

St. Mark's Episcopal Church

The Reverend Elizabeth Zarelli Turner, Rector

The Reverend Bert Baetz, Assistant Rector

August 18, 2009

Dear St. Mark's Parents,

The 2009-2010 Christian Formation programs for our children will begin on **Sunday, September 6**. Please take a moment to fill in the Church School Registration form included with this letter and return it by **Rally Day, Sunday, August 30** so we can make sure that your child is placed in the correct classroom and that our information is current.

Following are descriptions of the Nursery and Church School classes provided for St. Mark's children. Classes are held from 10:00 to 10:50 a.m. on Sunday mornings.



St. Mark's **Nursery** for crawling babies and children up to three years of age is located in Classroom C in the main building. Nursery staff works hard to provide a safe, comfortable place for our younger children to play during services and the education hour.



The **Godly Play** class is offered to Pre-Kindergartners and Kindergartners. In the carefully structured Godly Play classroom, children have freedom to explore their own faith. Using simple figures to tell the stories of God in a worshipful setting, children are able to experience and learn more about God. After hearing the stories in the Godly Play circle, children participate in the stories, bringing their experiences into their play and art work. By transforming the class into a sacred time and space with rituals of worship, their experience is "one of mystery, awe, and wonder," instead of one in which God is explained and interpreted for them.



The **Godly Play Two** class is an older version of the class for 1st and 2nd graders. The class will offer the same sense of sacred time and space, but with a more sophisticated program. Children will hear the core stories and other more challenging stories meant for older learners. After hearing the stories in the Godly Play circle, children will be able to choose from a greater number of response materials and activities that better suit their age group.



3rd, 4th and 5th Graders will begin a new program this year. The structure of the class will be similar to what we have experienced in Workshop Rotation, with the same variety of response opportunities as they explore the stories through artwork, drama, cooking, science, games, computer, music and outreach projects. However in this program, the children will remain together in the same classroom each Sunday and they will hear more Bible stories through the year. One of the greatest benefits is that the children will develop deeper relationships with each other as they dig deeper into the stories and work on on-going projects together in a familiar setting.



A **6th grade class** will meet in the school building during the fall while Confirmation Class for 7th graders is held. After the bishop's visit on October 25, the class will join the Youth Class.



The **Confirmation Class** for 7th graders and older teens interested in being confirmed will meet with our seminarians, Mary Ann Huston and Diane Pike. Confirmation is scheduled for Sunday, October 25. Students are asked to attend faithfully all of the classes to prepare for this important public statement of commitment to the promises made at their baptisms. More detailed information has been mailed out to families.



The **High School Youth Class** for 8th through 12th graders will meet with our Youth Director. After Confirmation on October 25, the youth will separate into two classes, the **Middle School Youth Class** for 6th through 8th graders and the **High School Youth Class** for 9th through 12th graders. Both groups will continue to explore different facets of their Christian lives through discussion, Bible study and activities. They will also meet for **Youth Group** two Sundays each month.

Children aged four through six years are invited to the Common Room for **Children's Chapel** at both the 9:00 and the 11:00 a.m. services. The children join their parents in the sanctuary at the peace. One parent is required to attend Chapel as an assistant to the leader each Sunday and to fulfill our Safe Church policies.

St. Mark's also offers many other ways for children to participate in the life of the community, such as serving as an acolyte, usher, youth lector or chorister, so plan to join us for Rally Day to learn more about these opportunities!

I am looking forward to another wonderful year - thanks to your commitment to and support of this thriving ministry. I look forward to seeing you on **Rally Day, August 30**.

Sincerely,

Cathy Nelson
Director of Christian Formation