

## **What's in a Name? I wonder why we call it Sunday School?**

“Lifelong Christian Faith Formation in The Episcopal Church is lifelong growth in the knowledge, service and love of God as followers of Christ and is informed by Scripture, Tradition and Reason,” states the Charter for Lifelong Christian Formation for the Episcopal Church.<sup>1</sup>

The Christian Formation staff, vestry, and committees at St. Bartholomew's revisit this charter regularly as we evaluate the learning opportunities in our parish. In addition to a prayerful life of worship, intentional outreach, advocacy and service, we reflect on what continuous learning is offered to help form us as disciples journeying with Christ, in Christ, and to Christ. One important and intentional way children, youth, young adult, and adult formation happens at St. Bartholomew's is Sunday School. Rally Day, August 14, 2016, marks the beginning of our next season of Sunday School. I wonder why we call it Sunday School?

An excellent question, you say! Each Sunday morning from Mid-August through May (the same season as our academic school) we offer classes for children, youth, and adults. These are opportunities to choose to learn about our faith, study the Bible, increase one's understanding of our liturgy, and discover how one lives a Christian life. For a concise way to describe what we offer we call it Sunday School.

Recency and repetition are important for learning. Learning is gaining knowledge, practicing skills, or testing theories. Christian learning happens in community and develops real community. Although it is a choice to attend, it is important for everyone to participate in Sunday School every week. Weekly gatherings are how the community comes together and learns about each other. Spiritual journeying and learning happen best in environments offering safety where people can see one another and be truly seen. Those who participate weekly in Sunday School have an opportunity to be known, and to really know their leaders and peers. Although few “homework” assignments are given, regular participants choose to do “homework”: praying for others in their group, inviting folks to go places, doing things with and for others, even reading the Bible! This practice of “homework” becomes part of Christian formation as participants use Christian language to discuss issues and questions of faith, and ethical decision making in all aspects of life. After all, it is what we promise to do, with God's help, at the Baptism and Confirmation.<sup>2</sup> The variety of offerings gives each person an opportunity to design their own lifelong independent study of seeking God and being Christ in the world.

St. Bartholomew's Christian Formation staff and vestry have recruited a dedicated team of leaders who value learning and being in community. They will be ready for you and your whole family each Sunday! Take the time to be part of Lifelong Learning at St. Bartholomew's Episcopal Church.

I wonder what the new part of your journey will look like as we begin again on Rally Day, August 14, 9:30 a.m., in the Parish Hall?