

2012 St. Elias Church School Report for the year 2011

We are thankful for a vibrant and growing Church School. There are 80 children between the two sessions of church school. We have approximately 20 children registered for the early session and 60 for the second session.

Our teachers are dedicated and faithful servants, Ronnie and Selina Long, who teach the young children and Dr. Mark Cherry who teaches Teens and adults in the first session; Natalia Smith, Cristina Apostolo, Sylvia Jabour, Nesreen Khoury, Noura Wakim, Daniel Rigney, Nicholas Oldziej and Christina Folger, who is on maternity leave, for the second session. Last year, we were also blessed to have Alex Apostolo and John Mark Nials teaching our middle school and high school students.

Ronnie Long continues to write our current curriculum, *Promise & Preparation*, whose theme is finding Christ in the Old Testament. Our children are learning to navigate the Bible passages and learn the deeper meaning behind them. We are all learning how to read the Bible and understand it thanks to Ronnie's hard work and dedication. We are thankful for his efforts for our children.

Thanks to all the parents who help with donations for snacks and our work with Caritas and Blue Santa this year. Our classes are planning charitable activities that they can participate in year round and not just at the holidays.

This past year, we were able to send Ronnie Long and Natalia Smith to the Orthodox Institute (OI) held annually at the Antiochian Village in Pennsylvania. The OI is a three-day workshop for Church School directors and teachers on techniques of teaching and our Holy Orthodox faith. Christian educators from across the country, Canada and all jurisdictions attend this exciting and beneficial seminar. This past year the keynote speaker was Fr. Thomas Hopko who spoke eloquently and effectively on Holy Scripture. Our teachers were fortunate to be able to attend this year. However, next year there are no funds budgeted for this send anyone. This is unfortunate because our teachers gain so much from the experience. My hope is that God will bless us with the funds to send at least one teacher to the 2012 OI.

A number of our children were award winners in the 2011 Creative Festivals project. My thanks to our teachers and parents who guided the children through the process of learning the deeper meaning of the theme, which was on the priesthood, and then express their understanding of it in word and picture.

Our vacation bible school (vbs) held in August was a smashing success. The theme was on giving thanks and the Divine Liturgy, *"With faith and love, draw near."* We had 40 children registered. They made an ancient altar, prayer books, prayer beads, prosphora, their own iconstasis, and had a scavenger hunt in the church looking for angels and crosses in the building and the icons. My thanks to Fr. Dave Lewis, who is so terrific with the children and a source of support and encouragement, as well as all of the teachers, parents and Teen helpers, who helped to make our vbs such a success.

This summer we instituted a new session for our children in which they were taught to sing the hymns of the church. Our thanks to Patricia Rudawski, who spearheaded this effort, and Sh. Geri Farman, who taught the children in the first session. These classes were a great success and have already produced new junior members to the choir.

Last, but not least, I invite you all to come back to the library/church school/office area where we conduct classes. We have run out of space for our classes and for our supplies. As our parish grows, so grow our needs to accommodate our ever-increasing population. This lack of space is unacceptable and needs to be remedied soon. Whether you have children or not, this is a problem we must all work to solve as a parish. I hope you will pray about this and talk to the members of the parish council and ask what is being done and how you can help to remedy this lack of space.

Thank you all for your support of our efforts and for allowing me to work as church school director.
In Christ, Vasiliki Oldziej