Blevins.


**For more detailed information on the Confirmation program, please check the rest of the packet.**
More than a Confirmation Program

*Be Disciples. Make Disciples.* This is our mission statement here at St. James and it applies to every person who belongs to our parish, including our middle school youth. This is why our Confirmation process is more than just a program. Programs do not “make” disciples, people do. Our middle school youth need this now more than ever. The average age someone leaves the Catholic Church in 2020 is 13 years old. It used to be true that the majority of those who left would return when they got married, or when it was time to baptize their children, but that is happening far less as well. It is important for us to share the faith boldly with our young people today. Our Church is filled with beautiful truths that our youth are ready to understand now more than ever. We will proclaim these truths boldly and with love, so they have the best chance to encounter Jesus, and let Him transform their lives.

When your son or daughter goes through the St. James Confirmation process, they will encounter the God of the Universe in the Sacraments, learn how to develop a prayer life, learn the teachings of the Church, better understand Scripture and Tradition, learn to have a love and passion for social justice, and be able to understand how Jesus makes a difference in their lives today.

We will do everything that we can to help your son or daughter be Disciples of Jesus. Join us on the journey.

**Attendance**

We expect families will try to make as many sessions as possible with the understanding that the more their son or daughter can attend, the more chances they will have to encounter Jesus. Attendance will be kept for safety reasons. There is not a minimum number of classes required for the Sacrament of Confirmation. We want both parents and children to be excited to come to Confirmation and we are confident that after a few sessions, this will be the case. If your son or daughter is unable to make a session, please kindly email Matthew Lawson. Matthew will then send any information needed for a session review at home.

**Confirmation Grades**

Confirmation preparation at St. James will be for grades 6-8. Middle school is a great time of transition for our young people. They are met with new challenges, changes, and are beginning to mature and become ready to dive deeper into their faith. These 3 years of preparation will give middle school students the best chance to gain and develop a lifelong relationship with Jesus. We will be flexible as we understand that everyone has different circumstances. If you have a child in 7th grade that has not been part of confirmation preparation, we will work with them to make sure they are in a place to receive the Sacrament of Confirmation with their peers. We will do everything that we can to serve you and your families, so please do not hesitate to contact us to discuss your family’s circumstances.

If you have a son or daughter that is in high school and would like to receive the Sacrament of Confirmation, we also have a process in place for them. Please contact Christina Hudson for more information.
Home School Option

While we wholeheartedly recommend the Confirmation process we are offering at St. James, as we have seen it change lives, we understand this may not be a preferred process for every family. We are excited to work with families to craft a “homeschool” option that will allow you to be the primary catechist with your son or daughter. There are many different “programs” to choose from and we can work with you to select one that fits your family’s needs. To find out more information about this, please contact Mathew Lawson.

Retreat

The Archdiocese of Chicago requires each student to attend a retreat experience before being Confirmed. Retreats are our specialty here at St. James! We have a combined 20 years of retreat experience on our team with over 3,000+ young people in attendance. Retreats give the youth a chance to connect with God more deeply by disconnecting from the busyness of this world and finding peace with the God who made them. Each year, we will offer a weekend retreat experience at the St. Iakovos Retreat Center in Kansasville, WI. The youth will have an opportunity to hear from dynamic Catholic speakers, pray with some of the best worship leaders, and have time to grow in friendship with those in their small groups.

We will have room for 100-120 students each year. Your child is only required to attend one weekend throughout their 3 years in Confirmation preparation, but they are invited to attend as many as they would like. If a full weekend is not possible for your family, we will work with you on another option. More information will be sent out after registering for our Confirmation process.

Check out this inspiring video from our high school retreat this past year. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bjszG2OSRGM&t=3s

Time/Frequency

Confirmation preparation will be every Sunday from 3:15-4:45 pm in the School gym. Faith is the most important aspect of our lives as Catholics. Our time on earth is but a blink compared to the time we will spend in eternity. If our faith is important, we should do everything that we can to make it a priority. Meeting weekly is beneficial for our young people. They will have an opportunity to develop holy friendships, grow with their small groups, and encounter Jesus in a new and profound way.

After surveying parents for a weekly confirmation preparation day, Sunday won by an overwhelming majority. This works well with our parish schedule as we have Mass at 5:00 pm which is immediately followed by Life Teen, our high school youth ministry from 6:00-8:00 pm. This will also allow middle school youth to acclimate to meeting on Sundays as they transition to high school.

We are aware the frequency of these meetings has increased drastically. That being said, we can accommodate and will work with individual families and their schedules. We understand not everyone will be able to make every session and that is okay. The process is set up in such a way that meeting more frequently benefits those who are unable to attend every session. If someone misses a session offered monthly, that student has now gone two months without faith formation. With a weekly frequency, a student could miss a few weeks in a row and still be able to come back to a small group that they can
feel at home in. There is no “requirement” for the number of sessions needed to attend. We are offering this incredible opportunity for your son or daughter and will leave it up to the parents to decide how they want to use this opportunity. In our years of ministry experience, the more sessions a student attends, the more likely they are to stay Catholic forever.

Mass Expectation

Mass is the most important thing that we will do as Catholics this side of Heaven. Each week, we are gifted with the opportunity to remember the story of our God, to remember our part in the story, and to receive the very body and blood of our Lord in the Eucharist. Jesus humbles Himself to dwell within us and we are called to go out and share Him with the world. Mass is essential in preparing for Confirmation. Otherwise, what are we confirming? We would love it if every person going through the Confirmation process was able to join us for Mass every week, as is already the expectation for all Catholics. This is part of the reason Sunday works so well for our process. Families can attend Mass together after the Confirmation session.

We will not keep a record of Mass attendance. We hope you will join us out of the goodness of your hearts, and to pray as a community journeying together in faith.

Check out this video for more inspiration on attending Mass.
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FuyxQvb9Ayw

Service Expectation

Historically, many Confirmation programs have a certain number of “service hours” to complete before receiving the Sacrament of Confirmation. Here at St. James, we will do everything we can to inspire your son or daughter to want to serve others out of the goodness of their hearts. We will offer monthly service opportunities and will encourage your son or daughter to be committed to lifelong service of others in the name of Jesus. We will also help them to find service opportunities on their own and empower them to invite their friends to serve with them. We will not keep track of service hours; however, we expect everyone will be inspired to help make the world a better place.

Small Groups

Small groups are an integral part of the Confirmation process here at St. James. They will be split by grade and gender, and the groups will have a chance to journey together for three years as they grow in faith. Small group time is only half the session so they will have a chance to grow in a healthy relationship with the opposite gender as well. Gender-specific small groups provide a space for middle school youth to develop healthy relationships with other youth of the same sex. Male and female middle school youth require different modes of communication and will relate to each other’s experiences differently. Placing them in single-gender small groups will allow for conversation to be aligned with these developmental differences. If you have an issue with your child being in a gender-separated small group, we will work with you to have a group led by both male and female leaders.
Saint Name

Upon confirmation every student will be asked to choose a Saint’s name they will take on in the Sacrament of Confirmation. This allows the candidate an opportunity to learn and form a relationship with the communion of Saints as well as gain a strong heavenly patron for their journey through this life. We strongly encourage the student to research and pray about which Saint they would like to adopt, and we will provide resources to help make this decision. All Saint names will be due by the end of November in their eighth-grade year, the third year of their formation.

Sponsor Information

All students will be required to have a sponsor to stand by them as they make their confirmation. This is a lifelong commitment for the sponsor as they agree to walk with, guide, and teach the candidate in the Faith. Requirements of the sponsor are as follows:

- Must be 16 years of age
- Be a Catholic who has been confirmed and has already received the most holy sacrament of the Eucharist and who leads a life of faith in keeping with the function to be taken on
- Must not be the father or the mother of the one to be confirmed (Can 893).

To stress the unity between the sacrament of baptism and confirmation it is desirable that the Confirmation sponsor be a godparent, but this is not required (CCC 1311). All sponsor information is due by the end of January in their 7th grade year, the second year of formation.

Bishop Letter

Each student will be required to write a letter to the bishop. In this letter, they will ask the bishop to grant them the Sacrament of Confirmation. Students will express their desire to be confirmed and describe the ways they have prepared for this sacrament. All Bishop letters will be due by the end of April in their eighth-grade year, the third year of formation.
Curriculum

The Curriculum we will be using for our Confirmation process is EDGE/Purpose from Life Teen. This program is a walkthrough of the Catechism with semesters that will focus specifically on the Church, the Creed, Scripture, Sacraments, prayer, social justice, and more. These topics will rotate on a three-year cycle. Though all three grades will attend the same nights, they will be exposed to all topics in their three years of formation. Catechism and Scripture references will be included with every session, so the students are provided with a source for the information they receive.

How Sessions Work

Purpose breaks away from the traditional classroom setting and places the teens in a fun environment that encourages community and sharing while at the same time providing the teens with engaging lessons. Our faith is not boring; it is dynamic, and it is time we showed the younger generation that. The structure of the nights follows the form of the Mass. They are divided into four parts called the Gather, Proclaim, Break, and Send. Each night will begin in a large group session. Teens will get a chance to socialize and hang out with their friends as everyone checks in. The night will begin with a general welcome and announcements about upcoming due dates, service opportunities, trips, events, and anything else they may need to know. Then we will move into the “gather” which is a game that allows a chance for the teens to interact with each other and break the ice. Next the lesson is given by one of the Core team members. The “proclaim” is meant to be both a lesson, a witness, and a call to action. We strive to have proclaims that incorporate life experiences that the teens can relate to while at the same time drawing them in to learn more about the topic of the night. After the proclaim we break into small groups of around 10 people each. Each of these groups will be led by a Core team member that will hopefully be with the same group throughout their preparation for Confirmation. In the preparation and training of our core team we strongly focus on relational ministry. We want our volunteers to be intelligent, loving, and faithful, but mostly we want to give the teens someone they can trust, open up with about their faith, and see as a role model as they continue their spiritual journeys. The goal of these small groups is not to have another proclaim given by the core team member but to give the teens an environment that they will come to trust so they are better able to process the lesson. It’s important that the teens are heard and that any questions they have get voiced. This allows everyone to open up the night more deeply, apply it to their own lives, and live the faith as they go forth. Our goal is not to throw impersonal facts and lessons at them but to show them this dynamic and living faith that applies to their lives and the world around them. At the end of small groups everyone will gather back together in a large group setting. We will end the night with the “send”. The send is always some sort of prayer that relates to the night. The goal of this is to get all the teens actually praying while at the same time exposing them to the wealth of prayers that the Catholic Church has to offer them.
Before Jesus ascended into heaven, He told his disciples to wait in Jerusalem so that they could be baptized by the Holy Spirit (Acts of the Apostles 1:5). When about 120 of Jesus’ disciples were gathered the Holy Spirit came in the form of wind and fire. Filled with the Holy Spirit, the disciples understood that God was anointing them for a special mission (Acts of the Apostles 2).

The early Christians made sure, then, that whenever they brought people into the Church, they would baptize them with water and then anoint them with oil. Why oil? Oil had been used in the Old Testaments to anoint priests, prophets, and kings. The early Christians realized that their community was “a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation” (1 Peter 2:9). Each new member was anointed with oil after being baptized with water.

In the early Church Baptism and Confirmation were celebrated in a single ceremony. It is still done this way in the churches of the East. In the Roman Catholic Church, the Church of the West, the two sacraments gradually separated. The Church in the West wanted the bishop to complete a person’s initiation. As the Church grew and the bishops ministered over ever-larger territories, the bishop could not be present for every Baptism. So began the custom of gathering groups of baptized Catholics together later so that the bishop could confirm them all at one time. In the process, over time the reception of the Eucharist came before the celebration of Confirmation.

In several dioceses the Sacrament of Confirmation is now celebrated before the reception of the Eucharist. This restored order returns the celebration of Confirmation to its original place after Baptism in the Sacraments of Initiation, with the Eucharist completing Christian initiation.

In the United States the designated age for Confirmation is between the ages of discretion and the age 16. To be confirmed a person must
1. have reached the age of discretion, which is defined as about the age of seven.
2. profess the Catholic faith and desire to receive the sacrament.
3. be in a state of grace.
4. be ready to live as a witness to Jesus Christ.

In receiving the Sacrament of Confirmation, the Christian’s relationship with God is made stronger. The Gifts of the Holy Spirit are strengthened: wisdom, understanding, counsel, fortitude, knowledge, piety, and fear of the Lord. In this way the Christian is equipped to become a better witness to Christ in the world.

A bishop is the usual celebrant of the Sacrament of Confirmation. During the celebration of Confirmation, the bishop extends his hands over those to be confirmed and calls upon God: “Send your Holy Spirit upon them to be their helper and guide.” Then each person to be Confirmed is anointed with chrism on the forehead as the bishop says, “Be sealed with the Gift of the Holy Spirit.”

In Confirmation the Christian becomes more closely united with Christ. With the strengthening of the Gifts of the Holy Spirit, the Christian can accept new responsibilities for witnessing Jesus to the world.

What's After Confirmation?

Confirmation is not the end of our religious education; it is a new beginning. We take lifelong formation very seriously at St. James and that is why we have the Life Teen program for high school students. Life Teen meets every Sunday following the 5:00 pm Mass. We begin with a meal and then dive into the night’s topic. We follow a similar format to EDGE/Purpose. The youth will hear an engaging talk, break it open in a small group, and learn a new prayer each week. If each student at St. James attends each Confirmation session and then continues to Life Teen for 4 years, they will have 315 hours of formation before they head off to college. They will absolutely be equipped to stay Catholic for life and to live out their faith in all that they do. Life Teen will also offer mission trips, engaging conferences, camps, and retreat opportunities.

Here is a video that shows the impact that Life Teen can have in the life of a teen. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2P0LVAio9DY
Meet the Leaders

My name is Jonathan Blevins, and I am the Director of Evangelization at St. James. I have a Bachelor of Arts in Theology and a master's degree in Religious Education with an emphasis in Youth and Young Adult Ministry. I have been working with middle school and high school youth for 12 years and have run multiple Confirmation programs over the course of the last 12 years in various parts of the country. I have seen young people change the world, and I am excited to walk with our middle school youth here at St. James as they change the world as well!

My name is Matthew Lawson, and I am the coordinator of Middle School Ministry at St. James. I have a Bachelor of Arts in Philosophy and spent a few years at St. Joseph’s Seminary discerning the priesthood. Once I felt the Lord calling me out of the seminary, I took a leap of faith, and followed his call to St. James to continue working in the Church. Before coming to St. James, I was on staff with Life Teen in Tiger, GA working with young people and youth ministers from all over the country. I currently oversee the Confirmation process and Middle School EDGE Program. While I am still getting used to the Chicago cold, I am thrilled to have been called to St. James and am praying for, and ready to serve you and your families.

My name is Christina Hudson, and I am the Coordinator of High School Ministry at St. James. I have a Bachelor of Arts in Government and International Politics and a Minor in Law. Though diplomacy and law were in the road ahead, the Lord had other plans. I became a FOCUS missionary for 8 years leading small group Bible studies, discipleship groups, retreats, and teaching young people to take their faith into the world. During this time, I was also planning large scale conferences and trainings in different parts of the country which led to corporate event planning in Chicago. I have begun my second year as a youth minister and love journeying with our youth as they discover and dive deeper into their relationships with Jesus. I run the Life Teen program at St. James, and we have already seen God’s work at hand. I look forward to continuing to journey with our teens and their families!