

St. John's Parent Handbook

2008-2009

St. John's Episcopal Church

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The Reverend Dorian McGlannan, Rector
The Reverend Peter Swarr, Assistant Rector

Our Mission Statement:

We are a community of pilgrims seeking to understand the heart of Christ and to make His presence felt through our actions. Come walk with us.

A Note About This Handbook

This handbook is designed for all parents of children and youth at St. John's. Within the following pages you will find information on St. John's Church School, St. John's Music Ministries, SYG (Youth Group), and many other programs and activities that welcome you and your children. As Christians one of our primary callings is to pass on our faith to our children. The primary location of this formation occurs in the home. That said, the Church Community also plays a key role in faith development. The Christian Formation Ministry Team offers you this book in the hope that it will aid you, your children and your youth in the development and deepening of their faith in Christ.

This book is divided into two major parts: The first section contains information about the Sunday Church School program at St. John's. The second section contains information about various activities and groups.

The Christian Formation Ministry Team

Mission Statement: We seek to equip God's children for their ministries by helping each develop a firm foundation in the stories of our faith and to achieve an experienced, personal faith

Christian Formation is a process of life-long development of our individual growth of faith. St. John's programs continue to expand and mold to the diverse needs of our parishioners - both youth and adult. The Christian Ministry Formation Team is one of many Ministry Teams at St. John's. The Team consists of six congregation members who have an interest in leading and/or helping the education and development of St. John's youth from a Christian standpoint. Our team meets monthly to plan, organize, and implement all activities (except choir) that involve our parish children. We are blessed to have over 50 dedicated volunteers who work hard to keep all these activities running smoothly. We could not have all the activities we do if we did not have the help and support of these wonderful people. Any member of St. John's is welcome to be a part of this Ministry Team, we are always looking for new volunteers.

Ministry Team Members

Ministry Team Chairperson

Sue Dowswell

Members

Amy Hepp
Mary Alice Brunner
Gwen Downs Paradowski
Kelly Evanoff
Paul Buckley

Curricula at St. John's Church School

The young people of St. John's are starting a brand new year of Church School with a wonderful mix of Church School Curricula. **Godly Play** continues to be offered not only at Worship Center (during the 11 AM service) but also during Church School. Godly Play is the curriculum for Pre-School Students and Kindergarteners. Godly Play is a program based in part on Montessori teaching methods that invites all children, literate and preliterate, to interact with and work with different Biblical stories through guided discussion, art, music, and roll play. For more information on Godly Play check out www.godlyplay.org.

The Christian Ministry Formation Team will continue using the **Episcopal Children's Curriculum** for Grades 1-5. Church School teachers found this curriculum to be a great tool for Church School and we are excited to continue utilizing it. ECC is intentionally designed to be developmentally appropriate for each grade level of the Church School. This curriculum is a specifically Episcopal program which functions in a three year cycle, the Shell Year (Baptism), the Chalice Year (Eucharist), and the Cross Year (the story of Christ). This year we will be using the Cross Year cycle. Through this program the children of St. John's will learn about Christianity, about the sacraments, about the Bible, and about the Episcopal form of Christian faith. For more information on the ECC check out www.livingthegoodnews.com/ecc

Celebration Sundays- Periodically throughout the Church School year, the Christian Formation Ministry Team will bring all of our students, preschool-5th grade together for a seasonal lesson and fellowship. This will be held during the regular Church School hour and the children will be with their fellow classmates and teachers. We will gather as a group in the Parish Hall and sing some songs, celebrate recent birthdays, introduce the library cart, and have a short seasonal lesson. We might listen to a story, play a game, or do a simple craft. Watch the announcements for upcoming Celebration Sundays!

The **Middle School Church School** will continue using a video curriculum. The curriculum is based on numerous books such as the *Videos that Teach* series. In addition to watching different movies, Bible passages and stories will be discussed while engaging Middle Schoolers in conversations concerning their lives, concerns, and experiences. All videos will be announced ahead of time by the Church School teachers. Only videos that are rated G, PG, or PG-13 (and only a select few from this category) will be shown in class.

The **High School Church School** will function as a discussion and activity group. In the past years we have looked at different videos such as *The Lord of the Ring* trilogy in conjunction with a discussion of evil. In addition to set topics and discussions this class will also discuss major life issues and world events in a safe, Christian setting where these young adults are encouraged

Church School 2008 - 2009

Church School classes are each Sunday from September 14, 2008 until May 31, 2009, from 10:10 am - 10:50 am. The Church School Calendar is on the following page. Please note special events and days without classes. Registration will be held on Homecoming Sunday, September 7 at 10:00 am in the Gathering. At that time, you will have the opportunity to meet your child's teacher and tour the classroom. Free will offerings will be accepted to help cover classroom expenses.

Teachers for the school year 2008 - 2009 are as follows:

Nursery

Janet Sigmon (Part-time staff)
Debbie Chinitz (Part-time staff)

Tots (2-3 year olds)—ROOM 3

Krista Miller
Georgiana Rushing
Ann Quay Rushing
Judithanne Smith

Pre-School/Kindergarten—ROOM 5

Stephanie Doroba
Sue Dowswell
Angela Swarr
Jan MacLeod

First Grade—ROOM 4

Helen Goderis
Sherry Bass
Karen Gonda

Worship Center (11am Svc.)—ROOM 5

April Dobbs
Beth Wideman

Second/Third Grade—PAR. HALL ROOM

Amy Hepp
Cathy Kemp
Tracy Grabowski
Marnie Mertz

Fourth/Fifth Grade—ROOM 1

Steve Hibbard
Ann Willis
James Boileau
Cathy Couture

Middle School (6,7,8)—YOUTH HOUSE UP

Joseph Cospito
Gwen Downs Paradowski

Sr. High (9-12)—YOUTH HOUSE DOWN

Bill Brave
Father Peter Swarr
Beth Hilton

Church School Administrative Staff

Eric Towell
Nancy Levy
Dan Hepp

Church School Calendar

Date:	Church Activities:	Church School Activity
9-07-08	Homecoming Brunch and Ministry Fair	Registration in Gathering
9-15-08		First Day of Class!
9-21-08		Families at the Rail
9-28-08		Families at the Rail
10-05-08	Pet Blessing at 1:00 p.m.	Celebration Sunday (St. Francis)
10-12-08	Crop Walk	
10-19-08		
10-26-08	Pipes Spooktacular	
11-2-08	All Saint's Sunday / Newcomer Brunch / Daylight Savings Time Ends!	
11-9-08	Veterans Day	
11-16-08		
11-23-08		Celebration Sunday (Advent)
11-30-08	Thanksgiving Day Weekend / Advent 1	NO CLASS
12-7-08	Advent 2 / Lessons and Carols	Pageant Practice at 12:30
12-14-08	Advent 3	Pageant Practice at 12:30
12-21-08	Advent 4	Pageant Practice in place of Church School
12-24-08	Christmas Eve	Christmas Pageant @ 4:00 p.m.
12-28-08		NO CLASS-Christmas break
1-4-09	Epiphany	Classes Resume
1-11-09		
1-18-09		NO CLASS-Martin Luther King Day Weekend
1-25-09	Annual Meeting	
2-1-09		
2-8-09		
2-15-09		
2-22-09		NO CLASS-Feb. break
3-1-09	First Sunday of Lent	Introduction to Lent
3-8-09	Second Sunday of Lent	Daylight Savings Time Begins
3-15-09	Third Sunday of Lent	
3-22-09	Fourth Sunday of Lent	
3-29-09	Fifth Sunday of Lent	
4-5-09	Palm Sunday	Hands on Holy Week
4-11-09	Easter Vigil	Multi-age service
4-12-09	Easter Sunday	NO CLASS-Easter Break
4-19-09		NO CLASS-Easter Break
4-26-09		
5-3-09		
5-10-09	Mothers Day	
5-17-09		
5-24-09	Memorial Day Weekend	NO CLASS
5-31-09	Pentecost	Last Day of Class, Teacher Recognition Sunday
6-7-09	Church Picnic	

Stewardship of our Children and by our Children

What is Stewardship? Stewardship is the art of caring for all you own. This takes planning and it takes time. We are all aware that time is life, so when we spend time caring for something or someone, we really give them part of our life. Giving to the church is giving it life. The truth is that we only give freely to what we love.

As you may already know, St. John's does not receive any special or outside funding. All programs at St. John's exist because of the support provided by each parishioner. Support through their time, talent and treasure. Many parishioners have asked "How can I best contribute to St. John's education programs with my time, talent and treasure?" To help with this question, we have taken the liberty of providing the answers below:

Support your child's Christian education development by:

- Staying in touch with his/her teacher.
- Reviewing the week's lesson routinely. Reinforcement of material enhances learning.
- Incorporate Bible stories as a part of everyday reading.
- Incorporate daily prayer as a way of life in your family.
- Nourish your own hunger for education by attending the Adult Formation Education Hour which is held simultaneously
- Utilize the parental resources available through the St. John's Library

Information will be provided to you via the parish newsletter, website, announcement pages, Church School email, and through interaction with ministry team members and teachers. Please feel free to contact, Father Peter, your child's the teacher or a member of the ministry team with any comments or concerns you may have.

Learning Stewardship

This year the Church School will continue to focus on teaching our children about stewardship. As Christians all that we have is a gift from God and we are called to use all of our gifts, abilities, time and treasure for the building up of God's Kingdom. One important way we do that is through financial stewardship. As such, the Church School is continuing to use an offering program for our students. We have ordered offering envelopes for all the children in Church School. The envelopes will be handed out in class. On each Sunday children are encouraged to bring in an envelope with their gift, be it a penny, nickel, or ten dollars. They can then put their offering in the offering plate, or if they attend the 9:00 am service they are invited to bring their offering with them to the Altar during the celebration of the Holy Eucharist.

Safeguarding God's Children

To insure a safe environment for our children, the St. John's Vestry has voted to fully implement the Diocese of Michigan's *Safeguarding God's Children* policy in all Church School activities. As such, all classes will have multiple adults in each room. Similarly, all teachers are required to attend a four hour Diocesan presentation on creating a healthy and safe environment for children. Classes are offered on **September 20, 2008** from 8:45-12:45 at St. James, Dexter and **October 18, 2008** from 8:45 am – 12:45 pm at St. Mary's In the Hills, Orion. In addition to this mandated training, background checks will be run on all teachers. If you have further questions about the *Safeguarding God's Children* policy, please contact Father Peter Swarr.

St. John's Church School Policy

Attendance/Safety in Church School Classes

- All children (including visitors) will be welcomed, accepted and nurtured to the best of the staff's ability.
- No children will be released to another child or to an unknown person.
- Teachers will take attendance every Sunday and file these records with Father Peter.
- Teachers will not release individual children during class time unless they are accompanied by a responsible adult.

Please note that if your child is under the age of 16, you **MUST NOT** leave the St. John's premises while the child is in Church School or Worship Center.

Discipline in Church School Classes

- When, in the judgment of the adult leader in charge of an activity, a child's behavior is inappropriate and persists, the child is to be removed from the community for a "time out."
- During events held on the St. John's campus, the child is to be removed from the classroom. A staff member will talk with the child about the behavior, how it affects others, and why it is inappropriate. When the child is ready to conform to expected and acceptable behavior, s/he is invited to return.
- During events held outside St. John's, two adult church leaders will take the child outside the community situation. They will talk with the child about the behavior, how it affects others, and why it is inappropriate. When the child is ready to conform to expected and acceptable behavior, s/he is invited to return.

Activities

St. John's offers a wealth of children and youth activities which support Christian development. Your child is invited to participate in any and all age appropriate activities.

Mission Outreach – Older children are invited to participate in these activities with an adult. Example of outreach events are: Crossroads Soup Kitchen, Salvation Army Bell Ringing, Gleaners Food Bank, and mission trips both overseas and domestic. Contact the Mission and Outreach Ministry Team or watch the Newsletter and Announcement Pages for dates and times.

Animal Blessing – On Sunday, October 5 at 1:00 pm plan on coming to St. John's for our St. Francis Day Animal Blessing. This is a wonderful service where we give thanks to God for pets and animals while praying for God's blessing to be upon them. Certificates will be given to all children who attend. This service is a wonderful one for children and adults of all ages. If you do not feel that your pet(s) can handle a crowd, please feel free to bring a picture of your pet to the service.

Families at the Rail – In the Episcopal Church every baptized person is welcome to receive the Eucharist no matter their age. That said, as children grow and as faith develops ever person has questions about Communion. Families at the Rail provides an opportunity for children and adults to explore the Eucharist. This course is offered at the request of many different parents who have asked for help in talking to their children about Communion. This class is offered to First Grade and older students. **The Next Families at the Rail class will be September 21 and September 28 during the Church School Hour.**

Corn Maze – At 4 p.m. on Sunday, October 19 **St. John's Children (Kindergarten-5th Grade)** and their parents will meet at Mayberry Farm in Northville for a corn maze walk. At 6:45 p.m. **SYG (St. John's Youth Group)** will meet for a night-time excursion into the corn maze (be sure to bring flashlights!). This event will be canceled in case of inclement weather.

Retreats – The Diocese of Michigan, in conjunction with the Diocese of Eastern Michigan, continues to offer Happening Retreat Weekends to High Schoolers. The next Happening will take place on Friday, November 21- Sunday, November 23. The Diocese also offers other High School and Middle School retreat weekends which will be announced via email and the Newsletter.

Christmas Caroling and Parish Greening – Date to be announced. Gather at the Church to travel throughout the St. John's neighborhood singing Christmas Carols. After singing we will return to the church for cookies, hot chocolate and the greening of the church.

Christmas Pageant – Open to all children tots-12th grade.

Confirmation Class – Young people who will be 16 years old by January 1, 2009 may consider taking their Baptismal vows for themselves in the rite of Confirmation. This class will begin Thursday, January 15th under the direction of Father Peter. We will meet after school is out from roughly 3:45-5:30. If you are interested in finding out more about this opportunity contact Father Peter.

Shrove Tuesday Pancake Supper – Come and enjoy this intergenerational traditional pancake dinner at St. John’s on Tuesday, February 24th.

Multi-Age Lenten Dinners and Education Program - Wednesday nights during Lent the Christian Formation Ministry team offers the ever popular Lenten nights. This program, held in conjunction with an adult education program, invites children and adults to explore the many and deep themes of the Lenten season.

Easter Egg Hunt – Children and families will gather at St. John’s at 1:00 pm on Saturday, April 11 (the Saturday before Easter) for a fun family Easter egg hunt. The Easter Bunny will be making a return visit!

Graduate Recognition – St. John’s will choose a Sunday in May to recognize all High School and College Graduates as part of our Sunday services. The date will be announced in the spring.

Vacation Bible School – A week of fun, faith-building activities, including storytelling, crafts, snacks, skits, and music. VBS is open to potty-trained children 3 years old-5th Grade. Older youth are invited to participate as youth leaders. Our preliminary dates for VBS are Monday- Thursday, July 27-30.

Ongoing Groups and Classes for Children and Families at St. John’s

Church School – Sunday from 10:10-10:50 a.m. during the school year.

Worship Center – Is held from 11:00-11:35. The goal of Worship Center is to help children encounter the Creator and to experience religious language, rather than merely repeat it. Worship Center uses Godly Play curriculum. Using storytelling, music, art, response time, the curriculum helps children experience the quiet of worship and the freedom to “wonder” about God. At 11:35 children rejoin their parents in the Sanctuary following the Offertory.

Celebration Sundays - Periodically throughout the Church School year, the Christian Formation Ministry Team will bring all of our students, preschool-5th grade together for a seasonal lesson and fellowship. This will be held during the regular Church School hour and the children will be with their fellow classmates and teachers. We will gather as a group in the Parish Hall and sing some songs, celebrate recent birthdays, introduce the library cart, and have a short seasonal lesson. We might listen to a story, play a game, or do a simple craft. Watch the announcements for upcoming Celebration Sundays!

SYG (St. John’s Youth Group) – A place to grow in God, have fun, share, laugh, make friends, play and learn about faith. SYG is offered for both Middle Schoolers and High Schoolers. Friends and newcomers are ALWAYS welcomed at SYG. The SYG groups have weekly meetings on Sunday (Middle School 6:00-7:15, dinner 7:15-7:45, High School 7:45-9:00). In addition the two groups travel to retreats, ski trips, baseball games, concerts, and other fun off-site events. Adult Leaders: Paul Buckley, Beth Hubbard, Joyce Anspach, Merilee Zawadzki, and Father Peter.

Acolytes – Young people in grades 4-12 are invited to serve God as assistants in worship. Acolytes serve in various capacities in the liturgy and assist the clergy at the Altar. If you are interested in joining this important group or finding out more contact Lana Klosterman.

Lay Reader – Read Scripture for Sunday worship at St. John’s. Contact Ken Sanders for more information.

Chalice Minister – Confirmed youth are welcome to take part in the ministry of being a Chalice minister at St. John’s during the Sunday services. For more information contact Ken Sanders.

Children’s Choir – The St. John’s Children’s Choir is a group for children in grades Kindergarten through 2nd Grade. This group sings a mix of traditional and contemporary music. We meet Sunday mornings in the Choir Room from approximately 9:50-10:10 am. The Children’s Choir sings in the Church about once a month. The Choir is directed by April Dobbs with Jennifer Hepp as the accompanist.

Youth Choir – St. John’s Youth Choir is open to all children Grades 3-6 and meets on Wednesdays from 5:00-6:00 p.m. Come join Mr. Scott as he leads the choir in highly interactive music making! Contact Minister of Music Scott Elsholz.

SonShine – SonShine meets on Wednesday evenings at 7:30 pm to rehearse for the 9:00 a.m. Sunday service. Open to anybody of high school age and up, SonShine is an eclectic worship ensemble that leads the congregation in contemporary praise songs, old time Gospel favorites, and even traditional hymns with a kick! No audition is necessary to join SonShine, and singers and instrumentalists alike are encouraged to join. Contact Minister of Music Scott Elsholz.

Adult Forum – Every Sunday from 10:15-10:50 a.m. (the same time as Children’s Church School). An opportunity for adults to further their faith journey. Topics range from current events to Bible Study, to updates from the Vestry.

Any Questions? Interested in Helping?

Please contact Father Peter Swarr (734) 453-0190 X14 or

pswarr@stjohnsplymouth.org or

AIM:stjohnsecyouth