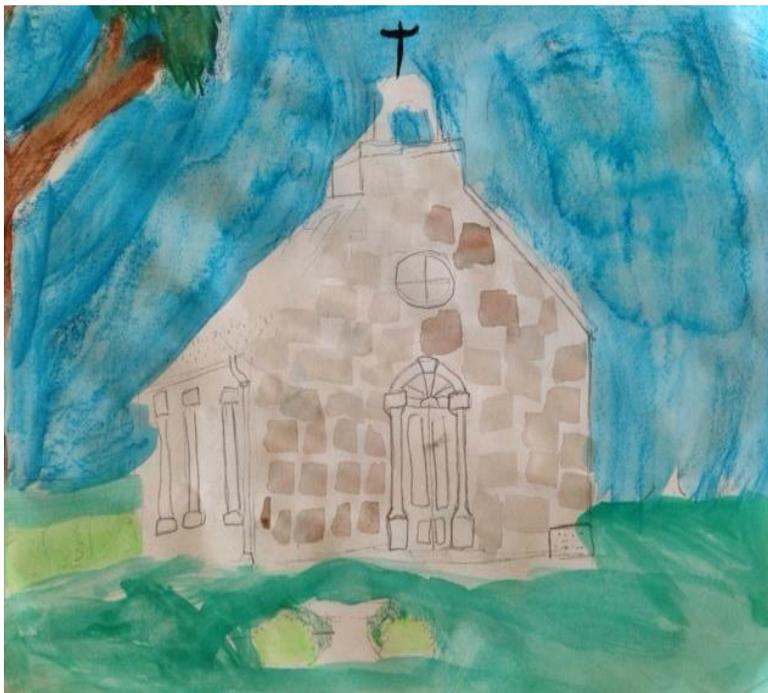


ST. MATTHEW'S CHURCH SCHOOL



Information for Parents

The Reverend John A. Zahl, Rector
The Reverend Richard S.J. Pike, Associate Rector

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We'd love for your family to be part of...

St. Matthew's Church School

The Family Service at St. Matthew's Church begins Sundays at 10:00 a.m.

Fourth Grade through Seventh Grade students attend service with their parents until the second hymn and then proceed with their teachers to their classrooms. Children are released to coffee hour at the closing of Church service. On the first Sunday of the month (November – June), they instead begin service in the Children's Chapel to celebrate an all-school communion service with the Associate Minister.

Children in Pre-K, Kindergarten, First, Second and Third Grades go to the Children's Chapel upon arrival. At least one teacher from the lower grades joins the service with the Church School Director, Musician and Lay Minister. After the service, the children will walk to their classrooms in the Parish House to participate in the day's lesson. They attend class until dismissal at the closing of the Church service, at which point parents pick up their children in the classroom.

Children's Morning Prayer Service in our Children's Chapel: One of our most lovely activities at St. Matthew's is the children's service in our Children's Chapel. Each week, a lay minister greets the children, leads them through a condensed service with prayers, a short Bible lesson or related homily, and the music leader accompanies the children in joyful songs. The children participate in the service by ringing the bell, lighting and extinguishing the altar candles, collecting and presenting the offering, and serving as crucifers.

CLASSROOM LOCATIONS

Pre-K, Kindergarten & 1st Grade: Parish House, downstairs
Grades 2, 3, 4 and 5: Parish House, upstairs
6th & 7th Grades: Parish House, library

NURSERY CARE

Nursery care is available during the 10:00 a.m. service for children under the age of three. It is usually monitored by one adult and one teen, and is located upstairs in the Parish House in the East classroom. All parents, whether members or visitors, are welcome to use the nursery. Please sign in and be sure a family contact sheet is submitted each year. On the Sundays when there is no Church School, the nursery will be open to children ages five and younger. During the summer months, the nursery may not be open, but if you plan to attend between July 4th weekend and Labor Day weekend, please contact the Church School Director beforehand and caregiving can usually be arranged. When a child turns three, he or she may join the pre-kindergarten at any time of the year.

CURRICULUM FOR 2018-2019

The Church School utilizes the curriculum *Weaving God's Promises*, a comprehensive, three-year Christian Education curriculum with two programs (children & youth) developed exclusively for the Episcopal Church. While not lectionary based, it utilizes Bible stories as the main source of teaching. Available online, it is accessible by our teachers. The mission of *Weaving God's Promises* is to teach children how God's promises of salvation are woven into our lives, and to teach them the way of Christ not only in church but in the world as Christ's ambassadors. It gives children a solid grounding and fosters the spiritual growth of our children in Christ's love and mercy, and teaches them the spirit of forgiveness and reconciliation. This year we will be studying the first year curriculum of the 3-year rotation, *Weaving Our Faith*.

Year One (our current year) of the curriculum is entitled *Weaving Our Faith*. This unit teaches the story of our salvation from the fall of humankind to our redemption by Jesus Christ. The main theme is: God loves us and stays with us – no matter what – to bring us back to God's divine love. The materials are focused on the Gospel of Matthew, emphasizing the Kingdom of God and our Anglican tradition and faith.

Year Two is entitled *Weaving Together the Family of God* and explores how we became God's people and part of the household of God, the Communion of Saints. The theme is: Through Jesus we are now we are God's people. The focus is on the Gospel of John, with stories of individual encounters with Jesus, transformation through God's love and the saints of the Church.

Year Three is entitled *Weaving God's Beloved Community*. This year tells how we are called by God to live in loving community with one another and fulfill God's promises for us in the healing of all creation. The theme is: We are called by God to live as One Body in Christ, loving our neighbors as ourselves. The focus is on the Gospel of Luke, with emphasis on our holy calling to care for others and the Gospel values of welcome, inclusion, compassion, mercy and forgiveness.

Each session in Church School is structured around the Holy Eucharist set forth in the Book of Common Prayer:

- 1) Gathering
- 2) Telling a Bible Story
- 3) Prayer
- 4) Sharing
- 5) Sending Forth

The curriculum is filled with stories and activities to engage children and guide teachers. While the subject matter will be the same at all age levels, the level of complexity, understanding, and reflection will grow as the children grow.

CONFIRMATION

8th Grade Confirmation class transitions students from Church School to full worship services. It provides a venue to discuss important life topics in a safe environment. Through study of the Bible and the Book of Common Prayer, our confirmands learn about worship and the mission of the Church. Additionally, they acolyte at the 8 o'clock and 5 o'clock services and give a sermon at year's end. They grow their faith as an aid to successfully navigate adolescence as well as a foundation for adulthood. According to our Episcopal tradition, Confirmation is the rite by which our young members take on for themselves the promises made for them at Baptism.

Confirmation class meets from November through April on select Sundays before the 5 o'clock service. For more information and a fall schedule, please contact our Associate Rector, Rik Pike, 914-234-9636 or rpike@stmatthewsbedford.org.

MUSIC IN CHURCH SCHOOL

All Church School children will learn the old standards we loved from our Sunday School days. Several times a year the entire church school will perform a song for the congregation. Vestry member, Mark Weigel, organizes and performs the children's music during service.

SPECIAL ACTIVITIES

Throughout the year, the entire Church School participates in several fun activities outside the classroom. The Spaghetti Supper-Haunted Hike is enjoyed by the entire parish at Halloween and the Christmas Pageant is a gift to the congregation. The children also participate in the Super Bowl Bake Sale, an annual Bingo afternoon, the Combes family-sponsored Easter Egg Hunt, and the Flowering of the Cross on Mother's Day.

HIGH SCHOOL YOUTH GROUP

At St. Matthew's, we encourage our older children to participate in fun activities beyond worship, both with family and independently. Our high school students are particularly focused on fellowship and service projects.

All youth who have been confirmed are encouraged to be acolytes or volunteer as a Church School teacher.

CHURCH SCHOOL ATTENDANCE AWARDS

Attendance Awards will be presented on the last day of Church School, June 9th. Each child will receive a Certificate of Promotion. Children who have missed fewer than eight classes throughout the year will receive a Faithful Attendance Certificate and annual pin. Special recognition is given to any student with perfect attendance.

Regular attendance at Church School classes is essential for sound learning, greater creativity, and the development of a spirit of belonging. Children benefit when parents encourage regular attendance and participation. The teaching of God's way is best supported when families integrate the lessons in their daily lives.

Worship with your children!

Excused Absences & Make-Up Absences: Attendance at the 8 a.m. or 5 p.m. service will count as attendance at Church School if a child's schedule keeps him or her from attending Church School. In order to receive credit for attendance, please be sure to notify the Church School Director if your child attends one of these services, or if your child is out of town and attends services at another Church. Activity Sunday, offered in the spring, erases one absence at any point during the year.

CHURCH SCHOOL STEWARDSHIP

The children are learning that the way we grow into whole Christians is by giving of ourselves for others. "You must love your neighbor as you love yourself," said our Lord. One way of developing gratitude and encouraging children to give of themselves is by bringing an offering each week to be placed in the tray during service. Offering envelopes are available throughout the year in the classrooms or from the Church School Director.

OUTREACH

We encourage all Church School children to be active in outreach. On Welcome Back Sunday, we arrive with jars of nut butter for a Back to School Food Drive. In November, the students decorate "Turkey Bags" to return the following week filled with Thanksgiving provisions that are donated to needy Westchester families. A Christmas Toy Drive supports Hour Children, providing gifts to children with incarcerated mothers. The children's offerings, profits from the Super Bowl Bake Sale and the Lenten Mite Box collection raise funds to help children in need, either locally or internationally. In past years, we supported El Hogar in Honduras, and American Friends of the Episcopal Diocese of Jerusalem, AFEDJ, a ministry in the Holy Land.

A PRAYER

Almighty God, heavenly Father, you have blessed us with the joy and care of children: Give us calm strength and patient wisdom as we bring them up, that we may teach them to love whatever is just and true and good, following the example of our Savior Jesus Christ. *Amen.*

GOALS FOR ST. MATTHEW'S CHURCH SCHOOL

- To help St. Matthew's children develop their natural faith into a Christian faith through knowledge of God's activity in the world and in people.
- To help each child learn the basic tenets of Christian faith, at age appropriate levels, by an examination of the Holy Scriptures, Church History, and the Book of Common Prayer.
- To encourage parents to become more committed and involved in their children's Christian Education.
- To encourage regular attendance in class by every child.
- To create an atmosphere in which the children feel they are a part of the family of St. Matthew's.
- To help the teachers grow in their own faith through their interaction with the children.

STANDARDS OF BEHAVIOR

The religious instruction of our children takes a major commitment on the part of our volunteer teachers, and we would like to make their teaching as easy as possible. One of the sporadic, but important, problems they face is discipline. With this in mind, a protocol has been developed to try to solve any potential problems.

1. If a teacher feels that a child is continuously disruptive, he or she will contact the Church School Director, who will handle it by working directly with the child.
2. If this fails, the parents will be notified in the hope that they will be able to correct the situation.
3. The next recourse is that parents will be expected to attend Church School with their child.
4. If none of the above proves successful, cases will be dealt with on an individual basis.

No child will be denied the right to a proper Christian Education, but some classes may need to be restructured or a child given individual instruction. Please speak with the Church School Director if you have any questions or concerns.