

**Guide to Youth & Children's Ministries
At St. Paul's Episcopal Church
Downtown Baltimore**

**By The Rev. Mary Luck Stanley, Associate Rector
On September 16, 2016**

Since 2006, our church has been intentionally reaching out to families with children and youth, and building new programs to support them. The staff, volunteers, and parents in our church are proud of the loving Christian community we have built. Ours is not a slick professional childcare program, with lots of staff and resources. Our groups are more home grown, with lots of involvement from parents and volunteers. We are more like a co-op, and because of that we have the expectation that parents who drop off their children for our programs will also make an effort to help out in a variety of ways. We are friends, young and old, walking side by side on a spiritual path. We are an urban village raising our children together in the Christian faith. We invite you to join us for the groups and programs described in this guide.

Nursery Care Program

Sundays from 9:00 a.m. to Noon, downstairs

At Old St. Paul's we cherish children so they will come to know they are cherished by God. We want our youngest members to have warm and safe associations with being at church. Our church is growing and we have many new babies, which is really something to celebrate! Thank you for bringing your little ones into our Christian community. They bring so much joy!

In the fall of 2016, we will move into a newly renovated Nursery that will be lovely in every way. The vestry is pleased to provide quality space and furnishings for the families in our church. The Nursery is staffed by Theresa Pearson (Nursery Care Coordinator, teresa.pearson@comcast.net), Qiana Scott, and Nadine Williamson.

We want to invite your help as we create an expanding nursery care program. For the health and safety of the children in our care, I am asking for your support as we live into these guidelines for the nursery.

- 1) Nursery Care is for babies who are three months old, and up to three-plus years of age. Due to our space issues, children who are four and older are not to be in the nursery.
- 2) Nursery Care is for infants and toddlers while their parents are participating in Old St. Paul's programs and worship.
- 3) On Sundays, the Nursery is staffed from 9:00 a.m. to Noon. Parents are asked to pick up their children no later than Noon out of respect for the staff.

- 4) Safe Church Standards require us to keep a one to five ratio of adult leaders to children.
- 5) Infants and toddlers may be dropped off and picked up by parents only. If you want an adult other than a parent to drop off or pick up your child, please pre-arrange this with me (Mary Luck Stanley) at least a day in advance so that I can inform the staff.
- 6) At the drop off, parents are required to sign in and leave a current cell phone number where they can be contacted while they are at church. Please double check that you have your phone with you, and it is set to vibrate so you can respond to calls.
- 7) In order to prevent illness from spreading, children who are sick should not be left in the nursery.
- 8) Parents are asked to leave fully stocked diaper bags (marked with the child's name) so that all supplies will be available for each particular child, including diapers, snacks, and an extra set of clothing in case of emergencies.
- 9) The staff has a policy that when children are crying for an extended period of time, their parents will be called so that they can come to the nursery to comfort them. We think this is in the best interest of the child.
- 10) Parents are always welcome in the nursery as they are transitioning their children.
- 11) When you have questions, ideas, or concerns, feel free to contact Theresa Pearson, who is the Nursery Coordinator (teresa.pearson@comcast.net), or The Rev. Mary Luck Stanley, who supervises the program (mary@osp1692.org).
- 12) Young children are invited to participate in Children's Worship in the undercroft (during the first half of the 10:30 a.m. service) as long as those under the age of five are accompanied by their parent. Children's Worship is set up for young children and their parents to worship together. Children over the age of five may participate independently.
- 13) Children are invited to transition into the youngest Sunday School class when they: A) are 100% potty trained and are able to go to the bathroom and clean up independently, and B) they are able to sit quietly in a circle and participate in the program. A parent may need to attend Sunday School with their young child for a few sessions in order to transition the child into a new routine.

Thank you for reading through the norms listed above and for abiding by these guidelines.

Because of the baby boom in our church, we have installed a second diaper changing area in the handicap bathroom near the kitchen. There is also a diaper changing area on the lower level near the back elevator. We have also added two new Soft Spaces in the sanctuary for families with infants and toddlers. Let me know if you have any questions or concerns about our nursery care program. We love having children and young families in our Christian community!

Soft Spaces

In the body of the Church we have created several soft spaces for families with infants and toddlers. By removing pews and installing extra soft carpet, we hope these areas will be comfortable spaces where families can worship together while little ones play nearby.

Community Building for Families with Infants & Toddlers

With the baby boom in our church, we have hired Kate Brantley, to be our Community Builder for Families with Infants and Toddler. She has been hosting various events including "Play Group" for parents, and their infants and toddlers up to age three. During the program year, Play Groups are hosted monthly on Saturday mornings from 10:00-12:00 in the undercroft and nursery. Kate sends out email invitations regularly and Play Group dates will also be included in the weekly E-pistles, leaflets, and newsletters. Parking is available in the St. Paul Garage next door to the Embassy Suites. We know that parenting young children is easier and more enjoyable when parents have friends to turn to for support and advice. Parents who need childcare in order to attend are invited to contact The Rev. Mary Luck Stanley so that she can make arrangements. Contact Kate at kate.brantley@gmail.com.

Children's Worship

Since starting this program in 2006, we have seen Children's Worship grow to the point that we now have a full house of children and parents who are joining us on Sundays from 10:35-11:00 a.m. in the undercroft. Last Easter Children's Worship included 94 participants.

Children's Worship is intended for younger children and their parents. On Sundays during the first half of the 10:30 worship, young children and families are invited to go downstairs for songs, led by Joe Smith, and the Good News, presented by the clergy. It is a joy to get to spend this special time together.

I want to ask for your help as we try to create a positive worship experience for our families, and especially for the children.

There are some basic expectations that I want to invite you to preview and review with your children so that they are aware of what we are trying to do together as a worshipping community. Will you please share these hopes with your children and then assist during Children's Worship with some gentle guidance, as we try to teach our kids what it means to worship as a Christian community?

Here are some basic guidelines for Children's Worship:

1) Circle up: Every person in the room gathers in the circle, with everyone in the front row. Our circle reminds us that we are all connected as a community, and that we always make room in our circle for everyone. As latecomers arrive to Children's Worship, we let them know they are welcome by moving aside and inviting them to join the circle. We leave the center of our circle open to make room for God to join us. We do not sit in the center or lay down on the carpet because it creates a distraction for others during worship. We do not leave the circle to play privately on the sidelines because that is not fair to the others who are gathered.

2) Participate: Everyone in the room is invited to participate in Children's Worship and there are no onlookers watching from the sidelines. Parents, as you participate and do the hand motions, you model how we worship together. Children who do not want to participate are invited to excuse themselves and either go to the nursery, or go back upstairs to worship. We ask parents and their children to sit on the floor in the circle, unless they are unable to do so. When Children's Worship is in session, we ask that there not be any onlookers in the undercroft. When children sense that they are being watched, it can cause them to feel uncomfortable. So, unless all adults and children in the room plan to participate in the program, they are asked to go back upstairs into the church.

3) Be present to what we are doing: Children's Worship is a time for being together with our whole group, and for singing, dancing, praying, and listening to the Good News. It is not an appropriate time to eat or chat privately. There is plenty of snack time before and after Children's Worship so food should not be part of this experience.

4) Children who are five and under need a parent or other adult to support them: We find that it's important for our youngest children to have an adult present to guide them during Children's Worship.

5) Dancing: We will have "dancing songs" and "not dancing songs" at Children's Worship. And the leaders will let the children know when we are having a "dancing song." During these times, it's great to have the children dancing either in the middle of the carpet or in the circle. But during other songs, when we are not dancing, it's only fair to other children that we all do the same things together as a sign of our unity.

6) Playing instruments: Participants will be invited to get percussion instruments to play for several songs. But when the leaders announce that it's time to put the instruments away, please be considerate by gently placing them back in the baskets. At Children's Worship we enjoy singing loud songs and soft songs, so please honor putting away the instruments when it is time to sing some quiet songs.

7) Marshmallow toes: When it's time to end Children's Worship and go back upstairs to join the rest of our community, all are invited to put on their "marshmallow toes" so that they can walk softly and quietly into the church.

8) Use the stairs to the right: When we sing our dismissal song and we quietly walk back upstairs, please turn to the right and use the back stairs instead of going through the North Tower. The problem is that there are often strangers coming in and out of the North Tower entrance, so we cannot guarantee the safety of the children in that space. Please only use the stairs to the right when going back up for communion.

Thank you very much for joining us on Sundays for Children's Worship. The experience is a joy for me, and I know Joe, Chris, and Mark feel the same way. We will try to do some reinforcing of our expectations, but the children will understand a lot more if you preview and review the norms with them. Also, please feel free to step in to help with discipline if you see a situation that needs attention. I trust that all of this will lead to a better and more meaningful worship experience, full of kindness, caring, and love.

Sunday School

We are fortunate to have Rebecca Giordano Dreisbach as our part-time Sunday School Coordinator. For the past three years, she has been coordinating a dedicated team of volunteer teachers and assistants who lead our various classes. Our Sunday School is growing, with more than 70 children at the kick off last year, and an average of about ten kids in each of the three classes on Sundays. Here is a letter from Rebecca:

Dear Sunday School Parents,

Welcome to the new 2016-2017 Sunday school year! I am so excited to be working with you and your children again. Our theme this year is Weaving God's Beloved Community. We have an excellent curriculum called Weaving God's Promises. The curriculum is a three year program based on our Episcopal faith. If you have a moment check out the website <http://www.weavinggodspromises.org/>. Our children will learn about God's love for them, make new friends, and have a fun time!! Our goal is for your/our children to love to come to church, Sunday school, and most importantly to know God's love. My mission, along with your partnership - is to create a warm, loving, fun environment for OSP children. I am grateful to be able to work with so many parents who also want their children to love church, and know God's love for them. My son David loves to come to church and my goal is for your children to love church as well.

Currently I teach third grade at Boys' Latin, I have also taught pre-first and fourth grade at St. Paul's School. In the evenings I teach for Hopkins' in their Independent School graduate program. My son David loves OSP and enjoys going to youth group. My husband Chris Dreisbach is an associate priest at OSP. We all love OSP!!

On Sundays, families are invited to gather in the undercroft as early as 9:15 a.m. This is often a fun time for people to socialize before Sunday School. At 9:25 a.m. sharp, parents will be invited to depart and go over to The Forum while the children will form a circle and join in the Opening Ritual, led by the clergy.

When Sunday School ends at 10:20 a.m., you can either pick your child up from Sunday School; or they can stay downstairs for music time with Mr. Joe. Which transitions into Children's Worship. You are welcome to join your children. After Children's Worship the children will be brought upstairs to join the congregation.

Here are some important dates:

Sunday, September 18th Sunday School & Youth Group Family Breakfast in the Undercroft, 8:45-9:30. Please come to see old friends, make new friends and catch up on everyone's summer. This is a chance to come together, reconnect and celebrate our new Sunday School year. Hope everyone can make it!

Sunday, September 18th Kick off of our Education Programs for All Ages. Blessing of the Backpacks during our announcement time at the 10:30 service, all students and educators are invited to bring their book bags to be blessed.

Sunday, October 30h

After church, the Sunday School and Youth Group families are invited to a potluck picnic from 11:30-1pm, in the backyard of the Historic Rectory, when games and activities will be led by the Youth Group, and kids will decorate pumpkins. The Rectory is one block from the church. If you are interested in helping out with this event, please contact me -I would love your help!

Stay tuned for more events as the Sunday School year unfolds.
Thank you again for all your help and support!

Rebecca Giordano Dreisbach, Sunday School Coordinator

Little Lambs: Sunday School Group

This group is for older 3s out of diapers, 4s, and younger 5s. The group gathers on Sundays at 9:25 a.m. in the undercroft for the Opening Ritual. At the end of the Opening Ritual, children will be dismissed so that they may gather as a group in the Little Lambs Room, which is on the right, off of the big room.

In order to participate, children must be 100% independent in the bathroom, since I ask teachers to stand outside the bathrooms while children are inside. Children must also be willing to sit in a circle and be engaged in the program activities. Parents may be called in the case of emergencies, or in rare cases of persistent behavior problems.

This class is being taught by Eileen Donahue Brittain, who is an expert in early childhood education, and Jeanne Neifert, who has a degree in early childhood education, many years of teaching Sunday School to young children, and is currently working as a nanny for twins. Volunteers will assist Eileen and Jeanne on Sundays, but the children will always see a familiar face when they greet their teachers.

When the youngest children transition into the Little Lambs group, it may be necessary to have a parent stay with them for a period of time, just to help them get acclimated. As soon as is possible, we would like to invite parents to allow their children to stay on their own, knowing that Jeanne and Eileen will always be there to provide support.

Parents are required to fill out a registration form when they drop off their children for the first time so that the teachers have information including the parent's cell phone, etc. Parents are to pick up their children from the Little Lambs class right at 10:20 and either take them upstairs or to Children's Worship. Joe Smith leads songs between SS and Children's Worship from 10:20-10:35 while children and parents are getting ready for the program to begin.

If you have any questions about how your child is doing in this group, feel free to contact Jeanne (sn612@comcast.net) or Eileen (ebrittain@gmail.com), who will be glad to fill you in.

Rainbow Kids: Sunday School Group

The class is for older 5s, 6s, and all 1st graders. The group gathers on Sundays at 9:25 a.m. in the undercroft for the Opening Ritual and is then dismissed so that they can have their program either in the big room of the undercroft, or in their new Rainbow Room (as soon as it is ready). In order to participate, children must be 100% independent in the bathroom, since I ask teachers to stand outside the bathrooms while children are inside. Children in this group must also be willing to participate appropriately in the program. Parents will be called and asked to return in case of emergencies, or in case of persistent behavior problems. The class is

taught by parents and other adult volunteers from our congregation. If you have questions, then please contact Rebecca or any of the volunteer leaders, including: Angela Koslowski, Marijke Sutter, Carrie Smedstad, Kate Widmayer, Kate Buckley, Rebecca Leege, Colleen Shapiro, Anne Monroe, Dennis Rivera, and Suzanne Popa.

Breakfast Club: Sunday School Group

This group is for older 2nd graders, 3rd graders, 4th graders, and some 5th graders. Participants gather on Sunday mornings at 9:25 in the undercroft for the Opening Ritual and are then dismissed to the Club House in the hallway near the bathrooms. The leader of this group is Rebecca Giordano Dreisbach, who is our Sunday School Coordinator, as well as being a 3rd grade teacher at Boys Latin School, and a teacher for Johns Hopkins.

Youth Ministry

Over the years, we have been blessed to have some wonderful youth ministers. Since 2006, several generations of teenagers have passed through our programs. Now we are lucky that Georgina Anton is our Youth Minister, along with the assistance of Laura Turton, our newest Youth Minister. Both Georgina and Laura grew up in the Episcopal Church, and amazingly, they both work at Under Armor. Together they will be developing groups, special events, and meetings for both the Middle School youth and the Sr. High youth. Feel free to contact them if you have any questions. Georgina Anton (georgina.e.anton@gmail.com), Laura Turton (laura.t.turton@gmail.com).

Youth Group News

By Georgina Anton, Youth Minister, georgina.e.anton@gmail.com

Welcome back from what I hope was a restful, joyful Summer. I'm looking forward to seeing all the youth again, undoubtedly all a foot taller than when I saw them last!

We're gearing up for a wonderful Fall season of Youth Group at Old St. Paul's. We're blessed to have Laura Turton joining us on the staff, and I look forward to introducing her to all of you. We will also be enlisting some help from the Senior High Youth Group.

In addition to our regularly scheduled 9:20-10:25 a.m. Middle School Youth Group time on Sundays, here is a list of specific dates to remember for the Middle School group

- September 18: Welcome back! Meet at 9:20 a.m. in the Undercroft.
- September 25: After church, we'll head out to lunch and go bowling. More details coming soon!
- October 1, Saturday: Service Project, Civic Works, 9 a.m.-1 p.m., families welcome!

- October 30: Family pumpkin carving at the Rectory after church
- November 27: Advent wreath-making during Education Hour
- December 4 or 11: Youth Group Christmas Party (date to be finalized soon)

For the Middle School Youth Group, we're planning our discussions around favorite Bible stories, and we're also incorporating some more Outreach opportunities to remind our youth of community responsibility. As a few examples of this, we'll do an Outreach project with the full parish on Saturday, October 1 that I hope you can all attend; we'll prepare bagged lunches to donate to the homeless during October; we'll fill a "reverse Advent calendar" of supplies for needy families in November; and we'll prepare seed packages in December that we can plant in the Spring.

For the Senior High Youth Group, we respect tight schedules and so will shift our pre-church meeting time to monthly lunches on Sundays. I'm tentatively planning these lunches for September 18, October 23, and November 13. I also hope our Senior High Youth Group members will assist Laura and me a couple of Sunday mornings per month with the Middle School Youth Group, and I know our Children's Worship and Acolyte programs could also use some extra sets of hands. I'll reach out soon to the Senior High Youth Group members about these great opportunities to get involved with our other church programs. Please let me know if you have any questions or concerns. Happy Labor Day and I'll see you all soon!

Middle School Youth Group

This group is for older 5th, 6th, 7th, and 8th graders, and maybe even a few 9th graders, and is led by our Youth Minister, Georgina Anton and Laura Turton. The group meets in the Upper Room from 9:30-10:20 on Sundays. Members are invited to gather on Sundays at 9:25 to help the little children with their Opening Ritual in the undercroft. Then the older group will go upstairs.

Senior High Youth Group

This group is for 9th, 10th, 11th, and 12th graders, and is led by our Youth Ministers, Georgina Anton and Laura Turton. While this group does not have formal meetings on Sunday mornings, they will be meeting a couple of times each month for lunch, coffee, and social events. Stay tuned for more information.

The Forum: for adults

On Sunday mornings from 9:30-10:20 a.m. all are invited to what I like to call, "Sacred Conversations about Life." I invite a variety of guest speakers to stir up conversation about real life issues that are relevant to our faith. Then I publish a calendar of topics and speakers so that people can cherry pick the Forums they want to attend. Most Sundays during the program year, September-May, thirty-forty members gather for The Forum at The Grand, which is the elegant building next door to the Church. Parents are especially invited to join us for an hour of self-care when you can actually spend some uninterrupted time having adult conversations

about important issues in our lives. Just drop off your children for the Opening Ritual in the Undercroft at 9:25 a.m., and then walk next door to The Grand for fifty minutes of personal time. Contact me, The Rev. Mary Luck Stanley, for more information: mary@osp1692.org.

Acolyting

Acolytes serve on Sundays at our 10:30 worship services. They wear blue and white robes. And they carry the cross, torches, banner, spirit stick, Gospel book, and incense in the Opening Procession, the Gospel Procession, and the Closing Procession. As children get into 3rd grade or older, they are invited to join an acolyte team with their friends to serve once a month. Over the years, it has become clear to me that children enjoy going to church more when they can sit with their friends. Once it is age appropriate, serving as an acolyte can also feel like both an honor and a way to contribute to our church community. As they lead our processions, the acolytes set the tone for our worship, and their ministry elevates our experience of the sacred presence of God in our midst. Keith Murray is our Acolyte Coordinator, and he enjoys training and supporting both the adult acolytes and the young people who acolyte. If you are interested, please contact either Keith Murray or The Rev. Mary Luck Stanley.

Helping Children to Find Faith: An Essay by The Rev. Mary Luck Stanley

What are your hopes for your child's faith development? I asked parents to respond to this question, and it was moving to hear responses like, "Right now, my daughter loves coming to church and I really hope that enthusiasm continues." "I want my kids to know they are loved by others in our church, and loved by God." "I hope my children will be shaped by the Bible stories and the Christian traditions, learning how to follow in the footsteps of Jesus."

In the twenty-seven years I've been working on Youth and Children's Ministry in the Episcopal Church, I have learned that children develop a Christian identity in the midst of their relationships with other Christians. **Faith is caught and not taught.** The development of faith is a matter of the heart, as well as the head. Faith formation takes place primarily in the midst of loving relationships.

As Episcopalians, we value education, yet it is not enough to just teach content to kids. The development of a love for God, and sense of belonging, as God's beloved children, comes first and foremost as children experience other human beings loving and forgiving them in a Christian community. If faith is caught and not taught, then **children catch faith by being in relationship with other Christians** who will model for them what it means to walk the walk, and talk the talk. **At St. Paul's, Baltimore, we cherish children so they will know they are cherished by God. We do this by spending time together as a Christian community, and by modeling how to love our neighbors as ourselves.**

We are moving away from the “school model” of Christian formation where parents simply drop off their kids at their classes so that the “experts” can teach the kids content about how to be good Christians. We know this old fashioned model doesn’t always work very well. So, we are moving toward an “extended family model,” where parents join their kids in their church activities, in a variety of ways, modeling what it means to be participants in a Christ centered community. If our church is more like an extended family, and we have weekly family reunions on Sundays, then we are all involved, taking turns helping out, and seeking to include all ages.

With more than seventy participants in our youth and children’s programs this year, we have become more of a home grown, volunteer and parent led co-op, than a slick professional enrichment program for kids. Parents especially, are expected to participate in programs along with their children. Faith development, for both the children and the adults, takes place within the context of friendship and community.

When it comes to faith development, it’s all about relationships with each other and with God. Think about it. The Bible is a big book full of stories about relationships that are blessed, broken, unjust---reconciled, healed, and transformed. We are building up the bonds of love in our Christian community, trusting that as we cherish each other, we are also cherished by God.