

## Children's Formation at St. George's March 2016

It has been a remarkable year for those of us working in Children's Formation. Our numbers have jumped and continue to climb mid-year as children "age in" to our program.

Atrium for ages 3-5 now has 41 children on the rolls with an average of 20 per Sunday.

Grades 1-2 has 20 children on the roll with 10-15 per week.

Grades 3-4 has 16 children on the roll with about 13 consistently attending.

Grades 5 to 6<sup>th</sup> grades has added more children mid-year and is up to 11 youth.

Numbers are up for multiple reasons. There is no doubt that the dedicated leadership from our teachers and the commitment from parents to bringing their children on a regular basis has made a huge difference. Our program is deep and substantial and that helps as well.

Numbers are also up from the cross pollination between church and the preschool. In addition to the weekly classes I lead for the children, Joe and I led the Christmas celebration for the preschool parents and children in the Nave and I provided an Ash Wednesday experience for the children in the Nave. Also contributing was the time our Lenten speaker spent with a small group of preschool parents for coffee. I will be working with Danielle Davis to see if we can offer in the future, spiritual conversations for parents of the preschool at least once a year.

### **Third Grade Bibles – November 2015**

We gave out a record number of Bibles (15) this year in a tradition that continues to be gratefully received by children and their parents. The children by this age are beginning to read independently and use the Bibles in their class each week. We also gave Bibles to fourth and fifth graders who came to St. George's after third grade.

### **Children's Formation Fundraiser – December 2015**

"In the wilderness prepare the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God." This verse from Isaiah was the inspiration for the children's formation fundraiser in December 2015. In an atrium discussion, the third and fourth grade children were asked, "What would you do to make ready a path for our Lord?" The children decided to hold a fundraiser with proceeds to benefit the local SPCA and St. Jude's Children's Hospital. Parents donated supplies and the children assembled jars of cocoa and brownie mix to sell during coffee hour. All of the children participated:

3 – 6 year olds decorated the tags

1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> graders assembled cocoa mix

3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> graders assembled brownie mix and cut ribbons

5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> graders organized, made signs and decorated jars

\$300 was raised and the children were thrilled to receive a thank-you note from the SPCA and a phone call from St. Jude's Hospital. It was wonderful to see St. George's compassionate community active in our youngest members!

Submitted by, Michelle Midkiff

### **Communion Retreat Day – February 2016**

Twelve children ages 6-9 attended a day long retreat about the Eucharist in Sydnor Hall. The day began with bread baking and concluded with a family Eucharist attended by the children's families. Multiple people volunteered and led activities and a treasure hunt which took the children all over the church as they learned the names for our spaces. The children wrote out letters inviting someone to be a prayer partner during the weeks remaining in Lent. All the letters have been given out and we hope to unite the children and their adult prayer buddies after Easter.

### **Wednesday Afternoon Atrium Time –**

I have begun offering catechesis time on Wednesday afternoon from 3:30 pm to 5 pm. Though numbers are small right now, we all feel that the program has been a success in reaching children who do not come to the atrium on Sunday and those who might find that the quiet and pace of the afternoon works better for them than the bustle of Sunday morning.

### **Liturgy of the Light - March**

This wonderful offering by our children's program has become the Easter service for many. This year our fifth and sixth graders have taken the lead in planning and assigning roles, including a small flower guild and an altar guild. They are thrilled to be leading this beautiful service which led them into conversation about the symbolism of Easter Eve services.

### **Nursery –**

I am very grateful to have had the consistent leadership of our Nursery staff. Numbers are climbing here as well. The St. George's nursery is averaging 15 children on a Sunday with the most children present during the 8:45 am to 10 am time frame. I have our staff monitoring the numbers and hours to be sure that we continue to stay in compliance with accepted safe staff-child ratio. Should the number of children in the 0-24 months range increase, we may need to consider adding an additional Nursery worker. At present we are trying to offer child care as often as possible to accommodate the large number of families who would like to attend our classes, meetings and worship services.

In looking forward to the summer, we plan to organize groups of adults to make materials for the children to use next year as we add level III Catechesis to our offerings. Currently we use a more traditional curriculum. We are also looking at the possibility of offering a Vacation Bible School the same week as our music camp- with one the first half of the week and the other in the second half of the week. If we are able to sustain the Wednesday Catechesis, we will do that as well.

Respectfully submitted, Carey Chirico

