

WOLF WATCH

— WEEKLY E-NEWS —

News for the Week of December 3

All School

Join Us! Coffee & Conversation With the Head and Board

Mark your calendars! Please join us for Coffee & Conversation with the Head of School and members of our Board of Trustees.

- This is a chance for you to hear directly from Steve and our Executive Committee Board members, as well as to ask questions.
- We have two sessions scheduled this month—the first on **Thursday, December 7, at 7:00 p.m.** and the second on **Tuesday, December 12, at 8:00 a.m.**



We hope to see you there!

Admissions Application Deadline Is Wednesday

Turning in an admissions application?

- Be sure to complete it by the deadline, which is this **Wednesday, December 6.**

- Please note that all other supporting documents are due by **Thursday, February 1.**
- With any questions, please [e-mail us](#).

Curious About the Upper School?

All parents (with students in any grade level) are invited to attend our Upper School Open House this **Tuesday, December 5, from 7:00-9:00 p.m. on the South Campus.** Check-in begins at 6:45 p.m. [Click here to RSVP.](#)

Announcing the Winner of Our SFF Parking Space

Huge congratulations to Jason Kaniss, winner of our drawing for yearlong use of the St. Francis Fund parking space—and many thanks to him and everyone else who have already supported St. Francis by making a gift or pledge!

PA Pointers

SHOW YOU CARE WITH THE CHRISTMAS COLLECTION

The Parents Association invites you to make a contribution to the annual Christmas Collection.

- This monetary gift is handed out each year at the Teacher Appreciation Cookie Party, and your contribution goes to EVERYONE—faculty, staff, sextons, Dining Hall personnel, police officers, full- and part-time coaches, and Explore and Extend after-school teachers. Each employee will receive an equal distribution of the collection, with adjustments made for part-time staff and coaches.
- These contributions honor our *School Handbook* policy that prohibits the purchase or solicitation of individual gifts for faculty/staff.
- If you'd like to contribute by check, please make it payable to the St. Francis Parents Association, with "Christmas Gift" noted in the memo section. Mail it to the school to the attention of the Parents Association, or place it in the Parents Association box in the school reception area.
- You may also contribute via the [PA website](#).
- **All contributions must be received by Friday, December 8.**

We hope you will join us in showing our appreciation for our tremendous faculty and staff!

WANT TO GET INVOLVED?

If you or someone you know would like to be a part of the Parents Association, please e-mail [Jennifer Stringer](#) for job descriptions.

CALLING ALL BAKERS: HELP MAKE OUR TEACHERS FEEL SPECIAL!

Help the Parents Association celebrate St. Francis teachers this Christmas season with cookies! Sign up to **bring cookies on Wednesday, December 13**, either online [here](#), or by e-mailing [Leigh Williams](#).

ST. NICHOLAS TOY GATHERING SUCCESS!

On Friday, December 1, Santa and his helpers from the Village Fire Department filled bags and bags with toys donated by grinning and giggling children. There were so many bags that it took multiple trips to get them back to the firehouse.

These toys will benefit the families of Houston through Toys for Tots. Thank you for your generosity and for making Christmas a merry time for so many in our community!

Primary School

From the Division Head

There is no better place to be this time of year than school. The joy that comes from being with children during this season of waiting is a blessing.

Before my children were in Episcopal schools, I had little understanding of **the importance of the Advent season**. Certainly, I knew that excitement and anticipation were inherent in preparations for Christmas.

But Advent is more than that.

Advent, the first season on the church calendar, is derived from the Latin word *adventus*, meaning “coming.”

We have many ways of appreciating this season in our school community. As our students learn, we are anticipating the birth of the Christ child and we are preparing a room for Him in our hearts. Having to wait, being patient, and not always rushing to get what we want makes the arrival even better. It is not meant to be easy.

In other news, **our schoolwide St. Nicholas Toy Ingathering project was very successful**. It was fun seeing our students bring in toys each morning and place them under the Christmas trees in each cottage. This Toys for Tots project gave us the opportunity to put aside our own wants as we wait and consider the needs of others.

I hope you will take advantage of the wonder and beauty of this season with your family.

Christmas is coming, and it will be worth the wait!

Blessings,

Amy Whitley, MA
Head of Primary School

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Primary School Dining Hall Menu

To view the Primary School Dining Hall menu for December, please click [here](#).

Mark Your Calendar

Tuesday, December 5

- *Chapel: 9:30 a.m.*

Wednesday, December 6

- *St. Nicholas Chapel: 9:30 a.m.; Primary I and II students wear uniforms*
-

Monday, December 11

- *Primary I Christmas Party: 1:30 p.m. in the classrooms; parents invited*
-

Tuesday, December 12

- *Chapel: 9:30 a.m.*
 - *T/Th Pre-Primary Christmas Party: 1:30 p.m. in the classrooms; parents invited*
-

Wednesday, December 13

- *Lessons and Carols Chapel: 9:30 a.m.; Primary I and II students wear uniforms*
 - *MWF Pre-Primary Christmas Party: 1:30 p.m. in the classrooms; parents invited*
-

Thursday, December 14

- *Primary II Christmas Pageants and Parties: Parents invited; please [click here to view the schedule](#) for each class*

Lower School

From the Division Head

Please join us for our annual Christmas Concerts! The children have worked so hard and enjoy performing for you. The dates and times are listed under "Mark Your Calendar," below.

This week's **Parent Connection** provides information about flexible grouping. In a differentiated classroom, teachers use a variety of methods in order to

accommodate all learning styles, interests, and levels of skill and readiness. One of the instructional methods we use at St. Francis is *flexible grouping*.

Grouping students is not a new concept; teachers have been grouping students since the days of the original one-room schoolhouse. Original grouping was based on age or ability, which led to students feeling labeled and ranked. Flexible grouping, however, groups and regroups students in a variety of ways throughout the school day.

We recognize that students learn in varying ways and at varying rates and have differing interests and needs. With flexible grouping, students are temporarily grouped together for the purpose of delivering information or working on an activity based on the type of differentiation the learner requires. This can be done in whole groups, small groups, with partners, and even individually.

Flexible grouping takes a lot of planning by the teacher. Faculty members review assessment data, testing results, and anecdotal notes, as well as consider the student's interests and specific needs to form appropriate groups.

The key to successful groups is flexibility. As students change, the groups will change.

Teachers group students within their classes, but sometimes groups are formed with students from different classrooms. This type of flexible grouping allows students to meet with the specialists we are fortunate to have here. As you might imagine, flexible grouping promotes maximum learning and optimal student performance because assessment is frequent and learning is meeting students' needs.

For more on flexible grouping, click [here](#). Please also feel free to contact us to talk more about it—or if you'd like to know more about anything else we do here in Lower School! We would love to share the great things happening in our classrooms.

Have a blessed week!

Warmly,

Carol Christ, MEd
Head of Lower School

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- With any questions, please [e-mail us](#).

Mark Your Calendar

Monday, December 4

- *Dress Uniform Day*
 - *Birthday Chapel:* Students with a December 3-9 birthday will receive a birthday pencil in Chapel today
 - *Christmas Concert:* Grades 1 and 2; 6:00 p.m. in the Fine Arts Center
-

Tuesday, December 5

- *Christmas Concert:* Grades 3 and 4 and Joyful Sounds Choir; 6:00 p.m. in the Fine Arts Center
-

Wednesday, December 6

- *Dress Uniform Day*
 - *St. Nicholas Eucharist:* 8:05 a.m.
 - *Christmas Concert:* Kindergarten; 9:15 a.m. in the Fine Arts Center
-

Monday, December 11

- *Dress Uniform Day*

- *Birthday Chapel*: Students with a birthday between December 10 and the end of the month will receive a birthday pencil in Chapel today
-

Thursday, December 14

- *Regular Uniform Day*
 - *Sing-a-Long*: 9:00 a.m. in the Fine Arts Center; students only
-

Friday, December 15

- *Dress Uniform Day*
- *Lessons and Carols*: 9:00 a.m. in the Fine Arts Center; students only
- *Polar Express Day*: Celebrations in classrooms throughout the day; **students may bring robes and slippers in their backpacks**; students only

Middle School

13 Reasons Why Not To: December Choices Parent Meeting and Student Assemblies

Teen depression and anxiety are on the rise. Popular shows such as *13 Reasons Why* glamorize suicide and high-risk behavior. The Choices program for December will highlight causes of these mood issues, and parents will learn what they can do to prevent and treat these problems and will preview the upcoming student presentation.

- **Wednesday, December 6**: Parent Presentation, 1:30-2:30 p.m.
- **Thursday, December 7**: Student Presentations, 8:10 a.m. (Grades 5 and 6) and 9:15 a.m. (Grades 7 and 8)

We hope all parents will join us on December 6 at 1:30 p.m. for this informative and powerful presentation. (Please see "From the Division Head," below, for additional information.)

From the Division Head

As is mentioned above, we have a wonderful opportunity this week to

reconnect with our Choices program, which addresses at-risk behavior during adolescent development.

The topic of discussion this week is teen anxiety and depression, and we will be talking about **how to help families cope with mood issues caused by such catalysts as technology use and bullying.**

On **Wednesday, December 6, from 1:30-2:30 p.m.**, we host Dr. Crystal Collier, director of the Choices Program in partnership with the Council on Recovery-Houston, for a parent meeting and presentation. Dr. Collier is an expert in helping adolescents and their families cope with at-risk behavior, and she has been partnering with school communities for years in this endeavor.

On **Thursday, December 7**, we will again host Dr. Collier to work with our fifth and sixth graders during one assembly and our seventh and eighth graders in another assembly. We hope to see you all on December 6.

Our programming class is developing android apps, and we need devices to test our work.

If you have an old phone or tablet that works but is no longer in use, please put it in an envelope and drop it off with the front receptionist or in the Middle School Office.

- You can wipe it clean yourself, or we will wipe it for you.
- Chargers/cables are also welcome.
- Cracks and low batteries are okay as long as the device works.

If you have any questions, please contact Steve Johnson at 713.458.6146.

It's a beautiful day, and we are Wolves!

Sincerely,

Connor Cook, EdD
Head of Middle School

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Mark Your Calendar

Monday, December 4

- *Regular Schedule/Dress Uniform Day*
 - *Explore and Extend Spring Enrollment Opens*
-

Tuesday, December 5

- *Regular Schedule/Regular Uniform*
 - *Eighth-Grade Bible Study: 7:15-7:45 a.m. in the Christian Education rooms at the end of the Middle School hallway*
 - *Seventh-Grade Water Crawl Field Trip: 8:00 a.m.-2:45 p.m., off campus*
 - *Upper School Open House: 7:00 p.m. on the South Campus*
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Wednesday, December 6

- *Special Schedule/Dress Uniform Day*
 - *Bible Study for Seventh Graders: 7:15-7:45 a.m. in the Christian Education rooms at the end of the Middle School hallway*
 - *St. Nicholas Eucharist: 11:05-11:55 a.m.*
 - *Choices Assembly for Parents: 1:30-2:30 p.m. in the Hogan Board Room*
-

Thursday, December 7

- *Special Schedule/Regular Uniform Day*
- *Bible Study for Fifth and Sixth Graders: 7:15-7:45 a.m. in the Christian Education rooms at the end of the Middle School hallway*

- *Choices Assembly for Grades 5 and 6: 8:10-9:10 a.m. in the Fine Arts Center*
 - *Choices Assembly for Grades 7 and 8: 9:30-10:30 a.m. in the Fine Arts Center*
-

Friday, December 8

- *Regular Schedule/Regular Friday Uniform*
- *Q2 Community Service Forms Due to MS Office*
- *NJHS Meeting: 7:15-7:45 a.m. in the Wheatcroft Parish Hall*
- *WEB Activity: 10:45-11:15 a.m. in fifth-grade classrooms and in the Christian Education rooms at the end of the Middle School hallway*

Church

What's Happening at the Church This Winter?

St. Francis Episcopal Church's winter and Christmas event schedule is now online. [Click here for the St. Francis winter and Christmas timeline.](#)

Christmas Eve Nativity Pageants

On **Christmas Eve, December 24**, toddlers through fifth graders are invited to participate in our Christmas Eve Nativity Pageants! We will hold two pageants, one at the **2:00 p.m.** service and one at the **5:00 p.m.** service.

Please fill out the [online registration form](#), and be sure to indicate which service your family will attend.

The church will provide costumes, which will be fitted at the rehearsals.

Spring First Communion

First Communion classes begin **Sunday, January 14**. This is an eight-week course designed to prepare second-grade students to receive the Holy Eucharist. If you would like to sign up or request further information, please e-mail [Nichole Hilgert](#).