

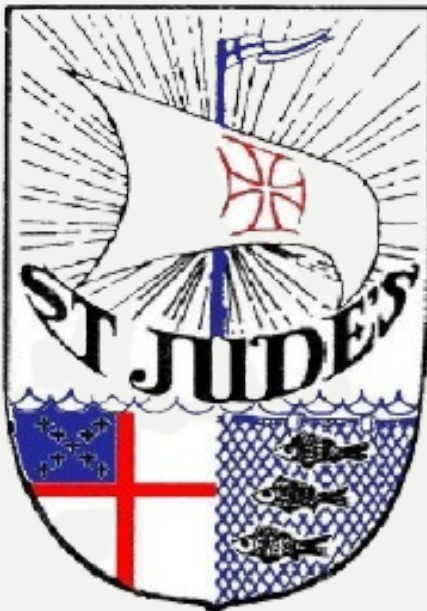
Current  
as of  
September 2023

ST. JUDE'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH

Niceville, Florida

# Annual Events for Children & Youth

Everything you need to know to organize and oversee the annual traditions for children and youth at St. Jude's



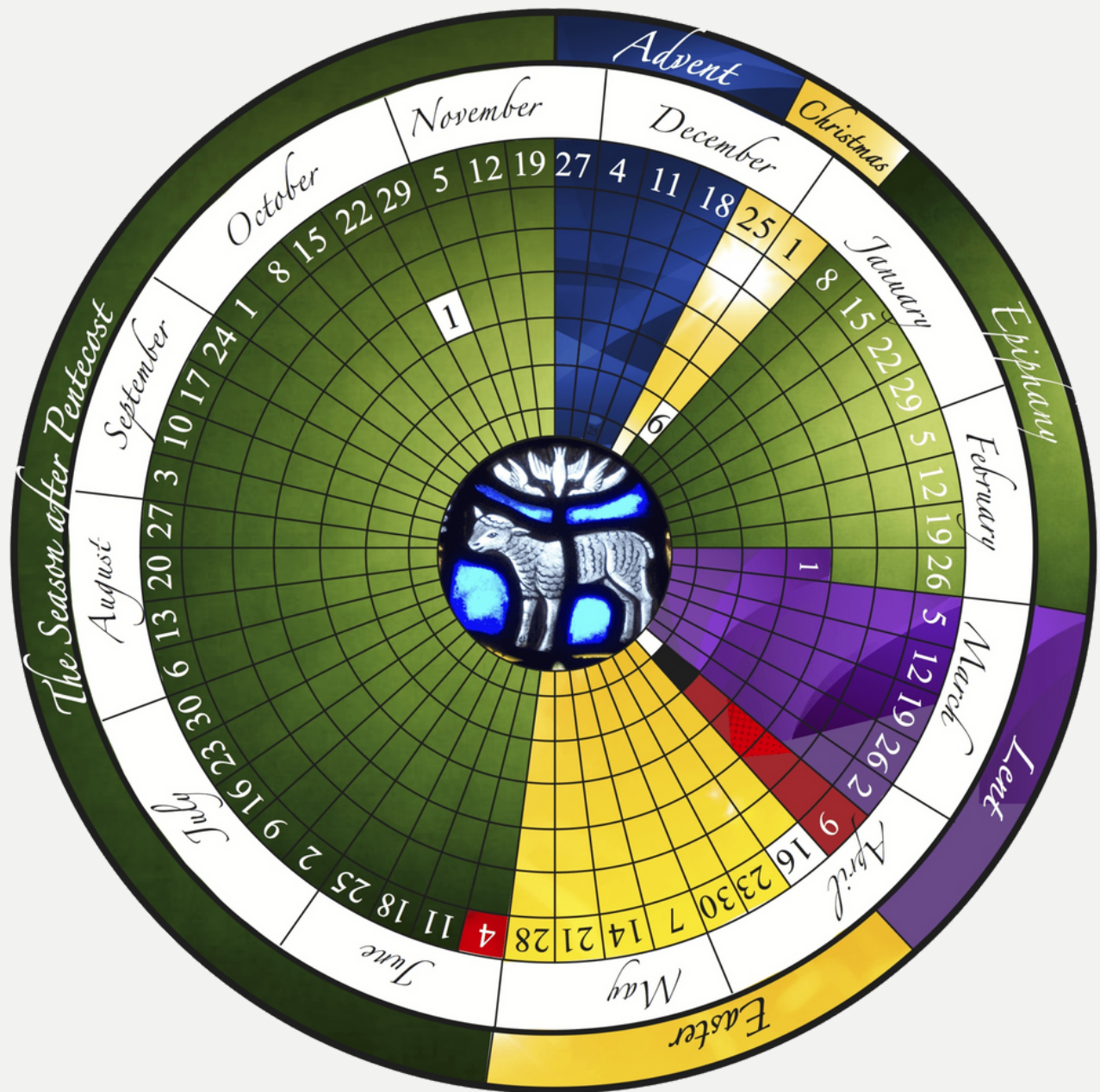
A HANDBOOK  
OF  
TRADITIONS,  
SUGGESTIONS,  
& GUIDANCE



Or:

*"I've been asked to take  
the lead on something...  
now what?"*

# The Liturgical Calendar



## THE CHURCH YEAR

St. Jude's tries to involve our children and youth in every major event in the church calendar. We'll start our exploration of St. Jude's traditions with the beginning of the church year, the Advent season.

Other times that feature special activities for our children and youth include, but are not limited to:

- Shrove Tuesday
- Easter
- Mother's Day
- Graduations
- Summer (VBS)
- Back-to-School

ALWAYS DISCUSS IDEAS AND PLANS WITH THE RECTOR.

# Advent

As you can imagine, Advent is one of the busiest times of the church year for children and youth activities. Many hands are needed to pitch in, so don't be afraid to ask for help!



## CHRISTMAS PAGEANT

Although it occurs during Advent, our annual Christmas pageant is a highlight of the season for children and adults and creates lasting memories!

- Choose an appropriate pageant script
- Coordinate with the rector for an appropriate date
- Sign up children for parts
- Discuss music with Music Director
- Enlist adult helpers!
- Hold a rehearsal
- Costumes & Props (check the attic!)
- Hold the pageant and HAVE FUN!

## CHRISTMAS PARTY

The annual Christmas Party is a longstanding tradition for the whole church. Originally a multi-course dinner, it has evolved into a potluck-style fellowship to make it easier on our volunteer chefs and organizers.

Youth and kids have traditionally served as servers and helpers during the party, earning tips they can use for extra Christmas money.

In the past few years they have also held a "bottle auction" to benefit youth events. Attendees simply bring a wrapped bottle, and these are raffled off.

A volunteer may also help the youth select Christmas presents for their families from the gift shop during the party.

In past years, an intergenerational trivia game teaming up youth with senior adults was also a big hit.



# Advent



## OTHER ACTIVITIES

- Making and delivering Christmas cards and care baskets to Twin Cities Pavilion
- Christmas caroling at Twin Cities Pavilion
- Youth Christmas Party with "White Elephant" gift exchange
- Creating ornaments for the annual Angel Tree
- Collecting (and contributing) donations to Thanksgiving & Christmas Food Baskets
- Decorating the trees in the sanctuary and the Parish Hall
- Activities we've done in the past: Episcopal Relief & Development Fair Trade Market, Operation Christmas Child shoeboxes

# Chili Cook-Off



A recent activity sponsored by the St. Jude's children and youth was a church-wide Chili Cook-Off.

The children and youth created their own chili to enter into the competition, staying after church the Sunday before to assemble the chili in the kitchen, with the help of grown-up volunteers.



The Cook-Off took place on a Wednesday evening in February.

Entrants were asked to sign up on the easel in the parish hall if they planned to bring a chili to enter in the competition. Also, there was a sign up sheet for attendees, so organizers could ensure plenty of drinks, cornbread, chips, etc. to enjoy with the chili. There were containers for "take out" available as well.

A jar was placed in front of each chili entry - \$1 per vote for best chili. Proceeds went to the Youth/Children fund.

The children and youth were also asked to help set up before the dinner and clean up after the dinner.



# Shrove Tuesday



## PANCAKE SUPPER

Annually on Shrove Tuesday, the Tuesday before Ash Wednesday, our children and youth help the Men's Group to prepare and cook a pancake supper for parishioners.

An overall organizer is needed to distribute tickets for children and youth to sell and to ensure kids are available for all jobs on the day:

- Set up
- Ticket taking
- Cooking
- Serving
- Clean Up

In addition to signing kids up for the various jobs required at the supper, the organizer should be aware of communicating the event to parishioners to ensure a good turnout.

And of course there is the usual "herding of cats" to make sure all the kids are doing their jobs on the day, while still having fun!

Proceeds from the pancake supper benefit youth and children's activities at the church.



POCs: Men's Group - Joe Morgan, John Stuckey, Frank McCarty

# Lent

DURING LENT, SUNDAY SCHOOL CONTINUES AS USUAL, BUT THERE ARE A FEW EXTRA ELEMENTS.

Since the COVID-19 pandemic, St. Jude's has provided "Lent at Home" packets for families with children that have greatly enhanced their observation and understanding of the season of Lent. These packets usually consist of a devotional guide, a coloring page to map out the 40 days of Lent, and a few other small items.

Every year, St. Jude's locks up the "alleluias." Children are encouraged to decorate ribbons with the word "alleluia" in glitter glue, which on Ash Wednesday are put in the box in front of the altar for the duration of Lent. Easter Sunday, the alleluias are placed in and around the Easter garden in the breezeway.



St. Jude's children and youth typically undertake a few extra service projects during Lent. One idea that made its debut in 2022 was an "Easter Tree" with tags depicting a need of senior residents of Twin Cities Pavilion in Niceville. Parishioners provided the needed items and the youth delivered them to the Pavilion near Easter.

# Holy Week

## THERE ARE SEVERAL CHILDREN'S ACTIVITIES ON HOLY SATURDAY

It's important to keep the children of St. Jude's involved in as many aspects of the church year as we can.

Holy week is a busy week, starting with Palm Sunday. Before Sunday School, children participate in the procession of palms from the parking lot into the sanctuary.

Holy Saturday is a busy morning for the church - it is typically the day volunteers clean and decorate the sanctuary in preparation for Easter. While that is happening, the children traditionally plant an Easter garden on the table in the breezeway. Families are asked to bring a flower or two to plant along with gardening gloves and spades. An organizer will need to provide potting soil and help coordinate the planting of the garden.



At the same time, another table is set up in the breezeway where the children can dye Easter eggs. Each child is asked to bring three hard-boiled eggs to dye, and a volunteer is in charge of setting up, helping to dye the eggs, and cleaning up. He or she also usually brings extra eggs to dye, and snacks for the kids.

When the garden is planted and eggs are dyed, a volunteer reads the story of Easter to the assembled children.



# Easter Sunday



## FLOWERING THE CROSS

At the start of the 10:30 service on Easter Sunday, the children participate in "flowering the cross." Flowers are placed all over the wire cross at the front of the altar.

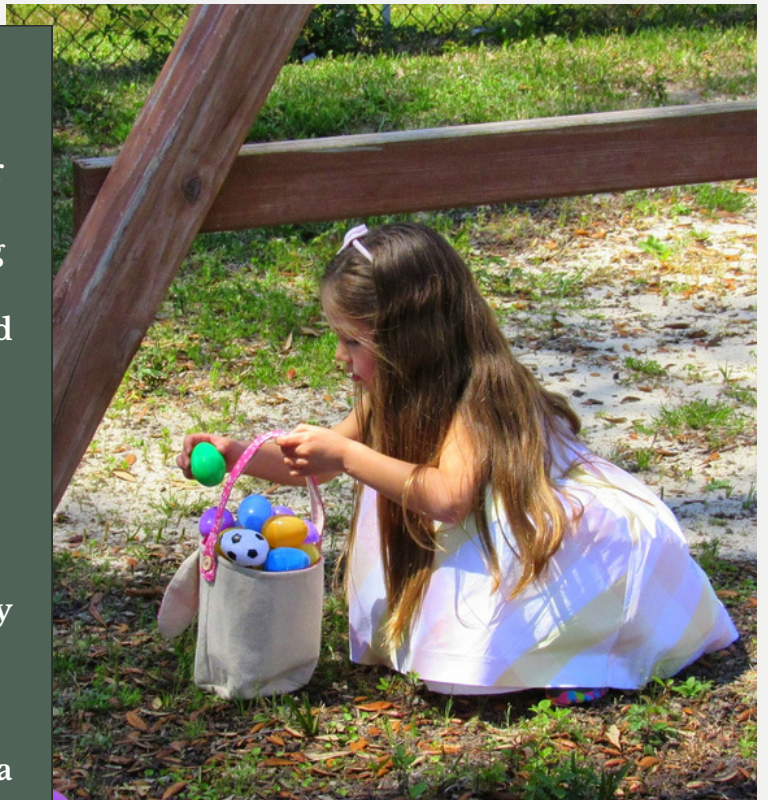
Someone will be needed to obtain flowers, coordinate the timing of the activity with the rector, and ensure all children have the opportunity to participate.

## EASTER EGG HUNT

St. Jude's traditionally holds an Easter Egg hunt after the 10:30 service on Easter Sunday. Two areas for hunting are set up; the main lawn and garden for older children, and the playground for the youngest ones.

In 2022, a scavenger hunt was organized for the older youth, which was a lot of fun for them.

Volunteers are needed to collect candy from parishioners (nothing chocolate!), stuff eggs, hide eggs, and collect the empty eggs for reuse. Of course, directing the egg hunts is also a large part of the day.



# Mother's Day

ST. JUDE'S TRADITIONALLY HOLDS A YOUTH-LED SERVICE FOR MOTHER'S DAY.

Someone with great organizational skills is needed to put together the annual Mother's Day service.

The main activities necessary are all behind-the-scenes and leading up to the service.

The volunteer will need to coordinate with parents to ensure youth and children are signed up to participate in the 10:30 worship service.

A volunteer will also obtain pink and white carnations for the greeters to pass out to mothers upon arrival.



During the Mother's Day service, youth and children typically serve as:

- Ushers/greeters - passing out flowers and bulletins, helping guests find a seat
- Readers: Old Testament Reading, Psalm, Epistle, Prayers of the People (this one can be split among multiple readers)
- Bringing the offerings and Sharing & Caring donations up to the altar during the Doxology
- Serving as acolytes, chalice bearers, and other lay leadership roles at the discretion of the rector
- Singing or performing music during the prelude, offertory, or postlude (coordinated with the music director)
- Delivering the sermon - this role is not always filled by one of the youth; if it is, it's usually a graduating senior. Check with the rector before recruiting for this role.

# Senior Recognition



In the spring as high school and college graduation nears, St. Jude's recognizes our graduating seniors with a special presentation.

The Sewing Guild typically creates a hand-made quilt to present to each of the high school graduates. (This may change as fewer of our members are involved in sewing.)

College graduates are also recognized during the service.



A volunteer is needed to determine who is graduating and how many gifts are needed. They also need to contact parents to ensure the graduates being honored will be in attendance on the Sunday of recognition, and coordinate or obtain gifts for the graduates.

Always meet with the rector to determine which Sunday to recognize graduates.



# Pentecost

## PARISH PICNIC

St. Jude's typically hosts some kind of parish event on Pentecost Sunday - a picnic, family pool party, canoe trip, or something similar.

For events of this size, multiple volunteers are needed for coordination and planning.

From finding a venue (or deciding on the church lawn), to planning games and activities, to the all-important food and refreshments - there is a lot that goes into these family events!

There is strength in numbers, though, so leverage the skills of the active members of St. Jude's. One central point of contact is critical to recruiting volunteers to run all aspects of the event and provide the overall organization and coordination that will make everything run smoothly.

While youth and children are an integral part of these events, remember they're for the entire church and it takes the whole parish to make them a success!



Whatever event the church has in mind for Pentecost, it has likely been done before - and there is probably someone around who knows all the lessons learned in planning and organizing. Ask around and you will find a wealth of information and helpers eager to make this year's Pentecost event the most fun ever.



# Vacation Bible School



OVER THE SUMMER, ST. JUDE'S TYPICALLY DOES NOT HOLD TRADITIONAL SUNDAY SCHOOL.

Holding a "Vacation Bible School" on Sunday mornings rather than over the course of a week in summer has proven to be popular with kids, parents, and volunteers. A volunteer VBS director needs to choose a curriculum, schedule which Sundays to hold VBS, recruit volunteers to set up/tear down decorations, and ask for volunteers to help register children and teach the VBS sessions every Sunday. VBS usually takes the entirety of time during the 10:30 worship service each week.

# Backpack Blessing



Usually the first Sunday before or after the start of the school year (consult the rector along with the school calendar), St. Jude's hosts a backpack blessing for students heading back to school.

Children and youth are invited to bring their backpacks up to the altar rail before the service begins. During the service, the backpacks are blessed by the rector and each student receives a small token to remind them of God's presence with them and love for them throughout the school year.

In the past, St. Jude's has combined the Backpack Blessing with a "Back to School Bash" in which inflatable water slides and other fun activities were brought to the church lawn. While a huge hit with the kids, for the grown-up volunteers a party outside in August is usually a little too hot!

Coordinating a family pool party or canoe trip to mark back-to-school time is another idea that has been a hit with St. Jude's kids in previous years.

Of course, nothing is required - a simple blessing and small gift may be quite enough!



A volunteer is needed to schedule the Backpack Blessing with the rector, practice good communication to ensure parents are aware, and obtain small token gifts for the students and hand them out on the day. Make sure someone takes a photo!

# Family Canoe Trip



## CAN YOU CANOE? WE CAN TOO!

- A family canoe trip has been a St. Jude's tradition for many years. Typically, this has been scheduled for the late summer or early fall.
- Locations have included Blackwater Creek, Cold Water Creek, and - in lieu of a group canoe trip - a picnic with water activities at Rocky Bayou State Park which included boats, kayaks, and canoes.
- Participants are encouraged to bring a lunch and warned that they WILL get wet!
- Ensure everyone fills out a release form/waver in order to participate. The office has a standard form that is used every year.

PAST POC: JOE MORGAN

# Charity & Donations



THE CHILDREN  
AND YOUTH  
PARTICIPATE IN  
MANY CHURCH-  
WIDE DRIVES

## KIDS CAN HELP

Making church-wide donation drives and fundraising activities relevant to kids allows them to understand the importance of "being" the church.

The youth and children even sponsor particular donation drives and events throughout the year to which the whole church can contribute.

Some activities in which St. Jude's children and youth have played a role include:

- Thanksgiving and Christmas baskets - the youth have donated at least one basket
- Angel tree - children make the ornaments and can help shop for and donate gifts
- Blessing of the Animals - the youth traditionally collect donations for animal shelters
- Coat Drive - youth set up donation boxes for coats to be donated to local elementary schools
- Twin Cities Pavilion - youth collect items such as toiletries multiple times per year for donation
- Supper on Saturday - youth can help assemble and distribute meals in this monthly activity





# Sunday School & EYC

St. Jude's traditionally holds three children's Sunday School classes:

- Nursery
- Pre-K - 1st Grade
- 2nd Grade - 5th Grade

While the nursery is usually operated by a paid staff member, the two Sunday school classes are run by volunteers. Two adults are needed in each classroom: a teacher and an observer. If there are not enough adults to help, classes have been known to combine.

St. Jude's always needs volunteers to organize and teach Sunday School!



Sunday School and EYC traditionally take a break during the summers to give parents and volunteers much-needed time off!



Middle- and high-school-age youth sit with their families during worship, and are often asked to help as acolytes, lectors, and/or musicians. Youth are the future of the church so it's important to get them involved!

The youth are also automatically members of the Episcopal Youth Community, or EYC. This is another way we reach the future leaders of our church with the message of God's love. EYC is entirely run by volunteers who organize and coordinate activities. Timing needs to be worked out with youth and their parents, so flexibility is important. EYC has met before on Wednesday nights, Sunday nights, or even after church. It all depends on everyone's schedules.

It's also important to balance service projects, learning, and fun activities to keep the youth interested in attending.



# Required Training

The Diocese of the Central Gulf Coast requires everyone who works with children and youth to take online Safe Church / Safe Communities training.

Every parish has a training administrator who can help sign you and your volunteers up for training.

At St. Jude's, the current training administrator is Dorothy Briley.

All volunteers working with children and youth should take the Abuse & Neglect Course and Duty to Report Mandated Reporter Course. Those working directly with the Youth Program should also take the Social Media Safety course and the Preventing Bullying course.

Having employees and volunteers well-trained in abuse prevention is essential in creating a safe environment for everyone.



More information about the required training can also be found on the Diocese website at [www.diocgc.org](http://www.diocgc.org).

You can also ask any member of the youth committee for more information.

# Children and Youth Ministry Team



## WE ARE HERE TO HELP!

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