

CHRISTIAN FORMATION

Director of Christian Formation

Tommie Moore

Christian Formation for our youngest...

Catechesis of the Good Shepherd is a faith formation experience for children ages 3 to 12 years old. Catechesis 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.

We are fortunate to have as our certified catechists: Tricia Edmonson, Joellen Murphree, Kamme Riddle, Stacy White, and Marrion Winders. Assisting in the atria are Sue Ann Averett, Kelly Fleming, Michelle Hester and Emily Jackson.

Michelle Hester, who serves as our volunteer Coordinator of Children's Ministries, works closely with our catechists and assistants. In that volunteer role, Michelle works to enrich existing programs and explore new Christian Formation opportunities for our children through study, service and worship. Among other duties, she is responsible for developing, planning and coordinating programming for children (1st through 6th grade); recruiting, retaining and training adult volunteers; coordinating and scheduling Catechesis of the Good Shepherd and coordinating Jr. EYC efforts. Michelle is a retired pre-school teacher and has a passion for religious education and formation. She and her family have been involved in ministry at Christ the King ELCA for many years. For all who give so freely of their time in Catechesis, I am deeply grateful for their commitment.

For our youth in 7th – 12th grades...

Participants in this class explore topical, Bible-based lessons based on current events and other trending subjects that have an immediate relevancy to youth. In 2019, with the wise guidance of Connor Harper, Rufus Van Horn, Manuela Wilson and Josh Westmoreland, our youth delved into such topics as:

- How we can rely on God's faithfulness even in difficult, unpredictable and alarming circumstances.
- We explored how Usain Bolt, one of the most electric runners ever seen, setting and breaking records left and right in his career, overcame obstacles as inspiration for doing the same in our faith.
- We used Advent as a launching point for discussion about the excitement surrounding all of our church-year celebrations.

In August, we celebrated summer with a Back to School bash with lunch, crafts, games for all ages, prizes, waterslide fun and fellowship! Students, teachers and administrators brought their backpacks, etc. for a special blessing as we looked toward a new school year!

As you can see, our time with your children is very full and our conversations with them are always enlightening. We look forward to our time with them in the new year, as we continue helping them explore and learn to live out their faith.

For adults:

“The Sunday Lectionary” class, led by Les Alvis and Caleb Bedillion continued in 2019 with a strong following, averaging approximately 25 attendees each Sunday. This class meets year-round in the south breakout room of the Parish Hall on Sundays at 9:30 a.m. They study the Biblical texts appointed by the Revised Common Lectionary and is made for those who wish to journey deeper into the message and meaning of each Sunday’s lesson. The class critically analyzes the Biblical texts, asking questions such as: Who wrote the text and when was it written? What is the historical and social context of the text? What was the author’s intent in writing the text? The class then discusses what the texts tell us about God and what the texts mean for us today. All are invited to join in for the weekly, lively (and entertaining) discussions. In addition, we also held a weeknight book study of *The Screwtape Letters* by C. S. Lewis during October that was well received.

Education for Ministry is a 4-year course studying the entire sweep of the Christian tradition from the earliest period to the present. Participants learn the disciplines of biblical exegesis and interpretation, systematic theology, church history, ethics and liturgics. Through study, prayer, and reflection, EfM groups move toward a new understanding of the fullness of God’s kingdom. Participants are given weekly assignments to study with the help of resource guides. 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.

Virginia Chambers and Ken Murphree served as the EfM mentors for the 2018/2019 academic year. The mentor’s role is not that of a teacher but as a guide for the group as they navigate the study material and we appreciate their willingness to serve in this capacity. Deanna Alford, Margaret Barshaw and Beth Harris graduated from the 4-year EfM course in May. Unfortunately, we did not have enough returning and/or new students to have an EfM group for the 2019/2020 academic year, but I hope we can offer the course again in the fall of 2020.

During Lent 2019, Confirmation classes were offered for youth and adults wishing to be confirmed or simply wanting a refresher. Thirteen youth and adults were confirmed/received during Bishop Seage’s visit in late May. Confirmation classes will again be offered in 2020 – watch your newsletter for details.

In October, at the beautiful home and grounds of Jimmy and Margaret Robbins, Daughters of the King hosted a “Quiet Day” retreat, with time to be alone with God, listening to His voice, as well as time to meditate and reflect. This has become an annual event, and I encourage you to consider participating in 2020.

The total 2019 budget for adult and youth Christian Formation was \$3,425. Of that amount, as of November 30, 2019 we spent \$2,829.92 on Catechesis of the Good Shepherd atrium supplies, material repairs/replacements, our youth curriculum, supplemental materials, supplies for the Back to School Bash and the book study.

My deepest thanks to all of the volunteers for sharing their gifts through teaching and mentoring during 2019. They are a dedicated group of folks and it shows! I encourage you and your children to take advantage of the Christian Formation offerings in 2020. We are planning to explore some new Christian Formation opportunities beginning in Lent of 2020, but as always, if you have ideas about topics for Christian Formation, I welcome your input!