

# **Catechesis of the Good Shepherd**

## **Mt. Bethel United Methodist Church**

### **What is Catechesis of the Good Shepherd?**

Catechesis of the Good Shepherd is an approach to the religious formation of children. It is rooted in the Bible, the liturgy of the church, and the educational principles of Maria Montessori. The program began in 1954 when a Bible scholar named Sofia Cavalletti and her Montessori-trained collaborator, Gianna Gobbi, began a religious program for children in Rome. Sofia quickly saw in the children a way of being in the presence of God that is both unique to the child and a gift to the adult who stops long enough to notice.

### **What do the children do?**

Children gather in an “atrium,” a room prepared for them, which contains simple yet beautiful hand-made materials for their use. The Catechist (teacher) presents each lesson using these materials to help the child visualize and begin to internalize the meaning of the lesson. We allow the children to work with these materials independently after having received a lesson. In this way, the child begins to understand God’s words in a deep and personal way.

### **How did this program start at Mt. Bethel?**

The program started in the late 1990’s at Mt. Bethel. Because children learn in different ways, we wanted to have a curriculum that spoke to the child’s spiritual being in a hands-on and quiet way. We have four dedicated classrooms in the basement of the Academy building (rooms F-023, F-024, F-025, and F-026).

There, we have classrooms filled with materials that have lovingly been assembled, made or painted by our Catechists over the years.

## **What is different about each level?**

*Level 1:* ages 3 (and potty trained) through Kindergarten

We have lessons on grace and courtesy, practical life (sewing, watering plants, making flower arrangements) and 40 beautiful lessons ranging from the liturgical colors used in the church year to God calling us by name as a shepherd calls his sheep. These lessons are presented each year in small groups so that there is time for reflection and response from the child. After receiving a particular lesson, the child is then encouraged to re-visit that lesson independently. Children are incredibly spiritual and we want to encourage that development from an early age.

*Level 2:* grade 1-3

At this level a new set of lessons are presented that are expansions or synthesis of lessons they received in Level 1 as well as new lessons. Because the children can now read and write, they are encouraged to use their Bibles to look up passages. They learn about places where Jesus spent much of his time on Earth. They learn about the history of the kingdom of God and the many gifts God has given us. They may also learn to use calligraphy to copy a Prophecy on beautiful paper, or to create their own set of cards with all the books of the Bible written on them, or embroider a cross on fabric. Through these activities, the child is able to concentrate his thoughts on God's word.

*Level 3:* grades 4-6

At his level children gain a vast knowledge of the Old Testament by creating and using complex timelines. They deepen their understanding of Jesus' time on Earth and his teachings. At this

point, the discussions become deeper and more meaningful to the child.

### **Who teaches these classes?**

Each Catechist (teacher) has gone through 90 hours or more of classroom time learning about their particular level. Catechists in Levels 2 and 3 have taken the training for the previous levels as well as the one they are teaching. We also have Assistants in each classroom that have taken a short course to learn how to help the Catechist in the Atrium. We encourage parents to become Assistants in one of the classes and consider taking the training to become a Catechist.

## **Enrollment in Catechesis of the Good Shepherd**

### **Levels 1, 2, and 3**

Child's name: \_\_\_\_\_ Called: \_\_\_\_\_

Child's address: \_\_\_\_\_

Child's birthday: \_\_\_\_\_ grade: \_\_\_\_\_ School: \_\_\_\_\_

Mother's name: \_\_\_\_\_

Mother's address\*: \_\_\_\_\_

Mother's home phone #: \_\_\_\_\_ cell: \_\_\_\_\_

Mother's email address: \_\_\_\_\_

Father's name: \_\_\_\_\_

Father's address\*: \_\_\_\_\_

Father's home phone#\*: \_\_\_\_\_ cell: \_\_\_\_\_

Father's email address: \_\_\_\_\_

\*if different from the child's

Class times are never guaranteed, they are based on existing class make-up and teacher availability. What would your preference be?

9:30a.m. or 11:00a.m.

Because of the curriculum and the space constraints we are under, we want the children to attend regularly. We also encourage our parents to observe in the classroom from time to time and to help the program by volunteering some of their time. Involvement from the parents and the children is necessary to make this program run smoothly.

Thank you for your interest in Catechesis of the Good Shepherd. If you have any questions, please contact: Betsy Brown at 770-649-1747 or [betsy.brown@comcast.net](mailto:betsy.brown@comcast.net).