

## **CHRISTIAN FORMATION**

### **Director of Christian Formation**

### **Tommie Moore**

Catechesis of the Good Shepherd is a faith formation experience for children ages 3 to 12 years old. It is based upon the belief that young children can and do experience God. The Catechesis of the Good Shepherd's work is done in an Atrium, an environment created to nurture children's spirituality. This is done by proclaiming the Gospel through the parable method, prayer, singing, silence, and exploring liturgical events. Hands-on materials are used to help children and adults reflect together upon the great mysteries of the Christian faith.

In Level I (for children ages 3 – 5 years of age), the exploration begins with building a loving relationship with Jesus the Good Shepherd. The image of Jesus as the Good Shepherd is central to this atrium. We focus on Jesus' life and His teachings through parables to make Him more concrete—a real person in a real time and a real place.

In Level II (for children in 1<sup>st</sup> – 3<sup>rd</sup> grades), many works from Level I are repeated, but have been expanded to suit them developmentally. Moral formation is also beginning at this age so moral parables are added. The image of Jesus as the True Vine is central to this atrium. The child's work with the Holy Eucharist and Baptism materials becomes more detailed and specific as they explore the order and prayers for each rite.

In Level III (for children in 4<sup>th</sup> – 6<sup>th</sup> grades), moral formation continues, so many more of Jesus' moral parables are added. This child has the ability to move through time easily and is able to think abstractly, so more in-depth studies of Salvation History are explored in this atrium.

We are fortunate to have as our certified catechists: Natalie Sparks Bullock, Stacy Carroll, Tricia Edmonson, Mary Howard King, Joellen Murphree and Kamme Riddle. Assisting in the atria each Sunday are Robin Bryan and Marrion Winders. This group is strongly committed in helping your children deepen their relationship with God and Jesus the Good Shepherd while helping them to participate more fully in our liturgy.

In 2013, we began Level I and Level II adult formation courses that will continue in 2014. Mary Howard King, who is a certified Level I and II formation trainer, is leading both of our adult formation courses. We are thankful for her guidance and leadership, not only in our formation training, but within Catechesis each Sunday. Sue Ann Averett, Fredda Robinson and Michele Waits are working on their Level I certification, while Marrion Winders and I are working on our Level II certification.

In order to continue to grow Catechesis, we need adults (male and female) who will attend the training with intentions of working with our children in the atria. Those that have been through the training and are now working with our children in this atmosphere comment that their own spiritual journey has been enhanced and enriched by the experience. However, please know that you do not have to be a certified catechist to spend time with the children in the atria. We are always looking for volunteers to assist the Catechist and children during their time in the atria. The assistant training only takes about an hour and we'd love to have you! If you would like to learn more about CGS, we have numerous books and resources available in the Christian Education office or you may join us in the atria on Sunday mornings at 9:30 a.m. or we welcome your presence during the adult formation training course. Simply observing the children at work or enjoying the peaceful environment can be meaningful to adults of all ages.

We also continued on our journey of growing our other Sunday morning Christian formation offerings for our adults and older youth. Lucy Adams, Mike Fitzpatrick and Leslie Wood are leading our 7<sup>th</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup> graders through topical Bible based lessons tied to what teens are talking about. Bible lessons are linked

to the issues and events that are relevant right now. They meet in the Sr. High Sunday School room at 9:30 a.m.

For the adults in 2013, we offered an adult class that explored a variety of topics, including a "*Journey Through the Bible*", studying the Gospel of Matthew; the "*Bishop's Bible Challenge*", studying the book of Genesis; "*Embracing an Adult Faith*", where we revisited some of Christianity's most fundamental questions; "*Episcopal 101*" where we learned about the Episcopal Church, our Anglican history, traditions and our rich liturgy and music; "*God in the Reel World, The Theology of Movies*", where we explored the theological implications in the movies "*Chocolat*" and "*A Man for All Seasons*"; and "*The First Christmas*", which helped us see the real Christmas story buried in the familiar Bible accounts. In September, 2013 we began a new class, led by Fr. Stanford, "*Understanding the Sunday Scriptures*", a study of the revised common lectionary for each Sunday.

Fr. Stanford will continue teaching "*Understanding the Sunday Scriptures*" in 2014, while other adult offerings in 2014 will include, the Bishop's Bible Challenge and Confirmation classes for youth and adults. Watch upcoming editions of the Cross and Crown for details. My deepest thanks to Fr. Paul, Fr. Stanford, Julian Carroll, Sally Gray, and David Sparks for sharing their gifts through teaching these classes during 2013.

Also offered for adults in 2013, Education for Ministry (EfM) is a four year course studying the Old and New Testaments, Church History and Theological Choices. In the weekly seminars, members have an opportunity to share their insights and discoveries, as well as, discuss questions which the study materials raise for them. While we did not have enough participants to form a group for the Advent 2013 semester, we hope to offer this course in the fall, 2014. It takes a special person to mentor an EfM group, and I offer my sincere thanks to David Sparks for facilitating this study group. His thoughtful and thought provoking guidance, teamed with his own mature understanding of his faith, enabled group members to explore the depth of their own spiritual journey.

My thanks to Ginger Harbour and Amanda Perry for directing "*Superheroes of the Faith*" Vacation Bible School in the summer of 2013. VBS was held on a Saturday, which allowed children to attend that aren't normally able to come due to parents working, day care situations, transportation issues, etc. In addition, we invited the children in our surrounding neighborhoods! Another added benefit to having a Saturday VBS was that our volunteer base, previously limited due to work issues, was expanded. Almost fifty children attended and numerous teenage and adult volunteers helped throughout the day. This was the second year we tried this model for VBS and we will continue to evaluate it as we plan for VBS, 2014. If you would like to help, please let me know!

The total Christian Formation budget for 2013 was \$10,280. Catechesis of the Good Shepherd was allocated \$6,700 for materials, supplies and resources for all 3 atria and costs associated with adult formation training. We spent \$2,821.09, as some of the costs associated with the formation trainings were less than expected.

The balance of the Christian Formation budget in the amount of \$3,580 was allocated for materials for youth and adult Sunday School classes, materials for confirmation classes, Vacation Bible School and costs associated with Education for Ministry. We spent \$1,168.70, since costs associated with EfM (\$1,900) and confirmation classes were not expended.

I offer my thanks to all of the parishioners that volunteer their time in Christian Formation. They are a dedicated group of folks and it shows! I encourage you and your children to take advantage of all of the Christian Formation offerings and I welcome your ideas and input anytime.