



## SUNDAY SCHOOL 2015-2016



## CATECHESIS OF THE GOOD SHEPHERD

“HELP ME COME CLOSER TO GOD BY MYSELF.”

SOFIA CAVALLETTI

St. Margaret's Episcopal Church provides a wonderful program of religious education for preschool through fifth grade children.

The Catechesis of the Good Shepherd is a curriculum for Christian education that has been in use for over forty years in churches throughout the world. It was developed by Sofia Cavalletti, an internationally known Biblical scholar, and is based on the principals of child development and the appreciation of religious potential in children.

The basic premise of the Good Shepherd program is that God has established a relationship with the child. Therefore, instead of the teacher pouring religious information into the child, we explore with the child the intimate relationship with God that is already there. We guide them with presentations from scripture and liturgy in a prepared environment where they can discover and deepen this relationship. We give them materials that they can manipulate and work with to reinforce their learning. The program also provides many opportunities for personal meditation and reflection.

At St. Margaret's we have leaders who have undergone extensive training in this program. The goal of the catechists (teachers) is to be the unassuming servant by guiding the children as they explore their relationship with God.

Every fall we ask you to fill out a registration form for the children who will be attending classes. If you have a child who is 3 years old by September, is potty-trained and ready for preschool, they may start the program in level 1 (room 1 in the church office).

Because the curriculum builds sequentially over the year, if your child turns three after September we ask that you have the child continue to benefit from the church's nursery care program until the following fall. This provides the best possible experience for each child.

If your family is joining us mid-year we would love to talk to you about what would work best for your family.



### **Level 1 – The Good Shepherd For young children ages 3 to 6**

The 3-6-year-old child is particularly capable of receiving and enjoying the most essential elements of our faith—the announcement of God’s love in the person of Jesus Christ, the Good Shepherd, who died and is risen.

Materials on the life of Christ and his teachings help make the mystery of God concrete for the child. The geography materials establish Jesus as a real person in time and space and Israel as the land through which God realized salvation for all. The Infancy narratives announce the Incarnation with the words of Scripture, moving from the Annunciation to the Birth of Christ, while the parables allow opportunities for wonder and personal exploration.

### **Level 2 – The True Vine For children ages 6 to 9**

While the heart of the catechesis for the child under six revolves around the parable of the Good Shepherd, the elementary-age child is captured by the image of the True Vine: “I am the vine, you are the branches. Whoever remains in me, bears fruit in plenty.” The proclamation responds to the deep need of the older child to more fully explore their relationships with God, family, friends, and the larger community.

The child at this age seeks guidelines. The moral parables offer a model for exploring behavior with the Pharisee, the Tax Collector, the Good Samaritan, the Found Sheep, the Found Coin, and the Prodigal Son. The proclamation and meditation stress God’s love, which is constant and always forgiving.

### **Level 3 – Living the Good News For children ages 9 to 12**

For our older children we transition into teaching a program called “Living the Good News.” This is a leading lectionary-based curriculum that helps bring the weekly Sunday readings alive for our older children while the highlights of the Catechesis lend continuity to their learning.

## **PROGRAM LEADERSHIP**

The adult leaders (catechists) function as facilitators, and after a Bible or liturgy-based presentation they lead the children in a guided discussion with questions that encourage reflection and wonder. The catechist does not rush to fill the silent spaces, leaving room for the Holy Spirit and the inner dialogue of the child.

The prepared environment takes place in our rooms, which are known as Atriums. They are beautiful in their simplicity and are lovely with their works of art. The rooms are special places set aside for our children. The children take ownership of, and care for, their special place. We encourage the children to move slowly and speak softly in the Atrium.

The curriculum is rich with Biblical and liturgical information that the children can internalize and work with at different levels as they mature. The children move about the Atrium making their own choices, including works related to the Bible, the worship service and meditation. They enjoy having these choices, including art materials, where they can express their learning and feelings.

Please contact Tracy Engel for more information or if you are interested in volunteering.

### **ST. MARGARET'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH—A CENTER OF GRACE**

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