

**CHRISTIAN FORMATION**  
**Director of Christian Formation**  
**Tommie Moore**

2016 brought a welcomed addition to the Christian Formation family with the addition of Michelle Hester to the volunteer base, as she assumed the position of Coordinator of Children's Ministries. 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 (through 6<sup>th</sup> 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. Michelle's addition to the staff was another piece of the restructuring of the parish staff which was approved by the Vestry in late 2014. At that time, they recognized the need to grow our lay church staff to meet needs and to examine the possibility of shifting certain duties and responsibilities among its members. Michelle has embraced her new role here and brings a wealth of experience and passion to all that she does for our youngest members. I am grateful for her willingness to serve in this role and for the opportunity to get to know her on a more personal level. If you haven't met Michelle yet, introduce yourself, and consider saying "yes!" if called upon to volunteer your time and talent.

**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.

In 2016, our youngest children (ages 3 years – Kindergarten) explored the meaning of the parables. They also explored the city of Jerusalem to understand that Jesus was a real person who was born, lived, died, and rose again in the land of Israel and that the resurrection was the fulfillment of God's plan. They learned gestures used in the celebration of the Eucharist and explored the relationship between Jesus, the Good Shepherd and humankind. They also learned the sign of the cross and how to exchange the Peace.

Children in 1<sup>st</sup> – 3<sup>rd</sup> grades continued the exploration of selected parables. They explored the empty tomb and the resurrection as the historical "evidence" that forms the bedrock of our faith. They also explored the gift of light and life of the Risen Christ in the sacrament of baptism. They studied The Lord's Prayer phrase by phrase, lifting up Jesus' model for prayer and explored what Jesus' is trying to tell us about prayer.

Children in 4<sup>th</sup> – 6<sup>th</sup> grades explored The Plan of God as worked out in the Bible and human history. They explored the growth of the Kingdom of God and the paradigm of Creation-Redemption-Parousia served as a guide for a more thorough exploration of scripture. They studied the maxims focusing on the order and rules of creation, and the rules of humankind, God's order and our place in it.

This is just a small sampling of the work that goes on during our time in the atria on Sunday mornings. 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. Simply observing the children at work or enjoying the peaceful environment can be meaningful to adults of all ages.

We are fortunate to have as our certified catechists: Natalie Sparks Bullock, Tricia Edmonson, Mary Howard King, Joellen Murphree, Kamme Riddle, Stacy Carroll White, and Marrion Winders. Assisting in the atria each Sunday are Ashley Arthur and Robin Bryan. 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.

While the training to become a certified catechist involves 90+ hours of instruction, 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 Catechists and children during their time in the atria. The assistant training only takes about an hour and we'd love to have you!

**For our youth in 7<sup>th</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup> grades...**

Participants in this class explored topical, Bible-based lessons based on current events and other trending subjects that have an immediate relevancy to youth. With the wise guidance of Josh Westmoreland, our youth delved in to such topics as: When a string of natural disasters had us wondering again where God is when bad things happen, they talked about ways we can find God's presence and care in the midst of difficult situations. On the anniversary of the terrorists' attacks on September 11, they explored ways to use our time well, recognizing it for the gift that it is. In addition, when the Powerball lottery rose to more than one billion dollars, our youth class took that opportunity to talk about how all of our resources, even for the non-wealthy, represent an opportunity to give. On Valentine's Day they explored the topic of love. Not love of one another this time, but God's love, taking a look at what it truly means when we say, "God is love."

Vacation Bible School, 2016 took a unique turn in the summer, as we welcomed Christ the King Lutheran Church, ELCA to All Saints'. It was a festive day that began with a worship service, continued with lunch and "Our Hands, God's Work" VBS. Members of both congregations came together to plan an afternoon of fun activities in music, art, crafts, Bible lessons and water play for children 3 years old through 6<sup>th</sup> grade, that mirrored the theme of working together.

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:**

**Weekly...**

"The Sunday Lectionary" class, led by the very capable Les Alvis continued in 2016 with a strong following. This class studies 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. This class meets year-round in the south breakout room of the Parish Hall on Sundays at 9:30 a.m. and all are invited to join in for the weekly, lively discussions.

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, liturgics, and ascetical theology. 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.

Through discussion and guided reflection, the seminars furnish an opportunity to deepen understanding of the reading materials. More important is the development of skills in theological reflection, with the goal being to learn to think theologically. By examining their own beliefs and their relationship to our culture and the tradition of our Christian faith, participants can learn what it means to be effective ministers in the world. In coming to terms with the notion that everything we do has potential for manifesting the love of Christ, we discover that our ministry is at hand wherever we turn. Year 1: The Old Testament; Year 2: The New Testament; Year 3: Church History; Year 4: Theological Choices. We are fortunate to have Pam Carman and Ken Murphree, both EfM graduates, serving as co-EfM mentors. Their role is not that of a teacher but as a guide for the group as they navigate the study material. I am grateful for the leadership, experience, knowledge and discernment Pam and Ken bring to their role as mentors.

EfM meets on Tuesday evenings during the traditional school year and registration is required for this course. We will open registration for the 2017/2018 session of EfM in June and welcome your participation. For more information, I invite you to contact me at [tommie@allsaintstupelo.org](mailto:tommie@allsaintstupelo.org) or Pam Carman or Ken Murphree.

### **During Lent...**

Fr. Paul led "*Current Episcopal Events: Marriage Equality*", which began with an introduction and related scripture. The Rev. Canon David Johnson, Canon to the Ordinary, joined the series to discuss *General Convention Actions*, related to this subject. Joy Johnson, M.Ed., LPC led a discussion on this topic from "*A Therapist's Perspective*"; Lisa Shaw Roy, joined in the discussion delving into *Marriage Equality and the Supreme Court*. Jessica Nelson, member of the Standing Commission on Liturgy and Music of the Episcopal Church brought the series to a close with "*Marriage and Blessing Liturgies*". After the Lenten Wednesday night series concluded, Fr. Paul offered additional classes during the Easter season to further explore this topic.

### **During the summer...**

We offered a multi-week study exploring the book, "*Searching for Sunday - Loving, Leaving and Finding the Church*" written by Rachel Held Evans. Discussions were led by Mary Howard King and Fredda Robinson.

### **During the fall...**

Fr. Paul led the confirmation classes for adults and along with Stacy Carroll White, for our youth. These classes explored the Episcopal Church, our Anglican history, traditions and our rich liturgy and music. When Bishop Seage was with us on All Saints' Sunday, 20 youth and adults, who completed the confirmation classes (required by the Episcopal Church) were confirmed during the service.

With Christ the King Lutheran Church's arrival at All Saints', we offered a multi-week class titled "*Episcopal-Lutheran 101*". This inquirer's class provided basic information about The Episcopal Church and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, their respective liturgies, histories, politics and theology.

Attendees learned about the similarities and differences of the two denominations and our common work of ministry. Most importantly, this class was a place where stories were shared and friendships were launched.

Ken Murphree organized a money management workshop, *Pathway to Financial Peace*, presented by Bill Hardin, First Vice-President of the Mortgage Loan Department, BancorpSouth (retired) and Financial Counselor with Faith Ministries. We had lots of good feedback from the course, and hope to offer a follow-up in the future.

### **Other formation opportunities offered...**

The Rev. Dr. Sarah Moses, Assistant Professor of Religion at The University of Mississippi and Curate at Christ Episcopal Church, Holly Springs, joined us and led a session about Islam and shared her thoughts on various current religious, ecumenical and cultural topics.

The Rev. Carol Mead, the author of two books, *Holy Ordinary and Practically Holy* and *Disciples on the Way* used rich metaphors to highlight the presence of God in everyday things, events and people. She shared news stories, cultural icons, movies, and other secular tools to tell the story of God in our lives, reminding us that, placed in the hands of God, the most mundane moments become consecrated; the most ordinary things become holy.

Parishioner Tom Kimmel took us on a pictorial tour of the beautiful west coast of Ireland. All Saints' is planning a trip with Tom as our guide in the summer of 2017, so be sure to watch for details about this exciting opportunity.

Judge Sharion Aycock, Chief United States Federal Judge on the United States District Court for the Northern District of Mississippi, shared information about Reentry Court, a cooperative effort of the District Court of the Northern District of Mississippi, and several federal agencies and offices. Reentry Court aims to reduce recidivism following incarceration in federal prison so that individuals will become successful and productive citizens in our community.

Daughters of the King hosted a *Quiet Day Retreat*, led by Rufus Van Horn, at the home of Jimmy and Margaret Anne Robbins. This was the second year for this retreat and we hope to make it an annual event.

Christ the King Lutheran Church hosted Oktoberfest, which was loads of fun, but also informative! We learned about the Reformation, what happened and why it is still relevant.

As you can see, many Christian Formation opportunities were offered during 2016. We try to offer opportunities that will appeal to a wide audience on Sundays, as well as other times during the week.

The total Christian Formation budget for 2016 was \$3,545. Catechesis of the Good Shepherd was allocated \$1,100 for materials, supplies and resources for all 3 atria. We spent \$626.44. The balance of the Christian Formation budget in the amount of \$2,445 was allocated for materials for youth and adult Sunday School classes, materials for confirmation classes, Vacation Bible School and supplemental materials. The funds allocated for this area of the Christian Formation budget were spent by September. Christian Formation programming for the remainder of the year was subsidized from our money market account.

My deepest thanks to all of the volunteers for sharing their gifts through teaching during 2016. 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 in 2017. And if you have ideas about topics for Christian Formation, I welcome your input!