



The beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. (Mark 1:1)

DECEMBER 2011



And so begins the Gospel According to St. Mark, the earliest of the four gospel accounts found in our bible. As they sing in *The Sound of Music*, "Let's start at the very beginning, a very good place to start. When you read you begin with A,B, C." And when you set out to read the Gospels, you begin with Mark. We at St. Paul's are partway through our Year of the Bible – a year of exploring scripture, different translations and interpretations, different approaches to scripture in history and culture and in our own spiritual journeys. And for Advent (which runs this year from November 27 until Christmas Eve) we at St. Paul's are being challenged to read Mark. Our hope is that many, many people (of all ages) will read about a chapter per day, so that by the time Advent is over and it's time to celebrate Christmas, we will have read an entire Gospel from beginning to end, and we have a clearer picture of the whole story of Jesus' life and teachings and death and resurrection.

I believe this is something families may choose to do together as part of their Advent devotions. You may use a story bible or children's bible, or if your kids are older, you might want to try *The Message* by Eugene Peterson, a biblical scholar who wrote his own translation attempting to capture the abrupt, immediate phraseology of scripture sometimes lost in more poetic translations. Or maybe you want to challenge members of your family to read on their own time, and hold conversations about your reading once per week. Any way you do it, I believe the act of reading and discussing scripture can knit a family together. People see things differently, raise different questions, are moved by different parts. All are enriched by sharing these perspectives. May Advent be a time of joyful preparation for you and your family.

— *Kate Gillooly*, Minister for Christian Formation and Program

The Pageant is Coming, The Pageant is Coming! (There are actually two of them!)

Christmas Eve celebrations bring two opportunities for children and youth to help tell the story of the birth of Jesus. Our 2 p.m. service is designed for young children and those who want a brief, simple celebration. We tell the story with lots of congregational participation (and the help of some junior high youth!). St. David's choir usually sings at this service, and a grand time is had by all.



Our 4 p.m. service is a really big deal! Live animals, a host of angels, and more shepherds than you can shake a stick at, as well as some Wise Men and pages, and the Holy Family. All come out to portray the story of that magical night that Jesus was born. Children in grades Kindergarten through 6 may sign up to be an angel, shepherd or animal. Main characters are assigned to 6th graders based on Church School attendance. All are welcome to participate. To be a part of things, fill out a signup sheet in the Church School classrooms. Costumes will be handed out on December 18 and at rehearsal on December 22. Lots of help with the Pageant is needed! Please contact Kate Gillooly if you are able to shepherd a group of kids, sort and mend costumes, or be a "runner" backstage.

Don't Miss!

Advent Dessert Theater has performances Friday, December 2, and Saturday, December 3, at 7 p.m. Tickets are \$5.00 per person, children 12 and under admitted free of charge. Desserts still needed!

Please contact Kate Gillooly, if you can contribute a baked item, (216) 932-5815, ext. 212.

Did You Know?

...**John Gates** was our Special Youth Representative to Diocesan Convention in November. Next time you see him, ask him what it was like!
... **Anna Hundert** recently led the Youth Group discussion on the Theology of Harry Potter. Ask her for a recap!

...**you can join us** any Wednesday evening in Advent for a chance to slow down, walk the labyrinth, try some contemplative prayer, and discuss your reading of Mark

SUNDAY TOPICS

Grades K-2: Godly Play

- 12/4 The Prophets and The Holy Family
12/11 The Shepherds
12/18 The Wise Men and Christmas
12/25 Christmas Day
NO CLASS

Grades 3-6:

Workshop Rotation

- 12/4-12/18
Cycle 3: Stations of the Creche
12/25 Christmas Day
NO CLASS

7th Grade re:form Class

- 12/4 Do cremated people go to heaven?
12/11 Why should I pray when God doesn't answer all my prayers?
12/18 Why does the Bible contradict itself sometimes?
12/25 Christmas Day
NO CLASS

8th Grade

Confirmation Class

- 12/4 CONFIRMAND/ SPONSOR Breakfast #2
12/11 Community Outreach Project
12/18 Selfishness, Selflessness or Self-Interest
12/25 Christmas Day
NO CLASS

Sunday Youth Forum

- 12/4 Social Media and the Effects on Religion
12/11 Reality TV & the Effects on Religion
12/18 2012 & the End of the World
12/25 Christmas Day
NO CLASS

THE PASSAGES INTERVIEW

Meet Meg von der Heydt

This month, we would like to introduce you to Meg von der Heydt. Meg is a Church School Board member and Church School teacher. She played an instrumental role with the launch of our new curriculum, *Godly Play*. Meg's life totally revolves around children, both at home and at St. Paul's. *Passages* caught up with Meg on one of those rare, beautiful fall days – a day that seemed to reflect Meg's peaceful, mindful and gentle way of leading our children to God. As you will see, God, children and play are important pieces of Meg's life.

How are you involved in Church School and parish life in general at St. Paul's? I

have been a member of the Church School Board and a Church School teacher for the past two years. I currently serve on the Worship Goal Team and previously served as an acolyte mentor.

Tell us about your family. I have been married to Jim for eleven years, and I am blessed with three wonderful children: Bess who is eight, Nora who is six and Iris who is three.

What do you do in your time away from church? I love playing with my children. I especially love being outdoors with them.

In the summer I travel to the shores of Lake Michigan where I serve as Director of Programs for Camp Miniwanca. This camp was started by the American Youth Foundation. One of my roles there includes organizing all the daily activities of the campers. I also love to read books.

Why did you agree to teach and serve on the Church School Board? Christian formation is extremely

important to me. I deeply care about the formation programs at St. Paul's.

What has surprised you about being on the Board,

teaching, or the curriculum process? The very spiritual or prayerful intentions of the children amaze me. Being involved in the Godly Play classroom each week has allowed me to build deeper relationships with the children. I have been impressed by such a thoughtful and reflective Church School Board. During the process of finding two new curricula, Godly Play and Workshop Rotation, each board member took the time to ask questions and form goals. The energy and enthusiasm found in our board members is a treasure for our church.

What is one thing you really want parents to know? I want parents to know how deeply spiritual their children are. I see this every week in the classroom – how intentionally prayerful, spiritual and gentle each child can be while learning and playing with God.



Flower Arranging during Godly Play

CHURCH SCHOOL NEWS

Godly Play Update

Godly Play for grades K-2 gets to meet lots of characters of the Christmas story during its Advent lessons. Prophets, Shepherds, Wise Men and the Holy Family all play their part in the unfolding drama of the birth of the Savior. Each week builds upon the last so that by the time we're ready to celebrate Christmas, children have a context to welcome the Christ Child and celebrate the miracle of the Savior coming. January will bring lessons on the Parables. More help is needed with our materials for Godly Play – if you are handy as a woodworker, or like to sew, please contact Kate Gillooly, (216) 932-5815, ext. 212, or Jimmy Wright, jwright@stpauls-church.org.

Workshop Rotation Update

Workshop Rotation holds a special 3-week Cycle on Advent called "Stations of the Creche." Our focus for grades 3-6 on December 4, 11 and 18 will be the journey to Bethlehem and the power of hope.

Theologically, this unit is about the concept of the incarnation – the idea that God came to earth to be among us. While this concept may be hard to grasp in its entirety, there is no doubting its power. God in an act of ultimate mercy, love and trust, comes down to be with us in all our broken humanity. A God "with skin on" is a very real concept for children and adults alike.

Author Ronald Rolheiser, writes "God takes on flesh so that every home becomes a church, every child becomes the Christ-child, and all food and drink become a sacrament... God, in his many-faced face, has become as accessible, and visible, as the nearest water tap. That is the "why" of the incarnation." (from *The Holy Longing*)

Birthdays in December

Miles Pierce, John Reynolds, Soren Gran, Sam Schmidt, Carlton Radivoyevitch, George Schmidt, Ella Randall, Patrick Wise, Caroline Thomas, Aiden Hartzler, Virginia Schenkel, Natalie Sickling, Harley Fulford, Tess Turco, Nick Protasiewicz, Jason Outcalt, Teddy Mayer, Grace Neiswander, Bess von der Heydt, Christina Schwarz, Eleanor James, Mateo Polanco, Susan Benincasa, Andrew Machesky, Lillie Baum, Mavis Austin, Maggie Shefcheck, Clare Ubersax.

YOUTH NEWS

Thanks, Emma and John!

On Confirmation Sunday, Emma Bachman and John Vodrey, as representatives for the 9th grade confirmation class, stood up and reflected on their experiences through the confirmation process and their time at St. Paul's and how those experiences related to the Ephesians. Many thanks to them for sharing with the parish, and congratulations to those 9th graders confirmed into the church.

Welcome 9th Graders

With the confirmation process over for our current 9th grade class, we warmly invite them to join Youth Forum, a formation class for all high school students. This group meets during the Christian formation hour in the 3rd floor youth room, and discusses current events and how they relate to what we believe. This class is lead by Carla Williams, Sara Jenks and Scott Gray. Come join us for thoughtful discussions, good laughs and bagels.

Confirmation Retreat Reflection

"Give them strength to hold their faith in you, and to keep alive their joy in your creation."

These words, taken from the prayer for young persons in the Book of Common Prayer help describe what we try to accomplish with the 8th grade confirmation retreat. On the weekend of November 4th, members of our 8th grade confirmation class spent the weekend at Cedar Hills, talking about what their faith means to them and forming community between them that will help facilitate their journey to confirmation. A beautiful weekend was spent in the middle of God's creation, talking, laughing, praying and coming closer to God and one another. I would like to thank Tori Payne, Grace Gamble and James Hockey for coming down as young adult facilitators for the weekend and all the parents who helped make this weekend possible. Thanks to all involved.

— Paul Winter

Youth Group December Schedule

- 12/4 Cookie Baking
- 12/11 Messy Games Holiday Edition (Make sure to wear clothes that can get dirty)
- 12/18 Youth Group Semi-Formal
- 12/25 NO YOUTH GROUP
- 1/1/12 NO YOUTH GROUP

Scenes from the Moses Chronicles:

Third graders in the Church School Workshop Rotation enjoyed interacting with Moses played by Mark Turner, and Pharaoh played by Jim Ptacek. (Photos: Andrea Turner)



Third graders watch and listen.



Moses speaks to Pharaoh, "Let my people go!"



Pharaoh



Moses talks to God.

Passages

Published monthly as a resource for families with children and teens by the Christian Formation Staff at St. Paul's.

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Moses talks to the people of God.



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