

# FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS



## St. Francis

### What is the vision and mission of St. Francis parish?

#### Vision:

To make manifest the kingdom of God in North Lake Tahoe.

#### Mission:

We are the living Body of Christ, animated by Eucharistic union, and sent by the Holy Spirit. As missionary disciples, we must welcome, evangelize, and serve all in North Lake Tahoe.

### What is the parish doing to fulfill its mission?

Always our best. With over 30 ministries, our disciples are actively welcoming, evangelizing and serving North Lake Tahoe. We strive to always improve in our service and living faith. We welcome you to join us and contribute to one of the many active ministries. We also ask for your prayers and patience as we each grow in our faith, striving to be more Christlike each day.

### What are the current staff roles at St. Francis?

Here is a current staff directory. <https://sftahoe.org/staff>

### Who makes the decisions for the parish? How are those decisions made?

Fr. Jorge has the final say in any parish decision. Father asks for input and takes into serious consideration the recommendations of the pastoral council and finance council in the process of making a decision. When time permits, he can request input from the broader parish.

### What is the role of the pastoral council?

In general, pastoral councils:

- Investigate or examine those things that pertain to the work of pastors,
- Reflect on or ponder them, and
- Recommend, based on conclusions reached.

#### Investigate

A pastoral council's first task is to closely examine matters presented to it by the pastor or that the council has identified. This information-gathering phase sometimes includes the input of the broader parish community.

#### Reflect

The council's next task is to consider the matters it has examined, looking beyond facts and figures to discern their meaning and implications. It discerns how God is inviting the parish community to act.

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## Recommend

Finally, once the council has examined a situation and pondered it, it must make a judgment. It recommends to the pastor what the council believes he should do. The council judges, not what is right for parishes in general, but what is right for this parish in particular. The goal is to keep the parish in conformity with the Gospel.

## Where can I learn more about the Pastoral Council?

Please visit <https://sftahoe.org/parish-councils-1> to see who is on the council. You can communicate with the council by contacting [PastoralCouncil@sftahoe.org](mailto:PastoralCouncil@sftahoe.org). This email was recently set up to improve communication between parishioners and the pastoral council.

## What is the role of the Finance Council?

The finance council is an advisory body to the pastor and the pastoral council. The finance council's areas of responsibilities pertain to budget, facilities, collaboration with church staff, and long-range financial development. The finance council and pastoral council function interdependently and it is essential that they communicate with one another in furthering the parish mission.

## Where can I learn more about the Finance Council?

Please visit <https://sftahoe.org/parish-councils-1> to see who is on the council. You can communicate with the council by contacting Debbie Ceragioli at [d.ceragioli@gmail.com](mailto:d.ceragioli@gmail.com).

## What has the Finance Council been working on lately?

- Finalizing the budget for FY2025 for submission to the Diocese.
- Finalizing the FY2024 financials and preparing the annual financial report to the Parish.
- Collaborating with the Pastoral Council to finalize St Clare's lease extension and to further develop plans for St Clare's School on the church property.
- Continuing work for CSA Drive 2024.
- Established a Security Committee to advise on the security/safety needs of the parish. This committee has begun working within the parameters of the approved security grant to prioritize projects for such and will report to Father Jorge and the Finance Council.
- Developed a QR card to place in the pews to facilitate congregant offerings.
- Continuing work on upgrading data access and storage.

## What is the parish currently doing to promote a healthy and vibrant parish body?

### Improve Communication:

- Compile and review all questions, concerns, comments on a periodic basis
- Maintain a Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) document on the website.
- Continue to enhance Ministry.
- Display Pastoral council members' photos on the website and in the vestibule of the church.
- Include a monthly pastoral council update in the parish bulletin, detailing what happened at the monthly meeting.
- Added an improved calendar on the website to provide a more detailed use of space to enable better coordination and flexible use. This calendar will include views that allow a visitor to see how each major space is being utilized.
- Publish events from the calendar in the parish bulletin.

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## Growing Disciples:

- Identifying best approaches to implement strategies that improve faith formation at all levels for the sake of growing disciples
- Encouraging the development of a habit of prayer
- Intentional formation at the Pastoral Council to enable discernment of the Holy Spirit's call for the parish.
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## Ministry Leader Gatherings:

- Will be scheduled twice a year.

## Parish-Wide Gatherings:

- Will be scheduled twice per year. The needs for 2024 will be determined by the Pastoral Council, with input from parishioners.

## Where do I learn more about all the ministries offered at St. Francis?

For more information regarding the ministries, please refer to the ministries booklet available in our office or see our website, <https://sftahoe.org/serve>.

## What is the current status of religious education classes at St. Francis?

Here are the current religious education and youth group programs taking place at St. Francis:

### Confirmation I : 42 kids

- from 6<sup>th</sup> grade to 11<sup>th</sup> Grade.
- Sunday at 10am in the Sanctuary

### Confirmation II: 61 kids

- from 9<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> Grade.
- Sunday at 10am in the Large Conference Room

### Rite of Christian of Initiation for Children: 3 kids

- students who have not been Baptized and are older than 7 years.
- Sunday at 10am in the Small Conference Room

### Atrium/CGS: 43 kids

- From K-5<sup>th</sup> grade. With sacramental preparation or continue Religious Education. The guides for CGS go through an intense formation of 80 hours for each Level. Three teachers from St. Clare's staff and SFA's Religious Education Coordinator run CGS.
- We offer Sunday or Monday at 10:15am . The majority of families prefer Sundays.
- The High School Youth Group: 25-30 kids on Sundays. These are High Schoolers that have done sacraments (they are able to bring their friends with them).

## What are the changes to religious education? Is there a wait list or enough space for the classes?

Last year, Bishop Muggenborg, after receiving input from all the Religious Education directors throughout the diocese, decided to move the Confirmation age to 7th grade or age 12, with a two-year preparation process starting in sixth grade. This change has resulted in a large volume of Confirmation II students. Deadlines were imposed for registration this year to ensure there were no waitlists for religious education classes. However, we are still serving

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high schoolers who haven't been confirmed and are also putting three new class levels through Confirmation classes, which now includes sixth, seventh and eighth graders. In addition to classes, the Diocese has required a focus on family catechesis, requiring a minimum of 10 hours per year, so we are also hosting the whole family once per month as part of our religious education at all levels. St. Clare's classrooms are cleared out whenever the parish hall is needed. However, even with a completely empty parish hall, St. Francis does not have enough room to accommodate more than 90 families and their children at these events per the fire code. In the future, the Confirmation class may be divided into two or three small groups.

## What Program is St. Francis using for Religious Education?

St. Francis uses the Catechesis of the Good Shepherd (CGS) for religious education for students sixth grade and below (including first communion preparation). This diocesan-approved program requires extensive 80-hour training for catechists per level and is seeing tremendous growth throughout the country. This hands-on method meets the needs of the child with materials designed to help him explore the scriptures with his head, heart, and hands. Children and adults alike fall in love with the "atrium" - a sacred space designed for strengthening their relationship with God through exploration of the scriptures with beautiful hand-made materials in an environment that fosters quiet reflection and prayer. In fact, Mother Teresa's missionaries of charity use the Catechesis of the Good Shepherd as part of their formation process. St. Clare's staff are trained as catechists in this method and have been volunteering their time after school to help teach these classes. The school's classrooms are set up so that each classroom holds a beautiful atrium area with surrounding work areas, so our religious education classes are held in the school classrooms which works well. We are happy to note that this program has been so popular that the parents of our students are asking to stay and participate each week instead of just once per month, and the students love the atrium so much that they are inviting their friends from their neighborhoods to join them. This method is beautiful and powerful, and we've seen so much fruit as a result of this program. Each year as part of CGS, we hold a beautiful first reconciliation family service, and each year we watch in awe as parents who haven't been to confession in thirty years follow their child to the sacrament and receive it with joy.

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## St. Clare's School

*(Answers under this section provided by St. Clare's School)*

### What is the mission of St. Clare's School?

The mission of St. Clare's School is:

"Inspired by Saint Clare's love of the eucharist with school wide participation in weekly mass and adoration, our mission is to help students know the Truth, love the Good, appreciate the Beautiful, and to grow into the fullness of their created potential. Saint Clare's strives to be a light to our community, drawing families into the love of Christ and the fellowship of our Catholic community through a vibrant, faithful Catholic school.

Our school seeks to fully embrace the Montessori method as well as the love of adventure and outdoor exploration that is so important to our mountain lake community. Integral to our mission is a fully incorporated atrium for the [Catechesis of the Good Shepherd](#)."

### What is St. Clare's history and philosophy?

Saint Clare's Tahoe was founded to provide the North Lake Tahoe community with a Catholic Montessori school, whose complete developmental program for children is built on three interrelated pillars: a vibrant Catholic Christian experience, the world-renowned Montessori Method, and a passion for outdoor exploration.

Saint Clare's began in 2017 as a homeschool co-op. In 2018 Saint Clare's Tahoe was officially established as a 501(c) 3 non-profit school holding a kindergarten and an elementary class at the North Tahoe Hebrew Congregation in Tahoe Vista. In 2019, a preschool program was added. In 2022, Saint Clare's added an Adolescent Program for students in 7th and 8th grades and moved to St. Francis of Assisi Catholic Church. In 2024, St Clare's joined the Chesterton Schools Network, adding a Classical high school curriculum and enrolling students through 10<sup>th</sup> grade, with plans to serve high school students through 12<sup>th</sup> grade. The school now includes Primary, Elementary and combined Adolescent/High School classrooms as well as a fully incorporated atrium areas for the Catechesis of the Good Shepherd (CGS), and currently serves students from PreK3 to the 10th grade.

Saint Clare's was founded to provide a nurturing, Catholic education to the children of North Lake Tahoe, and is committed to sharing a love of Christ and His teachings and the joy of the Catholic faith with our students. Inspired by our patron saint, Clare, at the heart of our program is our deep love for our Lord in the eucharist as the source and summit of our faith, as well as the incorporation of the Catechesis of the Good Shepherd, a rich environment provided for the child's exploration of his relationship with God. Saint Clare's program is anchored in a deep reverence for each child and his/her own unique journey of "becoming." We share Dr. Maria Montessori's view of the child as a unique creation of God, created for eternity, and worthy of the greatest respect. We strive to honor Montessori's understanding of each child as a being whose physical, cognitive, emotional, and spiritual parts are interrelated, by creating an educational environment that respects that unity. A Montessori education is meant to be an "aid to life," and approaches the development of the child as a continuum in which each stage has its basis in the preceding one and which, in its turn, is a preparation for the next.

We believe, as Dr. Montessori did, that sparking interest and enthusiasm in a child is the key to unlocking a life-long love of learning. When children have the opportunity to work for extended periods of time in peace and full concentration at their own pace, they become calm and joyful. They learn with ease through interaction with their environment, while the teacher serves as an observant guide, following each student's growth and providing—at the right moment—the materials for deeper understanding, all while ensuring their successful movement along a

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rigorous academic track. At the adolescent level, we apply the Montessori Method to a classically based curriculum in which students engage in Socratic seminars, read classical literature, and take Latin and Logic, while running a small business as a class and taking part in weekly community service and outdoor adventures.

Our days are structured with a wonderfully home-like rhythm. We sing together as we work, pause to pray the angelus, attend mass together and enjoy the seasons with stories and saints' day festivals which breathe life into our days.

Saint Clare's Tahoe draws inspiration from the teaching of the Catholic Church that "parents are the primary educators of their children," and therefore seeks an ongoing communication and collaboration with the parents of the children enrolled in our school.

Saint Clare's Tahoe is operated as a ministry of the Diocese of Reno for the purposes of Catholic education and proudly bears the name "Catholic" with approval from the Bishop. SCT is operated as an exempt Nevada school under the provision of NRS 394.211 and as such is exempt from the provisions of the Private Elementary and Secondary Education Authorization Act. Our preschool program is a fully licensed Washoe County childcare facility.

Saint Clare's Tahoe is incorporated as a private, not-for-profit 501(c)3 public benefit corporation which is governed by a Board of Trustees, all of whom are St. Francis parishioners.

## Is St. Clare's a Catholic School?

Yes. St. Clare's is an independent (Tier II) Catholic school in full communion with the Catholic church and operated with the express, written permission of Bishop Muggenborg as a ministry of the Diocese of Reno. This is the seventh year of operation as a Catholic school for St. Clare's. At its previous location in Tahoe Vista, St. Clare's operated as an Independent Catholic school and was given permission to bear the name "Catholic" and provide sacramental preparation under Bishop Soto (Bishop of the Diocese of Sacramento). At its current location at St. Francis, St. Clare's continues to enjoy a great relationship with its diocese, operating as an Independent Catholic school, now as part of the Catholic schools' network in the Diocese of Reno under Bishop Muggenborg. Paige Roodhouse (St. Clare's Executive Director) reports to the Superintendent of Catholic Schools for the Diocese, as one of six Catholic elementary school principals in our diocese.

## What is an Independent Catholic School?

An Independent Catholic School or Tier II school is a fully Catholic school within a diocese that is under the authority of the Bishop and operates with his express permission. As an Independent Catholic School, the school enjoys the benefits of a relationship with its local parish while operating separately as an independent entity in terms of governance (with its own board) and finances. The independent nature of this type of school allows it to maintain its integrity and unique charism long term.

## What is the make-up of the student body and staff of St. Clare's?

Saint Clare's currently has forty-five students ages PreK3-10th grade and six full-time employees. St. Clare's board and administration to include the Executive Director are volunteer positions that are unpaid. St. Clare's currently serves twenty-two families. Thirteen of those families and twenty-seven of the forty-five students are St. Francis parishioners.

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## What is the relationship between St. Francis and St. Clare?

St. Clare was St. Francis' first female convert. Clare could hear Francis preaching in the square outside of her bedroom window as a young woman and left her life of privilege to follow Francis. Francis and Clare are the 'great saints of Assisi' who worked side-by-side to found religious communities that lived in poverty and in an uncompromising commitment to the Gospel. St. Clare's School was founded by St. Francis parishioners, a family who was inspired by her devotion to the Eucharist and to her total dependence on God's will - in what they felt was a response to God's call to provide Catholic education to our community. There are currently no other Catholic schools in the Tahoe Basin, and until the Village Church decided to open a small Kindergarten and 1st grade in 2024, St. Clare's has been the only Christian school serving our area since 2018.

## What is the relationship between Montessori and Catholicism?

Maria Montessori was a devout Catholic. She wrote some beautiful books called "The Child and the Church" and "The Mass Explained to Children" where you can see her passion for our faith. Montessori's vision for educating the "whole child" including his relationship with God and her deep respect for the youngest child reflects her commitment to Catholic values. Her vision for religious education done through the Montessori Method was created by two of her proteges who, after her death, created the Catechesis of the Good Shepherd which is based on Montessori's writings. This is the religious education program currently used by both St. Francis church and St. Clare's school.

Some problems arise in that the name "Montessori" is not trademarked. So there are many schools who do not have certified teachers and/or do not follow Montessori's pedagogy and still call themselves "Montessori" schools. This can be misleading and cause people who have experienced these schools to have a negative idea of what Montessori education is. The guides (teachers) at St. Clare's are certified through the Association Montessori Internationale, the leading and most rigorous teacher training in the world. However, because AMI is a secular organization, there are many AMI Montessori schools which are entirely secular and leave out Montessori's vision for Catholic education through her method. There is a movement in the US currently which Paige Roodhouse is part of, to found an International Catholic Montessori Organization to provide teacher training and a return to the Catholic nature of Montessori's vision.

## Does St. Clare's have a board? What is their responsibility?

Yes, St. Clare's is governed by a Board of Trustees which is common practice for an Independent Private School.

The Board exists primarily to formulate policy and give direction to the school. It is charged with furthering the school's mission and ensuring the school's success.

Responsibilities include long range "big picture" strategic planning, policy development and approval, oversight and hiring the principal/executive director, approving the annual budget, setting salaries, setting tuition, overseeing financial accountability, and ensuring in broad terms that the school is fulfilling its mission.

## Who oversees the teaching of Catholicism at St. Clare's?

The school is operating under the supervision of the Superintendent of Catholic Schools for the Diocese of Reno. St. Clare's uses the [Catechesis of the Good Shepherd](#) (CGS) for instruction in the Catholic faith, which is a Diocesan-approved program. It is also the same program currently used by St. Francis for religious education, and many of the school staff serve the parish community by volunteering as catechists after school. The school's staff members

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are practicing Catholics in good standing with the church, and certified in the Catechesis of the Good Shepherd which is an extensive 80-hour (per level) certification program.

## St. Clare's Relationship with St. Francis

### Why is St. Clare's operating within St. Francis of Assisi?

St. Clare's is now in its seventh year of operation and its third year at St. Francis of Assisi. For its first four years, St. Clare's was housed in the North Tahoe Hebrew Congregation (NTHC) in Tahoe Vista. As St. Clare's continued to grow from a handful of students into a thriving school, it outgrew the space available in the NTHC. In the spring of 2022, The NTHC leadership, who saw an increase in youth participation after COVID, opted to decrease the rental space available to the school to make more space for their own growing community, necessitating the school's move to a new location.

In the spring of 2022, the parish leadership wrote the following "we believe as a parish, that supporting Catholic education and formation of our youth is crucial to our mission. Forming young Catholics in the faith is square in line with both the Diocesan and Parish priorities and has been a hallmark of the Catholic Church in American for hundreds of years."

Until St. Clare's opened in 2018, there was no option for Catholic education and formation in the North Tahoe area; today, we have the opportunity to take a proactive role in ensuring the next generation of Catholics are formed and educated in our faith and in a values-based environment. Beyond that, we recognize the opportunity to infuse new life and membership into our parish at a time when much of our long-standing demographic is decreasing.

In December of 2023, the Pastoral Council reaffirmed that policy, writing that Education is a fundamental obligation of our faith and supports our parish evangelization mission, as well as ensures a brighter future. St. Clare's is bringing people of goodwill closer to Christ and the Eucharist. Our parish community, particularly those with families, have the opportunity for an education centered on Christ.

### What was Father Jorge's Decision on continuing St. Clare's Relationship with St. Francis? (Text of Fr. Jorge's statement made to Parishioners the weekend of January 20<sup>th</sup>, 2024, appears below.)

- "After much prayer, reflection, consultation, listening, and guidance I come before you as your pastor and leader of this community to let you know that I came to a final decision about Saint Clare's School. I listened to the community, I sought the guidance of Bishop Mueggenborg, I consulted with some leaders in our community, I met with the Principals of our Diocesan Schools, and finally I went and met with the Diocesan Priest Council to hear from them any concerns, advice, and directions that they would give me.
- After having the school in our building for almost two years and watching the children grow and learn under our roof, I hereby give my blessing to continue our relationship with Saint Clare's School as they find the means and ways to establish themselves in our property and to become the first privately Catholic school in our area. As a Christian Catholic community here in Lake Tahoe,



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we welcome and embrace Saint Clare's as Saint Francis and Saint Clare were good friends in their own little town of Assisi.

- I invite all of you to welcome our young families, our children, and Saint Clare's School as an institution working shoulder by shoulder with our parish in evangelizing the north of Lake Tahoe. As we continue our process of establishing the school in our area, let us work together as one body and show the rest of the community that great things can happen when we come together as one in Christ.
- May the Holy Spirit continue working with us as we go by building our present together to make sure that we leave a better future for our next generations to come. We are a relatively young parish, next year we are celebrating our 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary as a parish and here we are "conceiving" a daughter for our church. I am sure that our future generations are going to be proud of ourselves for facilitating what we can in our present as others did in the past for us today.
- Let us pray for all those men and women, lay, and ordained who worked very hard for us to have what we have right now. I am sure that as you hear this reading today many names and faces come to your mind of people that made possible this beautiful building and community that we have.
- May God bless you all for opening your arms, your minds, and hearts for all those who need us, especially our youngest brothers and sisters in our community. May God bring to fulfillment the good work he has begun in our parish."

## Is St. Clare's considered a ministry?

Yes, St. Clare's is operated as a ministry of both the Diocese of Reno and St. Francis parish.

## How is the parish accounting for the financial risk of having a school on premises at the current time?

St Clare's Tahoe School operates independently from St Francis of Assisi Catholic Church. Each has their own and separate liability insurance coverage. Under the lease agreement, St Clare's must name St Francis as additional insured, to further remove liability from the church. These measures serve to minimize financial risk to the church.

## What's the vision for a vibrant St. Clare's at St. Francis 5 years from now?

The ideal future for the school would include room for up to 30 students in the Primary Program, 30 students in the Elementary Program and 20-25 students in the Adolescent/High School Program. Top end, this means room for 85 students. The chairs of the Pastoral and Finance Councils are meeting with St. Clare's leadership on a monthly basis to determine the vision, goals, as well as short and long-term plans for St. Clare's.

## How will we operate our multiple ministries and ed programs in the church with the additional space needs required by the school?

While there is no set answer to this question, there is a spirit of collaboration, unity and charity that will guide each of us in adapting and working together to find practical and reasonable solutions to the space crunch. To empower parishioners to work together on this issue, the staff is in process of reconfiguring the online church calendar so any parishioner at any time will be able to see how each space is being used and when each space is available.

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Regardless of which ministries, including the school ministry, remain on site, this improvement to the calendar will help our parish for years to come. We look forward to working together to continue to improve processes and communication and empower our parishioners to adapt and thrive in the spirit of faith, hope and charity.

## St. Clare's TRPA and Washoe County Process

### What is the Current Status on Washoe County's and TRPA's permitting processes for St. Clare's?

The Washoe Board of County Commissioners and the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency (TRPA) approved the Development Code Amendment (DCA) respectively in February and April 2024. Washoe County subsequently granted a Special Use Permit (SUP) in June, 2024. TRPA is expected to grant a SUP sometime during the fourth quarter of 2024.

The U.S. Census of 2020 and the American Community Survey both show an increase of the total population of Incline Village from 2018 to 2021 with a steady increase of the population of persons 18 years and under. The amendment responds to both the increase of school age children within the community, as well as permitting primary and secondary school uses as a Special Use on parcels in the Wood Creek Regulatory Zone.

It is considered an entitlement with the property now that the SUP is issued. No additional applications or hearings will be necessary until construction plans are initiated; the enforcement of the terms of the SUP is handled administratively between the issuing agency and the recipient.

### How are the costs of the amendment process being covered between St. Francis, St. Clare's and the Village Church?

The costs, which are significant, have been covered by St. Clare's and Village Church. St. Francis has not incurred any additional costs.