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July 1, 2010

Dear Friends of All Saints' Children and Youth,

As summer finally starts to seem like summer, it seems like many of our youth and families have scattered to the four winds, vacationing, visiting family, and just enjoying the Montana summer. What you might not know is that Camp Marshall is the destination for many of our families. We have at least six All Saints' kids at camp this week, and several families are planning to attend the next two family camps. We also have kids who will be attending the second Jr./Middler camp, July 11-17 for 3rd – 8th graders. This is another kids' camp opportunity for those who did not attend the first one and I'd encourage families to consider it if it works into your schedule. Camp is fun!

For preschool – elementary children, we continue to provide Children's Chapel every Sunday at the 11:00 AM service, year round. The main curriculum we use for this is the Montessori based Godly Play, which we have taught for quite a few years now with great success.

For kids going into 1st – 8th grade, we will be having two Camp Marshall day camps at our church property. The first will be held August 9th – 13th and the second August 16th – 20th. These are run by Camp Marshall staff with the help of All Saints' volunteers. Last year we had the largest attendance at day camp in the Diocese of Montana, which has prompted us to expand our camp to two weeks. Campers can attend either or both weeks. There will be activities, games, swimming, Godly Play, tie dying and much more! We have brochures at the church or call me for information.

Volunteers will be needed to help at the day camp, host the Camp Marshall staff to a dinner either cooked at home or out, bring snacks for the kids, and to drive kids to various activities. We will have sign up sheets in the parish hall, and if you are interested in helping at the day camp please let me know ASAP so that we can make sure all administrative requirements are met for volunteers.

For all families, children and youth, we are designating Sunday, August 29 as “Back to School” Sunday. After the 11:00 AM service we will have great food, games and prizes, and a chance for parents and children and everyone else to preview what we will be doing for youth and children for the next program year. Expect to get a taste of what Godly Play is all about, as well as to become more familiar with our Rite 13 program for kids 6th – 8th grade. We hope to get a great turnout to this event, so that we can kick off our program year in style.

One thing that sometimes surprises people is that our acolyte program is intended for elementary school through high school youth. Many churches only allow older teens to participate, but we are happy to be able to include children when they are ready and interested rather than making them wait. We have a good sized group of acolytes most of the year, but because of vacation schedules this summer we have four valiant youth serving, which gives them a turn about every other week. Please thank these kids for their dedication, and if there are any children who would like to become acolytes please let me know. We can train children right away, and we will also have training in the Fall.

As always, I am so grateful to everyone for your continuing and generous support for our youth and children programs. Without the dedication of our wonderful parents, the amazing assistance we get from our volunteers, and the atmosphere of welcome that everyone provides for our younger members, we would not have the growing and thriving ministry that we enjoy.

Please feel free to call me at any time with questions, concerns, or ideas. I have an “open cell phone” policy and always love to hear from interested parishioners.

In God’s Peace,
Faithfully,

Cynthia Benkelman
Christian Formation Minister, Children and Youth
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