



The Journey

Table of Contents

"On Children"	2
Youth Choir	4
Spirituality at Home	5
SYG: Youth Groups	6
Summer For Kids	6
Christian Formation	7
Opportunities	7
Easter Dedications	8
Gleaners Work Days	8
Calendar & Challenge	9

FOCUS: On Children & Youth Formation

IS IT SUMMER YET?

With each day now we move closer and closer to Spring and then, wait for it, yes, SUMMER! It seems that this will perhaps be the most anticipated summer in years as together we have weathered a challenging winter. Summer is a special time for those who don't have to be in school— our youth (and some of our wonderful teachers)! But it is also a special time for our church community; a season when we worship in 2 instead of 3 services, a time when families plan more time together, a time we break from some of our regularly scheduled classes, rehearsals and meetings to slow down and enjoy a different pace.

This issue of *The Journey* is focused on our children, our youth, summer opportunities and an invitation into a season of discerning how best to respond to our growing number of families with small children. Plan on joining us Sunday June 1st after the 10:00 service to hear more and share your ideas (see Priest Lisa's article for details). We are passionate about our children and finding ways to support and celebrate their lives in our midst.

So as you read this issue in April, hoping that the snow continues to melt around us, know that the warm summer days are indeed just around the corner. We are almost there!



Baptism

- April 20, 2014..... Easter
- June 8, 2014 Pentecost
- November 2, 2014 All Saints Sunday
- January 11, 2015..... Baptism of our Lord

Baptism Registration Forms are on the bulletin board outside the church office next to the "Sign Me Up" board. If you are interested in talking to Priest Lisa about baptism please contact her via email: priestlisa@stjohnsplymouth.org





On Children

by Kahlil Gibran

Your children are not your children. They are the sons and daughters of Life's longing for itself. They come through you but not from you, and though they are with you yet they belong not to you.

You may give them your love but not your thoughts, for they have their own thoughts.

You may house their bodies but not their souls, for their souls dwell in the house of tomorrow, which you cannot visit, not even in your dreams.

You may strive to be like them, but seek not to make them like you. For life goes not backward nor tarries with yesterday.

You are the bows from which your children as living arrows are sent forth.

The archer sees the mark upon the path of the infinite, and He bends you with His might that His arrows may go swift and far.

Let your bending in the archer's hand be for gladness; for even as He loves the arrow that flies, so He loves also the bow that is stable.

A Season of Discernment "On Children"

In this beautiful poem, written and published by Kahlil Gibran in 1923, we are reminded of the precious, fragile, perplexing and at times highly complicated nature of what it means to have children. In this issue of *The Journey* we are focusing on "our" children.

Whether or not you are literally a parent, we as a community have been entrusted with loving, celebrating and supporting the children and youth that travel with us. We are committed to them and need reminders from time to time, of how to be more inclusive and relevant so as they grow up they know we see, respect and adore them as vibrant and valuable members of our community.

The Church for this generation of youth is a very different place than for previous generations. I have seen two very big differences over the past decade or so. First, there are significantly fewer students in our Sunday morning classes- often are the Sundays when we have as many teachers in our classrooms as we do youth.

Second, Sunday itself is no longer a day of univocal focus for families. Today we are competing with Sunday schedules that often include: organized sports, social events, blended and complicated family arrangements, and work schedules of parents that don't always allow for regular Sunday participation. In and of itself this is not necessarily bad news. These realities are a part of our lives- lives still precious and holy, wrapped in the love of a God who never leaves us-whether we are in

church or not. At the same time, these realities present us with opportunities to think through how and when and why we gather, and the ways we facilitate or hinder full participation in our common life.

I believe the time has come for us to have a season of discernment about "Sunday School." The Sunday school movement began in Britain in the 1780s. The Industrial Revolution had resulted in many children spending Monday through Saturday working in factories. Christian philanthropists wanted to find a way to educate these otherwise illiterate children and Sunday was the one day that presented itself as a time for actual education. From this desire to fill an educational void Sunday School was born.

Up until the mid 1950s this model served the church well as it adapted itself away from the work of needing to be the primary educational source for children into a crucible for actual catechetical (religious teaching) and formational purposes. It also evolved as an important venue for enculturation into the liturgical and spiritual life of the church. Sunday school was the hub, the place for children and families to connect, find support, learn about the faith community, engage in social events and build up the next generation of church members and leaders. It was a good model and it served not only a clear and necessary purpose, it worked and worked well for many years.

Today, in 2014, we find ourselves navigating a different landscape and looking out at a very different horizon. In a recent Gallup poll, 95% of Americans polled claimed that they still believe in

Continued on page 3

A Season of Discernment "On Children" *(Continued from page 2)*

God, but have simply stopped going to church. Of those born since 1980, 25% describe themselves as having "no religious affiliation." Polls indicate that less than half of American Christians can name the four gospels, only a third know the Sermon on the Mount is found in Matthew and two-thirds of those surveyed believe the saying "God helps those who help themselves" comes from the Bible (it does not.) The point here is not to bemoan this lack of knowledge, but rather to elucidate the need to re-examine our current context.

We can no longer make assumptions about the centrality or even relevancy of church in the lives of those around us. And in terms of families with children, it seems imperative that we take time to listen and discern how best to create an atmosphere and a culture that is engaging, accessible and meaningful against the backdrop of the rest of their lives.

What does all this mean for St. John's going forward? While the answer is not yet in sight, I believe we have reached the launching pad for a time of conversation. We are only limited by our own imaginations and our ability to trust God and each other through a process seeking out next steps together. We are ready to ask some big questions including:

Questions about current format:

Should we continue to offer Sunday School classes by age groups?

If we do, is 10:10-10:50 the best time for families?

Should we offer something for parents during this time?

New program/format ideas & questions:

Should we think about a more family-oriented, all-inclusive, multi-generational program instead of traditional Sunday School from 10:10-10:50?

Would families participate in a family-based program offered in the Parish Hall each week?

What is most important to families on Sundays?

How can we better serve, include and engage multiple generations?

Between now and September we will be praying, talking, thinking, dreaming and planning a path forward. We may be ready to introduce a new structure by September, or we may need more time to plan next steps; it all depends on our collective input and willingness to discover what lies ahead. This is a conversation that will be richer and more vibrant if we can find ways to include many voices. To begin, we have planned two ways for the community to be involved in this process:

Sunday School Forum

Sunday, June 1st 11:15-12:00

Come join us in the Parish Hall for a facilitated conversation after our 10:00 service where ideas will be shared and questions can be asked.

On-line Sunday School survey to be sent in April with questions and opportunities to share ideas.

I hope that we are bold in this conversation and risk moving out of our comfort zones in order to find new ways to celebrate and support the youngest in our midst and those that have not yet discovered our corner of heaven on earth. We are so blessed to have new families finding us every week and looking for a place and a community to raise their children, feed their souls, ask the deeper questions of life and find community that cares and extends itself to reveal God's love.

May we together, with God's help be beautiful *bows from which our children as living arrows are sent forth* in the name of the One who loved us first.

And may you never forget, that you are loved,

Priest Lisa



Youth Choir – By Julie Ford, Director of Music

One of the highlights of my week is our Wednesday afternoon Youth Choir rehearsal. The members of this choir are in grades 3 through 7, and we meet each week from 5:00 to 5:45 pm in the Music Office. Our rehearsal routine is very consistent from week to week – we always start and end with some sort of prayer, and we always have a “devotional word” that somehow relates to something we are learning that day. Aside from learning anthems to sing in worship, we learn basic music skills, and a lot about church and worship. We follow a curriculum published by the Royal School of Church Music, called “Voice for Life”.

We also have a 3-year rotation of lesson plans that I have developed (and continue to refine). The first year involves studying the psalms and learning different ways to sing and pray them. We even write our own Psalm prayers. The second year involves studying hymns and learning their background stories. During that year choristers are challenged to memorize the first verse of a long list of hymns as part of our “Hymn Memorization Program.” The third year involves learning about the format of liturgy we follow in the Episcopal Church. Aside from the “Voice for Life” materials and the 3-year rotation materials, we also learn about the church seasons every year.

My goals for the members of the Youth Choir encompass a few different aspects. Perhaps it is obvious that I want to encourage a love for music and especially a love for using music as a means to worship and serve God. But aside from that, I wish to create life-long worshippers: Christians who will continue to attend church after they graduate, and who will take an active role in the life of the church. I was thrilled the other day when the father of one of the Youth Choir members told me that his daughter had asked him what part she will sing when she joins the Parish Choir next year.

I have often sent out emails to members of the parish, explaining the benefits that I see children gain through

participation in a program such as our Youth Choir. Here are the points I raise:

- Youth Choir provides its members with **free music lessons**. We not only sing songs, but we also learn the basics of music reading. The curriculum we use, "Voice for Life", gives choristers skills they can use for a lifetime. The concepts we study will help them to excel in other music activities.
- Youth Choir provides its members with **Bible lessons** to supplement the lessons they learn in our Formation ministries.
- Youth Choir members learn a lot about **worship**. They learn to be active participants in worship.
- Youth Choir members **have fun** in weekly rehearsals, and form **friendships** with other choir members.

Chorus America's 2009 Chorus Impact Study indicates that singing in a chorus has a positive impact on **school grades**. They found that the positive benefits of chorus participation for children are even greater than the positive benefits for adults. They found that singing in a chorus improved children's memory, homework habits, and creativity. It also helps children to develop teamwork and social skills.

As part of the Voice For Life curriculum, choir members advance through the lesson books and earn wearable items that indicate their level of achievement. Currently we have 5 choristers who have achieved the white level (level 1) and 1 chorister who has achieved the light blue level (level 2). They take a lot of pride in the accomplishment of completing a level, and I take a lot of pride in seeing their musical understanding increase each year.

If I had one regret about our Youth Choir, it would be that it is a secret too well kept. I wish that we could fill our music room every Wednesday! If you were unable to make the Youth Choir Open House in March and have questions or would like further information about the program, please call me. Thank you.

Julie Ford
734-453-0190, Ext. 10

Nurturing Spirituality At Home – By Sherry Bass

A definition of spirituality: the state or quality of being dedicated to God, religion, or spiritual things or values.

The word “spirituality” - what does it actually mean? How does one become “spiritual?” When do we begin to develop spirituality? What can parents do to instill spirituality in their children, especially in an ever-increasing secular, over-commercialized, and competitive world? I recently read an article in the winter issue of Episcopal Teacher that addressed nurturing spirituality in the home, or what the article referred to as “domestic church.” It is the home where the foundation is laid for a child’s faith development. It is there that two important life lessons begin for a child. It is the first time a child experiences “community.” In addition, the traditions and rituals of a family provide the framework for building and strengthening a *sense of belonging*. Feeling connected in this way, a child begins to experience trust, loyalty, and unity.

Long term, belonging to a community, as first established in the family, will transfer beyond the home to the experiences of school and church.

So what can be done at home to begin this journey? The family table! It is here that we enter into conversation about our day – our successes and failures, our cares and concerns – we learn how to be compassionate and to forgive. Discussion of God’s presence and guidance can follow.

One of Jesus’ most memorable moments on earth was the last supper. He shared a meal with his friends, his “community.” He shared intimate details of the next three days. He thanked them and asked them to remember him. His words, his actions created a legacy passed on to others by these disciples.

When we gather for a meal at home, we are preparing for the experience of Eucharist at church. As we share a meal at church, we take our concerns and prayers to the rail. We ask for for-



giveness, and we listen to God. This is an extension of the family meal at home, and there is much similarity: talking, sharing, listening, forgiving, belonging.

So here are some practical ideas to implement when preparing for a meal at home:

- Provide a place of focus. A centerpiece should be part of the table setting, and children can even take part in designing one.
- Candles and slow, soft background music add to a slower and more calming pace.
- Always pray before a meal, thanking God for the food and those who have prepared it. Some families take turns in leading this prayer or sharing something that happened during the day.

Through loving and caring for the needs of our family, we are modeling God’s love and care for us. The more we can make connections to the faith we live every day, through the meals we share at home, the more our children will see that Sunday and the Eucharist are an extension of what we share and celebrate at home in “domestic church.”

-Sherry Bass,
Coordinator of
Christian Youth
Formation



SYG: Middle School & High School Youth Groups

Youth Group at St. John's has long been a long and vibrant tradition and of importance to everyone, youth and adults alike. This tradition continues with new, thriving Middle School & High School Youth groups.

We meet every Sunday (with just a few exceptions.)

Middle school youth group begins at 6:00 p.m. and lasts until 7:15 p.m.

7:15-7:45 p.m. we have a combined meal with middle & high school youth, as well as the adult leaders.

This is an opportunity for everyone to join in community and get to know one another.

The high school youth group begins at 7:45 p.m. and lasts until 9:00 p.m. if we get everyone to quit talking by then. On the first Sunday of every month we have a joint outing that goes from 6:00 to 9:00 p.m. with both groups together doing something fun in the local community.

We cover a wide variety of things in youth group, pulling our discussions from the readings, sermons, books, newspapers and the youth themselves.

We talk about things that are important to our youth and things that matter to them in their daily lives. When all is said and done though, this is a Christian Youth Group so, yes, we do talk about God, Jesus and the Bible.



If you are the parent or guardian of a middle or high school child, and they are not currently attending youth group, we'd love to have them join us. If your child is already part of our weekly fun, thank you for your support. Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions or concerns about Youth Group at St. John's.

Paul Buckley,
Volunteer Youth Coordinator,
cell: 734-231-1613.

SYG Schedule Recap:

Sundays at the Youth House

6:00-7:15—Middle School

7:15-7:45—Middle & High School Shared Meal

7:45-9:00—High School

All are welcome— come try hanging out with us— we can't wait to see you and get to know you!

2014 Summer Fun for Kids

Monday, June 23-26

For quite a number of years, St. John's has offered a short, one-week "Vacation Bible School" that has run from 9:00–12:00, Monday–Thursday once the schools are out. We close on Thursday with an evening Ice Cream Social and short musical presentation by the children. We are still in the process of determining if we have enough interest and volunteers to coordinate this effort this year— stay tuned...

Christian Formation Ministry

The Christian Formation Ministry Team is a group of individuals with a desire and passion to teach the children of Saint John's about the church, prayer, and mostly God's love, in a fun, thoughtful, and age appropriate way.

Our team plans activities throughout the year that are designed to teach in a hands-on, fun-filled format. We have planned such activities as, a children's mission project during Lent, an intergenerational program on Palm Sunday, and an Easter Egg Hunt. In the summer we plan and implement Vacation Bible School.

November and December are fun months, too, as we plan an Advent mission project, the Christmas Pageant, and a visit from St. Nicholas.

The Christian Formation Ministry Team is also responsible for church school. The team reviews curriculum, recruits teachers, disseminates information about Sunday School and plans group activities.

Our team is reorganizing and starting anew! We are looking for people who like to plan and carry out children's activities. If you are a parent with younger children please consider Christian Formation. You would get to be on the team creating the programs your children will be participating in at church. We meet once a month and would love for you to join us. If you have any questions, or would like more information, please contact: Sherry Bass, Sunday School Coordinator: cell: 248-766-6085, sherrybass45@gmail.com

Opportunities to Connect, Grow & Serve

Every week we are seeing new faces and families in worship; it is wonderful and exciting. It also reminds us that we are called to live with open hands inviting and reaching out to include those who are new among us. There are many wonderful ways to make connect with God and each other, grow in faith and serve with love. It is also is our job to continually invite, engage and encourage each other, especially the newest among us.

Here is a short list of ways to get more connected in this amazing community of faith:

- Join us for informal time at Coffee Hour after the 9:00 & 11:00 services in the Gathering
- Complete a "Get Connected" Card found in the pews and let us know how we can reach you
- Go to our website, www.stjohnsplymouth.org and sign up to receive our "Journey Notes" weekly email, like us on Facebook, following us on Twitter
- Check out the "Sign Me Up" Board outside the office and consider coming to:
 - ~ "Friday Night Dinner with Priest Lisa & Kim"
 - ~ Inquirer's Class—for anyone interested in exploring our faith
- Joining an Outreach activity- Crossroads, Gleaners

- Offering to Host a Coffee Hour
- Attend "Food for the Journey" Soup Supper and Conversation
- Come to our small and informal Wednesday 10:30 Healing Service & Eucharist
- Email Priest Lisa and find time for coffee, tea and conversation (priestlisa@stjohnsplymouth.org)
- Pick up a "Ministry Opportunities" Booklet and check out where you might like to add your hands and heart to serve among us

Whether you are new or a long-time member, the irony of Christian community is that we are all on the same journey even if we haven't yet met. Some of us are wired for making connections easily; others need to be invited and perhaps to just observe for a while before entering more fully. Some of us have been in church our whole lives; others are new to our rituals and patterns or may be returning after a season away. Everyone is needed on this journey we travel together; so come, bring all of who you are, we will share what we have with each other, we will make room at the table for one more with joy, we will be gentle in our welcome, and remind each other along the way that we are loved.

Easter Lily & Music Dedications

Every year at St. John's, we celebrate Easter by beautifully decorating the Nave with dozens of lilies and by playing, singing, and hearing glorious music. You can directly support these symbols of joy by making a contribution for flowers, music, or both. Celebrate, remember, or give thanks for important people or occasions by making a dedication.

You will find forms on a table in the main entry hallway. Please note that the forms are two-sided so you can make either or both types of dedications on the same form. Make checks payable to St. John's and indicate "Easter Lilies" and/or "Easter music" in the memo line.

To assure that your dedication appears in the Easter bulletins, please turn in your dedication no later than Sunday, April 13, 2014. Dedications will be accepted beyond that date, but may not appear in the dedication listing.



Gleaners Food Bank

For more than 36 years, Gleaners Community Food Bank has been "feeding hungry people and nourishing our communities." Last year, Gleaners distributed 41 million pounds of emergency food to more than 550 partner soup kitchens, shelters and pantries in Wayne, Oakland, Macomb, Livingston and Monroe counties.

Gleaners Community Food Bank, with broad community support, fights hunger in southeastern Michigan. In collaboration with our member agencies, the Feeding America network, and our program partners, we provide millions of pounds of donated and purchased food to people in need. In so doing, Gleaners is committed to distributing nutritional, high quality food. Through education and advocacy, we will reduce reliance on the emergency food system. Gleaners adopts best practices and cost effective systems and procedures to achieve the highest possible return on its human and financial resources. Gleaners fulfills its role with a sense of compassion and urgency while nourishing, sustaining and advancing hope in our community.

If you have enjoyed volunteering at Gleaners in the past or have wanted to give it a try, mark your calendars for one or more of the following dates:

SAVE THE DATES

April 5, 2014

June 28, 2014

November 1, 2014

Sign up on the "Sign Me Up" Board outside the office



NOURISHING HOPE

feeding hungry people

Lower our cost and increase nutritional value by securing more food from local sources and farmers.



SUSTAINING HOPE

supporting community health

Help people do more for themselves by learning to shop smarter, cook healthier, and take advantage of all the resources they have to live a better, healthier life.*

ADVANCING HOPE

mobilizing the community

Engage donors, volunteers and agency partners in our vision to end hunger.



Spring Calendar Highlights (check website for full calendar)

APRIL	1 Tuesday	First Parish Council Meeting
	5 Saturday	Gleaners Food Bank work day 8:30 a.m. to noon
	6 Sunday	2nd of 4 Inquirer’s Class 10:10 a.m. Single’s Get-Together 6:00 p.m.
	11 Friday	Palm Cross making and continental brunch 9:00 a.m.
	13 Sunday	Palm Sunday
	14 Monday	Red Cross Blood Drive 1:30-7:30 p.m.
	17 Thursday	Maundy Thursday service 6:30 p.m.
	18 Friday	Good Friday service 12:00 p.m.
	19 Saturday	Potluck (5:30) & Easter Vigil at the Cathedral Church in Detroit (6:30 p.m.)
	20 Sunday	Easter Sunday services at 9:00 & 11:00 a.m. (Baptism at 11:00!)
	27 Sunday	3rd of 4 Inquirer’s Class 10:10 a.m.
29 Tuesday	Vestry Meeting 7:00 p.m.	
MAY	4 Sunday	4th of 4 Inquirer’s Class 10:10 a.m. Priest Lisa with Youth Groups (Sunday evening)
	25 Sunday	SUMMER WORSHIP schedule begins! (7:45 & 10:00 until September 7th)
	27 Tuesday	Vestry Meeting
JUNE	1 Sunday	Family Forum & Conversation
	8 Sunday	PENTECOST—Baptisms and Annual Church Picnic
	15 Sunday	All YOUTH service
	22 Sunday	Newcomer Brunch (after 10:00 service)
	24 Tuesday	Vestry Meeting

An Easter Time Challenge for Adults OR Kids!

Can you put the following events in the correct order?

- | | |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ___ Jesus carries the cross to the place of crucifixion. ___ Jesus throws the money changers out of the Temple. ___ The next day, some women find Jesus’ tomb empty. ___ Jesus shares unleavened bread and wine with the disciples. ___ The Temple police arrest Jesus and the disciples run away. ___ Jesus is nailed to the cross and dies after a few hours. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ___ Jesus arrives in Jerusalem. ___ Jesus and his disciples meet to celebrate the Passover meal. ___ Jesus’ body is taken down and laid in a tomb. ___ Jesus remains on Earth for 40 days after resurrection. ___ Jesus is tried three times and is sentenced to death. ___ Jesus curses the fig tree. ___ Mary meets Jesus outside the tomb. ___ Jesus and the disciples enter the Garden of Gethsemane. |
|--|--|



CONNECT, GROW, SERVE

Lisa Tucker-Gray

Priest-In-Charge

734-834-0132

priestlisa@stjohnsplymouth.org

Julie Ford

Director of Music

734-453-0190 x16

jford@stjohnsplymouth.org

Sue Booth

Director of Operations

734-453-0190 x10

sbooth@stjohnsplymouth.org

Office Hours

Monday-Friday 8:30 a.m.-4:30 p.m.

SUNDAYS

7:45 a.m. Holy Eucharist
(spoken, no music)

9:00 a.m. Holy Eucharist
(contemporary music)

10:10-10:50 a.m. Children's Sunday School

11:00 a.m. Holy Eucharist
(traditional music)

Nursery Care 8:45 a.m. -12:15 p.m.

St. Johns Episcopal Church

575 S. Sheldon Road

Plymouth, MI 48170

Phone: 734-453-0190

Fax: 734-453-1504

Email: info@stjohnsplymouth.org

www.stjohnsplymouth.org