



# Nursery School News

A Monthly Newsletter of St. Paul's Episcopal Nursery School

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## From Jane: Keep It Simple This Holiday Season



My 83-year-old mother called me yesterday and asked about suggestions for Christmas gifts for my family. I honestly felt like crying for a brief moment! I just wasn't ready to face it all – too much hype, too little time, and way too much stress. It made me wonder more than ever just what our role as parents is in terms of our children during the Christmas season. Our culture has commercialized this religious season beyond belief, and I am as guilty as the next person of being seduced into the excesses of it all – spending too much on unneeded things, eating and drinking too much, doing too much etc.

But back to my original thought about our role with our children during the Christmas season. Probably the two most important things that I have learned from the children I have worked with over the years are:

- Less is best
- The goal of “perfection” about many things in life can actually be very counterproductive.

Both of these “lessons” apply to what I believe our role, as parents should be for our children during Christmas. A rule of thumb during Christmas seems to be that more is better. Please don't forget that children easily become over stimulated and overwhelmed if their environment is cluttered with too much activity and too many things. Children have an amazing capacity to really enjoy, explore, and reflect upon things that may seem very simple and therefore not exciting or “good enough” to us in our hurried and overly complex adult lives. We should really take a lesson from children where this is concerned. Rather than frantically adding more things and new activities to our lives in an effort to make this the “best Christmas ever,” perhaps we should allow our children and ourselves the luxury of enjoying *(Cont.)*

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## St. Paul's Annual Santa Breakfast



Hopefully you have all received your Santa Breakfast invitation for December 13<sup>th</sup> from 9:00 am – 11:00 am. As in year's past, we have a wonderful array of activities and performances scheduled to entertain and captivate the children. We have our own Margaret Hooton playing a sing-a-long of Christmas carols, which is sure to be a hit by all. We also have a puppet show, a craft set up at all the tables, and of course a visit from the jolliest of all elves, Santa Claus. For breakfast we are serving fresh Bruegger's Bagels, with cream cheese, muffins, Smiley Cookies, fruit salad and juice and bottled water. And to warm the hearts of all the parents we will have hot coffee, both regular and decaf, from Starbuck's. We are thankful to all the contributors of food this year for

their ability to provide us with peanut-free goodies.

Please get your RSVP and check into the office by Tuesday, December 9<sup>th</sup> so we can have a good idea of how many to expect. It is helpful to return your reservation expediently because the order in which your turn it in will determine the time that your child/children is scheduled to visit with Santa. It promises to be a great time for all so we hope to see you there! Don't forget your cameras.

## From Jane: (Continued)

and rediscovering simple family traditions which are familiar and enjoyable to us all.

The other lesson is about our obsession with perfection when it comes to the Christmas season. What many people fail to realize is that plans for perfection are a sure way to experience feelings of disappointment and failure. Adults in our culture (myself included) far too often focus on end results. At this time of year especially, we look only at end products, and simply disregard the process and its meaning in our lives. How often are we bombarded over the Christmas season with articles in magazines and the media about “perfect Christmas decorations, perfect perfect Christmas dinner?”

with children knows that they processes than “perfect” end how to enjoy simply being in children often change course in involved and enjoying an activity, which may lead to an end product that in no way resembles their initial goal or idea. How much more creative and enjoyable life is from their vantage point!

***...perhaps we should allow our children and ourselves the luxury of enjoying and rediscovering simple family traditions, which are familiar and enjoyable to us all.***

entertaining, or cooking the Anyone who has worked are much more interested products. Children know the moment. In fact, midstream when they are

Perhaps we should allow our children and ourselves the spontaneity and time to enjoy one another this Christmas season. If we protect our children from what may become our own inappropriate expectations, which result from all sorts of preconceived ideas about what a “perfect” Christmas must look like, as well as the excesses which the commercialism of the season may pressure us into, we will do ourselves and our children a great favor. Perhaps this is our role in terms of our children during this Christmas season. Have a joyful Christmas and a safe and happy New Year!



## St. Paul's Nursery School Set To Unveil Security System

Our new security system is in place and ready for use. We are planning to begin using it in February 2004. The reason that we will not start using it until February is that we need the time to educate everyone about its use and time to distribute key fobs to all parents and care givers who will be entering the school with children.

We decided to install a security system in an effort to be proactive about our children's safety and security. We have not had any negative incidents here at St. Paul's, which have caused us concern, but many parents have expressed a desire for a more secure environment than the unlocked and open school that we have now. It's unfortunate that we need to be concerned about the security of our children when they are here, but we no longer live in a world where we can simply trust anyone to come and go in and out of the school while the children are here.

Essentially, the interior doors going into the nursery school area will be locked and only those with key fobs will have access to the school during the day. There will be a doorbell for deliveries and visitors, and of course parent's can easily enter and exit any time during the day by using their key fob. The elevator will be locked on the nursery school level, but people can still use it to go upstairs to the church levels.

We will have a parent education evening in order to answer questions and give a detailed explanation of the system in January. You will also be receiving detailed written instructions after the first of the year. In the mean time if you have questions or concerns please ask me or Sharon McCarthy and we will be glad to answer any questions or address concerns as best we can.

## The 2003 Wine Tasting Event Is A Great Success



Thanks to the efforts of Susan Bicket and her entire committee this year's wine tasting was more successful than ever! I particularly want to thank all of the parents who made up the beautiful baskets that Laurel Flaherty organized so well. Jen Broadhurst and her committee brought the silent auction to a new level. And Kristen Napoleon once again put together a wonderful slide show of the children. Finally, we are so fortunate for Rocky Bleier's generosity and willingness to do such a fantastic job, once again, with our live auction. All in all it was a spectacular evening and the money that we raised will be put toward the operating budget so that our children can continue to receive the high quality of early childhood education that is distinctly ours. One of the first things that I plan to do is to get some new bikes for the Big Room. Our bikes have been well used over the years by many children, and it is time that we replace a number of them. We've recently purchased a digital camera and printer that we have been using in the class rooms with the children for educational purposes, and the proceeds from the wine tasting will also help pay for these expenses. Thanks again to all of you who attended and/or made donations to the event. You've all helped to make this school a wonderful place for our children!



## St. Paul's Episcopal Church In The News

Most of you probably saw the article in the Sunday, November 30<sup>th</sup> issue of the Post Gazette about St. Paul's Episcopal Church and Father Banse's decision not to pull out of the National Episcopal Church, as a number of Episcopal churches are doing in the Pittsburgh Diocese. A few people have asked me what this means, if anything, for the Nursery School and whether it will affect us. My answer is that it will not particularly affect us in any way. We will remain here, a part of St. Paul's Church, as always.

I received a letter from the National Association of Episcopal School's this past August after Gene Robinson's election as Bishop of New Hampshire that was very reassuring, stating that Episcopal Schools will continue, whatever the direction of individual churches, to serve the needs of its students. In the letter The Reverend Peter G. Cheney (NAES Director) states:

*"At this time it is most important that our student-centered work continues to be the chief priority of Episcopal schools. The young people we serve come first, and they need and deserve our full attention. We hope that any difference in opinion between adult members of an Episcopal school community about their Episcopal election will be expressed appropriately and respectfully. The manner, in which adults treat each other, if and when they disagree, makes a very significant impact on young people; and, as educators we ask everyone to keep this clearly in mind, and to act accordingly. The breadth and diversity of opinion that has always existed within the Episcopal Church has created schools of extraordinary excellence, dedicated to spiritual formation, knowledge, and service. Our students, our parents, and our friends, whatever their own faith traditions, expect us as leaders to show the same compassion, support, and civility to the entire range of responses to and opinions about Canon Robinson's election as we would in regard to any other complex issue. We owe them our best efforts, our most open hearts, and our most effective leadership."*

These are certainly complex issues, as the letter states. And as Bob Banse states in the Post Gazette article, "I'm a believer in unity. I'm a believer in consensus building. I'm a believer in trying to do things in a collegial way."

As a member of St. Paul's Episcopal Church I'm sure we will struggle with these issues for a long time to come. But as far as the nursery school goes, I foresee no way that the school will be impacted by the Churches politics in this matter.



## Teacher Gifts

Just a reminder, There is no expectation on the teacher's part for elaborate Christmas teacher gifts. Please do not stress out about it. Bake some cookies with your child or make a simple ornament. We would much rather you enjoy a few calm moments with your child at home than rushing out to the store to spend money on some elaborate or expensive gift! Remember it is about the process. A child will be rewarded by giving a gift they were actually involved with as opposed to watching their teacher open a gift they are not familiar with because it was purchased by the parent. Remember too that this is not a competition. No points are given for the Most elaborate or expensive gift. Rather, the greatest gifts come from the heart and hands of a child.



## The Mitten Tree

Don't forget about our mitten, hat, and scarf tree. These items can be bought or home made for boys or girls, infants or children. We will be giving them to the children from St. Luke's Lutheran Church in Hazelwood and New Hope United Methodist Church in the North Side. This is a wonderful opportunity for your child to begin to understand the importance of giving and sharing with children who are less fortunate. Any questions ask Mindy or Paula.

## Registration For 2004-2005 School Year

Our new registration process was very well received last year, and we will continue to use it. A brief reminder of the way it works. We will have a registration week for all priority Ia and Ib children – those already enrolled in the school and siblings of currently enrolled children - beginning the week of **January 19<sup>th</sup> – 23<sup>rd</sup>**. Forms can be handed in or mailed in anytime during that week. The deadline for the **earliest date** that all other priorities may mail in their form will be **Monday, February 2<sup>nd</sup>**.

The typical progression for students will be as follows:

1. Children enrolled in AM sessions will remain in the morning, and children enrolled in PM sessions will
2. remain in the afternoon sessions.
3. Children will have the choice of remaining at the same days per week or adding 1 day per week – i.e.
4. Tuesday/Thursday children may remain in 2 day per week classes or move up to 3 day per week (MWF). 3 day per week children (MWF) may remain in 3-day classes or move up to 4 days per week.
5. If a child desires to switch from morning to afternoon or vice versa they may request to do so and if space is available we will grant the request. If a child desires to move from a 2 day a week class to a 4 day a week class they may request to do so and if space is available we will grant the request.
6. Essentially all currently enrolled children are **guaranteed** a space following the typical progression. Other requests will be granted only if space permits.

If you have questions regarding the best placement for your child/children for next year please discuss it with your child's teacher or me. We will place a registration form in your mailbox on Monday, January 19<sup>th</sup> and you will have the entire week to return the form.



## Mark Your Calendar For St. Paul's Activities & Events December 2003

MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9 RSVPs are due for Santa Breakfast 	10	11	12	13 St. Paul's Annual Santa Breakfast 9A-11A	14
15	16	17	18	19 Last day before Christmas Break	20	21
22	23	24 Christmas Eve	25 MERRY CHRISTMAS! 	26	27	28
29	30	31 New Year's Eve	1 Happy New Year!	2	3	4
5 First day back from Christmas Break	6	7	8	9	10	11

*Merry*   
*Christmas* 