

Dates of Interest

Monday, September 4
Labor Day Holiday
Mass at 9:00 AM

Tuesday, September 5
Saint Elizabeth Parish School
Opening Day for Grades 1-8

Thursday, September 7
Saint Elizabeth Parish School
Opening Day for Kindergarten

M-T-W, September 11-12-13
Elementary Faith Formation
Opening Prayer Services

Saturday, September 23
Knights of Columbus Blood Drive

Friday-Saturday, October 13-14
Christ Renews His Parish
Men's Overnight Renewal

Wednesday, November 1
All Saints
Mass at 7:30 AM, 12:00 PM,
7:00 PM

Sunday-Tuesday, November 5-6-7
Forty Hours Devotions

Friday-Saturday, November 17-18
Christ Renews His Parish
Women's Overnight Renewal

Thursday, November 23
Thanksgiving Holiday Mass
at 9:00 AM

**Communities Coming Together:
An Interfaith Dialogue**



From left, Imam Ejaz Sabir from the Islamic Society of Chester County, Father Mullin, Rabbi Jon Cutler from Beth Israel Congregation, and Rev. Tina Mackie from Saint Matthew's Evangelical Lutheran Church, who participated in an interfaith dialogue and Iftar supper on June 13.

In This Issue:

Iftar Interfaith Dialogue.....1-2
 Youth Mission Trip.....3,8
 School Spirits.....4
 Odyssey of the Mind.....5
 Father Stokely Celebrates 1st Year..6
 Family Spirits.....7

On June 13, Saint Elizabeth Parish warmly welcomed and hosted an interfaith dialogue and Iftar supper to build bridges across three of the faith traditions in northern Chester County. Approximately 160 people attended the event from the Muslim, Jewish, and Christian communities. Attendees included members of Beth Israel Congregation, the Islamic Society of Chester County, Saint Andrew's Episcopal Church, Saint Matthew's Evangelical Lutheran Church, Saint Paul's Evangelical Lutheran Church, and Saint Elizabeth Roman Catholic Church.

What is Iftar? Iftar is an Islamic religious observance meal during

Ramadan. It occurs after the Maghrib prayer at sunset and traditionally three dates are eaten to break the fast in emulation of the Islamic Prophet Muhammad. Eating as a community is considered a form of charity.

The evening featured a panel discussion about aspects of the various faiths along with an event to foster understanding and friendship among the youth who attended (see sidebar for details). Following the panel discussion, there was a sundown prayer, a potluck meal with traditional food from each group, and lively fellowship.

(Continued on page 2)

Communities Coming Together...

(Continued from cover)

Panelists included Rabbi Jon Cutler from Beth Israel Congregation, Imam Ejaz Sabir from the Islamic Society of Chester County, and Reverend Tina Mackie from Saint Matthew's Evangelical Lutheran Church. Father Mullin welcomed everyone and started the conversation by explaining the purpose of the event: to develop mutual understanding of individual faith traditions and to promote common efforts in service to others. The panelists answered questions about their religious practices and the responsibility to others included in their faith traditions.

"This is a unique experience where Christians, Jews, and Muslims come to celebrate Iftar in a Roman Catholic Church," said Rabbi Cutler. "Remember, everyone is a stranger in Egypt, and it is our responsibility to help the oppressed and marginalized. Everyone needs to take time to learn about others," he said.

Reverend Mackie added, "We need to look outside of ourselves to consider the well-being of others. When everyone experiences God's love and follows His example, violence does not have the last word."

Fun Activities For Youth at Program

Activities and dialogue at the Iftar event weren't for adults only – about 15 children also enjoyed special programming that contributed to the success of the evening.

"The children's portion was not originally part of the evening's plan," said parishioner Dawn Curtis, a member of the planning committee. "However, many families signed up with their children so Father Mullin suggested we come up with specific activities for the children."

Curtis, with her 13-year-old daughter Annie, created a kid-friendly

Imam Sabir explained, "The Holy Quran tells Muslims of their individual responsibilities and their direct relationship with God. Everyone will eventually stand before God and be held accountable

for what they have done. Charity for all, woman's rights, and the abolition of slavery are deeply rooted in our faith. God created man in a most dignified manner and does not have hate in His plan."

Rabbi Cutler concluded by saying "We will remember tonight, but the real value of this evening is acting to make a positive difference in the world. This is not an end but a beginning."

The event was a great success according to participant evaluations. Responders enjoyed the panel discussions, fellowship, table discussions, and food and thanked Saint Elizabeth Parish for hosting the evening. Many indicated they learned

presentation that covered the history and traditions of Islam, Christianity and Judaism and, most importantly, the similarities between all three.

"We ended up just using the presentation as a touchpoint to move throughout the hour," Curtis said.

"The children were amazing! We sat in a big circle and all of the children from oldest to youngest offered their thoughts and input. It was wonderful to see them sharing, respecting, and truly listening to one another. We easily could have talked on and on."

After the meal, Curtis took a group of Christian and Muslim children over to



15 children enjoyed the program's youth activities.

something new about other religions and left with a greater understanding of the similarities between Muslim, Jewish, and Christian traditions. One participant reflected, "Each religion is working towards justice, dignity of all humans, and love, not hate. I felt humanity at its finest tonight!"

A combined team from the represented faith communities plans to review the evaluations and consider potential future efforts aimed at addressing hunger, homelessness, refugee support, and other humanitarian efforts.

-David Guthrie

the church. "Again, the kids amazed me. The Catholic and Protestant children proudly explained our Christian traditions to the Muslim children. The Muslim children asked questions and also told us how their faith shared some of our symbolism. All of the children were so respectful while being inside a place of worship." The children's activities were a great success. Curtis concluded. "I was honored to be a part of the experience and very proud of all of the young people who shared in the evening."

-Sue Morgan

Diary of a Busy Mission Trip: Saint Elizabeth High School Youth Group Hits the Big Apple!

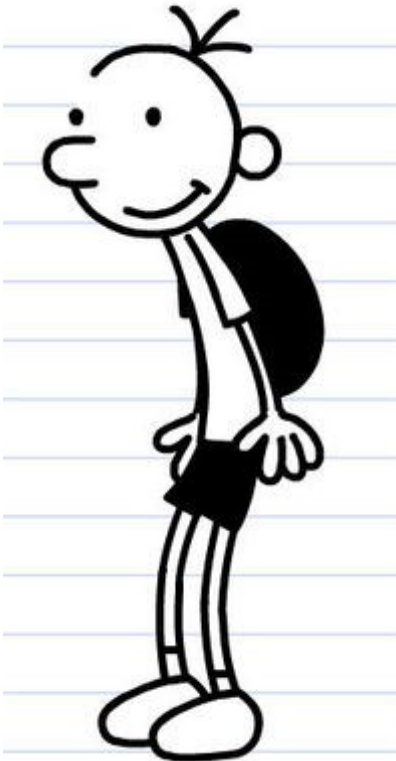
Taking a page out of the *New York Times* bestselling novel and blockbuster movie series *Diary of a Wimpy Kid*, here is a day-by-day account of the Saint Elizabeth Parish High School Youth Group's busy mission trip to New York. This summer, five adult leaders accompanied 24 parish teenagers to St. Nicholas of Tolentine Parish in Jamaica, Queens, where they joined forces with eight other high school youth groups to refurbish a 100-year-old church.

Over the course of five days, the teens labored through more than two dozen different projects ranging from painting and cleaning to heavy-duty landscaping – all in an effort to give St. Nicholas some much-needed tender loving care. After an exhausting week, the crew trekked 12 blocks to Saint John's University for the Steubenville NYC Catholic Conference where they spent the last three days of their trip. Steubenville is a vibrant youth conference mixing prolific speakers, Mass, and Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament with an electric atmosphere of nearly 2,000 Catholic teens. It was a beautiful end to an amazing trip.

Below are reflections – diary entries – from our six high school seniors.

Day One: “The first day, we drove up, had fun, and were told how it would go down! Even though I was familiar with most faces, I still met new ones.”
– Brad Schaefer

Day Two: “Monday was so much fun, and it felt good to get the week started while getting to know the staff at St. Nicholas of Tolentine. It was a busy start with all of us doing different jobs and working hard!” – Kate Buzin



Day Three: “On Tuesday, we focused on completing our jobs which included painting, smashing cabinets, cleaning, and organizing different rooms. The big project of the day was painting a hallway, a bathroom and a full kitchen. After completing our morning/afternoon jobs we then put in a full team effort from 7pm to 12am to finish up the painting!” – Liam Galligan

Day Four: “We took a break from our work today, and went to New York City. We walked around

Times Square, and went to a beautiful daily Mass at St Patrick's cathedral. After Mass, I lit a candle in my dad's honor and said a prayer by myself. After that, my group trekked 20 blocks down to Dylan's Candy Bar. We ate lunch at Johnny Rockets, and walked around Central Park.” – Cara Grim

Day Five: “Thursday was our last work day at St. Nicholas of Tolentine. On the whole, we completed about 24 projects at the parish and made connections that will stay with us for years to come. I'm so thankful we could bring our teens to this beautiful place!” – Ryan Schwalm

Day Six: “On Friday, we headed down to St. John's University to get our Steubenville weekend started. At the arena our crew got the party started at the front of the stage singing and dancing. Once things settled down we were introduced to the weekend speakers, this year's host was Bob Rice and the theme was ‘Elevated’ based around Revelations, 21:5.”
– Rhianna Liriano

Day Seven: “Saturday was filled with inspiring talks and the final Adoration. The music, the emotions, and the palpable energy that radiated off the monstration was moving and inspiring. Our group is so close with one another and it was beautiful to see everyone comforting each other.”
– Maiya Kervinen

(Continued on page 8)

School Spirits

New Program Enhances Social and Emotional Learning

This fall, Saint Elizabeth Parish School is implementing a unique, new program focusing on social and emotional skills that will help students succeed in both school and life. Obtained through a mini-grant, this initiative, *Second Step*, is a global, research-based program designed to teach children how to understand and manage emotions, control their actions, and be aware of others' feelings. The program also focuses on prevention of substance abuse, bullying, and violence by teaching empathy, communication, and emotion management.

"The social and emotional components of a child's education are equally as important as academics in Catholic education," explained school Principal Dr. Diane Greco. "Although we are not a school overrun by bullying, if even one student feels his or her classmates are mean or overly competitive, that's one too many. *Second Step* provides guided professional development that enables teachers to promote skills that will sustain a positive school environment where all students are supported."

The program will be implemented through developmentally appropriate lessons for each grade level and focus on empathy. It will create a consistent message and common language for students and teachers, which will strengthen positive behavior, maintain cooperative relationships, and promote responsible decision making.



"We view this initiative as a way to improve and reinforce our Catholic values as taught in our religion classes," noted Dr. Greco.

Second Step has been applauded for its success across the country. In a 2015 study that occurred over a one-year period with 7,300 students and 321 teachers in 61 schools across six districts from kindergarten to second grade, significant improvements in social-emotional competence and behavior were reported with *Second Step*. Additionally, the number of lessons completed and student engagement were predictive of improved student outcomes.

Media-based, highly interactive, engaging lessons will teach concepts in younger grades such as learning to listen, respecting differences, and fair ways to play, in addition to managing

disappointment, embarrassment, and anger. As students transition to sixth, seventh, and eighth grades, *Second Step* teaches and models communication skills that help adolescents navigate common challenges like peer pressure and bullying. This program supports the Catholic core competencies of self-awareness, self-management, responsible and ethical decision-making, relationship skills, and social awareness.

Dr. Greco added, "Our goal is to have all of our students develop and deepen empathy for others, which will help maintain positive relationships and successful conflict resolution, along with the confidence to make the correct decisions. This will enable every student to feel safe and secure at school, so they can concentrate on getting the best possible education."

- Julie Krumenacker

Parish School Students Compete on World Stage

Three Middle School teams from Saint Elizabeth Parish School successfully competed this year in Odyssey of the Mind, the largest problem-solving competition in the world. A 25 year-old international education program, Odyssey of the Mind consists of complex, open-ended problems which students must collaborate, brainstorm, and work creatively to solve.

This year, the sixth-grade team, coached by Mike Sisti and Allison Shirker, placed first at the regional competition, qualifying them to compete at the state tournament in Pittsburgh. The eighth-grade team, coached by Mary Jo Springer, placed second at the regional competition, and also advanced to States.

The seventh-grade team, led by Melissa Miller and parish school teacher Paula Ringenbach, placed first at the regional competition, and second place at States, with the highest overall score. They advanced to the world finals, where they placed sixth in their division of over 50 competing teams!

“These kids are amazing,” said Miller. “They all have special talents that when brought together, made the team exceptional. Getting to the world competition was obviously the ultimate goal. We started preparing in November for the Regional competition that occurs in March. They definitely experienced ups and downs throughout the process. As coaches, we cannot tell the kids what to do or how to do

something. They need to come up with everything on their own.” The seventh-grade team met multiple times a week and sometimes on weekends, as the kids created their script for a required eight-minute skit, practiced their performance, and built their own props.

“The kids, coaches, and parents dedicated a lot of time to this competition, but it was well worth the work,” added Miller. “We are so proud of these kids. They are building life-long skills that will serve them well in high school, college, the workforce, and beyond.”

Congratulations to all of these impressive achievers!

-Julie Krumenacker



*Odyssey of the Mind Teams
Top: 6th Grade Teams
Bottom Left: 7th Grade Team.
Bottom Right: 8th Grade Team*

Father Stokely's Reflections on His First Year at Saint Elizabeth

This past June 20th marked Father John Stokely's one-year anniversary as Parochial Vicar at Saint Elizabeth Parish. "I recognize that God has blessed me in many ways, and I am happy to add this past year – and I hope many more – to that list of blessings," he remarked. *The Spirit* asked Father Stokely to reflect upon what he has observed about our parish community after his inaugural year. Below, he shares five adjectives and their meaning to him as exemplified by our parish community.

Welcoming. From day one, the members of our parish community welcomed me with open arms. This warm and inviting spirit puts a smile on my face when I see the kindness of our parish family in action.

Talented. I quickly noticed how many talented people comprise our parish. It is great to work with a pastor and staff who are so knowledgeable and passionate about what they do. We are also blessed to have highly skilled professionals on parish councils and committees who offer their expertise to benefit the church. But, where I see such immense talent is in the young people of our parish. I remember walking into our parish school's performance of *Beauty and the Beast* and wondering if we imported a few professional singers... only to discover that it was our own students!

Generous. Saint Elizabeth is a stewardship parish. After a year here, I now have a much better understanding of what this really means. We have many parishioners who are heroically

generous. When most people would say, "I've given enough," these stewardship heroes continue to give, time and again. It is quite remarkable.

Vibrant. When people work very hard and love what they do, they naturally create a vibrant community. There is always something going on at Saint Elizabeth Parish. Whether it is in the gym, school, ministry center, or church, someone is in there. The liveliness of our community points to something deeper within each person, and that brings me to my last defining characteristic of Saint Elizabeth Parish.

Holy. Maybe this should have been first, but this is a critical observation I have had about the people of Saint Elizabeth. I love seeing our students put their hearts and souls into First Friday Mass and EFF prayer services. It is a delight to walk into the church during the afternoon and see a parishioner sitting quietly in prayer. I have been humbled by the many people who have shared with me their struggles, sorrows, hopes, and joys.

I have been privileged to see the love of Jesus Christ in the hearts of many people here, and feel truly blessed to experience it myself.

*-Father John Stokely
with forward by Amy Giampietro*



Father John Stokely celebrated his first year as our Parochial Vicar.

"The Spirit" Staff

Editor-in-Chief

Lisa Barbadora

Director of Parish Communications

Deacon Barry Midwood

Contributors

Lisa Barbadora

Amy Giampietro

David Guthrie

Julie Krumenacker

Sue Morgan

Elisa Sheronas

Father John Stokely

Photos

Mary Damian

Fred Clark

Layout/Graphics

Sara Richardson

Other Staff

Al Brady

Father Thomas Mullin

Family Spirits

Meet the Valentino-McBride Family: Making a Joyful Noise

Dave Valentino, also known affectionately at Saint Elizabeth Parish as, 'the musician in the white shirt,' started his stewardship service as an usher at Saint Joseph Parish in Downingtown many years ago. He was musically talented, but no one there knew it. All that changed when the director of music for the Lumen Christi Teen Ministry, Paul Wojcik, asked for and received a new keyboard for the parish. Paul played guitar and didn't know anyone who could play the keyboard, but the Parochial Vicar, Father Thomas Gillin did. So, he invited Dave to join the music ministry. Lucky day for Saint Joseph Parish and for the future of music at Saint Elizabeth, too!

"I never played church music," said Dave in response to the invitation. Paul assured him that it was not so different from other music that he played so beautifully, relying on his perfect pitch and musical ear at his Dad's Brickette Lounge in West Chester. Dave had been playing there since he was 17, and, years later, his wife, Karen, joined right in and is now the manager.

After three years of music ministry service at Saint Joseph's, Paul retired to Florida and Dave thought his short career as a music minister was over. However, Deb Skrajewski asked Dave to stay on with her as she assumed music leadership of the Teen Group. When Saint Elizabeth parish was founded, Deb was included in the new parish, joined our Music Ministry, and she and Dave played



Making music for the Lord is at the heart of the Valentino-McBride family. From left, Karen and Dave Valentino, Victoria (holding Avery), Jeff and Mason McBride.

the music for the Installation of Father Mullin as pastor, held at Bishop Shanahan High School in 2000.

Father called Dave after that event and asked his advice for a sound system for the Lionville Middle School gym, where Masses would be celebrated for the new parish for the next five years and two months. Dave stepped up to the call, provided a sound system, and officially began volunteering for Saint Elizabeth.

His daughter, Victoria, explained, "My Dad always said that his ability to play music is a gift, so why not give it back." She admits that she sings in the car, but hasn't inherited her Dad's talent. She and husband, Jeff McBride, along with their sons, Mason, 4, and Avery, 2, are parishioners. Both boys were baptized by Father Mullin, who has been a comforting presence in

the family. Vicki gratefully recalls Father calling her personally when Jeff underwent open-heart surgery five years ago.

Dave played keyboard and bass guitar at the ground-breaking and the dedication ceremonies for our church and has been a faithful accompanist for several musical groups at Saint Elizabeth Parish over the years. "I have always believed that the Holy Spirit's eddies and currents move you in certain directions in your life," said Dave.

It was Father's personal invitation, and the Holy Spirit that moved Dave from ushering at Saint Joseph Parish to becoming 'Mr. Music' at Saint Elizabeth Parish, and transplanting his growing family here, too. For that, our community is most blessed and grateful.

-Elisa Sheronas

Diary of a Busy Mission Trip...

(Continued from page 3)

Day Eight: "Today was a bittersweet ending...sweet, in the sense that we spent a weekend with thousands of people who love Jesus just as much as we do. But also bitter, because it was our last day, and soon we'd be heading home. Regardless, I left with new brothers and sisters in Christ."
- Rhianna Liriano

Saint Elizabeth Parish coordinates and chaperones a summer mission trip for its High School Youth Group annually. To learn more, contact Youth Ministry Coordinator, Ryan Schwalm at 610-646-6534 x104 or rschwalm@stelizabethparish.org.
-Lisa Barbadora



Stay Connected with the Saint Elizabeth Youth Group!



<http://bit.ly/2i7QFIU>



st.es_youthgroup



<http://bit.ly/2i6hKMv>

Saint Elizabeth Parish
P.O. Box 695
Uwchlan, PA 19480-0695
Phone: 610-321-1200
Fax: 610-646-6513
E-mail:
steuucc@stelizabethparish.org
Web site: stelizabethparish.org
The Spirit is a publication of the Parish Newsletter Staff. If you would like to join *The Spirit* staff, please call the Mullin Ministry Center.



Non-Profit
Organization
U.S. Postage
PAID
Permit No. 231
Uwchlan, PA 19480

Return Service
Requested