

St. Brigid School News



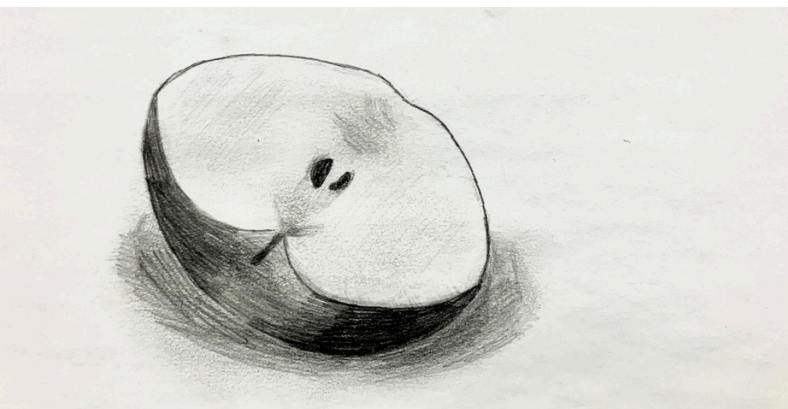
SHINING LIGHT IN THE WORLD



STUDIES IN LINE, SHAPE, AND SHADING

Students in 7th and 8th grade worked to bring 2 dimensional drawings of fruit to more sophisticated 3-dimensional compositions using shading techniques. Kneaded erasers and professional drawing pencils give a seriousness to the process and quality of the finished works of art.

Younger students who saw their work were inspired to try the same drawing challenge. On the left is the work of a middle school student in black and white, and on the right, that of a second grader in color!



WE HAVE AN AMAZING ART PROGRAM!

Welcome to Mrs. Ina Qirushi, art teacher for students in grades 1 through 8! In just a few weeks, Ina has raised the bar on the art program at St. Brigid School. Her gentle and skilled approach has been very successful in bringing to light the gifts and talents of our students through technical and creative art instruction.

Students are learning the basic elements of art, such as line, shape, form, value, color, and texture and learning how to apply them to create works to be proud of.



MORE EXCITING WORK TO COME

As the students in all grades become more proficient in the use of the basic elements, more art principles, techniques and supplies will be introduced.

We are very excited to see what is coming next and we are blessed beyond measure to have the skill, patience, encouragement and teaching Mrs. Qirushi brings. She has great faith in the skills and abilities of our students and is sure to bring out the artist in each individual.

A LETTER FROM MR. BURKE

Dear Friends of St. Brigid School,

While reviewing the final copy of this newsletter, I was deeply grateful for what the students experience at our school each day.

Experiences shape who we are, and St. Brigid School offers many opportunities for our students to grow in all aspects of their lives.

From learning the basics to becoming critical thinkers who perceive the world through the lens of the message of Jesus, the gospel, and our Church, our students are challenged to be their best selves in all that they do.

The bar is high, and our students continue to achieve their personal definition of greatness in all their endeavors, both as members of our school and of the broader community, guided by a program that helps them grow in partnership with their parents.

As you read and reflect on this newsletter, I pray that you continue to support our efforts to nurture children's faith and academics as we build God's kingdom here on earth.

Every action we take, person we meet, and life we impact has meaning and informs us as we move towards what St. Brigid School will be in the years to come. I want you to be a big part of our present and future.

Thanks for your support and prayers in making these experiences real and transformative for our students.

Sincerely,

Bill Burke
Principal



STRATEGIC PLANNING

Planning has begun for a revised Strategic Plan to guide the school through to the next accreditation review.

The committee for Mission and Identity is gathering feedback and information to help ensure we continue to live true to our mission and look at what our identity is currently and determine in what ways we need to grow in the future.

Ongoing plans for improvements to the existing facilities are at the forefront of the plan. Completing overdue maintenance and enhancing safety measures will allow the school to continue to operate on this campus as long as possible.

We have already seen changes to the curriculum this year with the Spirit of Truth religion program. We are committed to continue to look at other ways to maintain the rigor in academics as that is an important part of who we are and what we do.

The questions to reflect on are:

Where do we want to be in 5 years? And where do we see the school in 10 years?

More information on the direction we are going will be forthcoming as the plan develops.

SAFETY MEETINGS RECAP

Chris Fitzpatrick, Special Agent with Homeland Security Investigations visited the school in October to give a presentation to parents, staff, and students on the subject of Online Safety. The content was enlightening and led the administration to be more careful to discern what information about students should be public and what should not be public. Do we post our schedules and events? Do we put students out on Facebook and Instagram despite the possibility of hidden location tags and other identifiers?

How do adults handle the safety of their children when they are exposed to and utilize online platforms prone to predators with minimal if any real protections available? These are real questions and challenges for all of us as we teach our youth to navigate a complex technological world.

Also in October, members of our safety team, Paul Fenton, Cape Elizabeth Police Chief, Robb Couture, Former Captain with the South Portland Fire Department and current Project Manager for Emergency Management at Maine Health, along with Mike Magalski, Director of the Office of Professional Responsibility at Portland Diocese presented information and addressed concerns of parents regarding the safety of the school facilities.

Key take aways and actions in process are:

- Trainings for staff and students have been in place for over 12 years and happen continuously.
- In the spring of 2025, each classroom and space in the school was assessed and practical action steps were provided to help everyone make pertinent decisions to keep students safe depending on the nature of the event.
- A risk assessment of our campus was completed by Maine Emergency Management Association and the Portland Diocese.
- The results of the MEMA assessment informed our application for a FEMA Safety Grant, which has been completed. We prayerfully await the decision and are actively preparing and planning for safety upgrades, whether we are awarded the grant or not.



Greetings from Fr. Paul



Dear Members and Friends of the St. Brigid School Community,

In recent years as we enter January, a week or so after Christmas and Epiphany, I like to share with the parish the words of Howard Thurman's *The Work of Christmas*. Thurman (1890-1981) was a theologian, author, educator and civil rights leader. He was a mentor of Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Thurman wrote:

"When the song of the angels is stilled, When the star in the sky is gone, When the kings and princes are home, When the shepherds are back with their flock, The work of Christmas begins:
To find the lost, To heal the broken, To feed the hungry, To release the prisoner, To rebuild the nations, To bring peace among others, To make music in the heart."

Those two brief lines express the heart of the mission of St. Brigid School, to lead and invite our students and families to come to know Jesus Christ and to share in his Mission. Classes, prayer experiences, direct service opportunities such as serving at the St. Vincent de Paul Food Kitchen are a few ways St. Brigid invites your children into a friendship with Jesus.

This is all very good. On its own it is not enough. We invite and need your families to make a relationship with Jesus a part of your family life. Leading your family in prayer at home, participating in Sunday worship in your home church or other place of prayer are two important ways to connect with and support the school's efforts.

St. Ignatius, the founder of the Jesuits, knew that often our lives are very busy. He recommends a short, reflective prayer that can help keep us stay focused on what really matters. He called that prayer the "Examen."

The Jesuits of the US and Canada offer this brief video on doing an Annual Examen. It can easily be adapted to a daily or weekly prayer.

Use the links below or the QR codes on the right to find the Examen prayer, which you can use to reflect on the events of the past year, past week, or past day. Following this practice in some regular way only takes minutes and has brought many people blessings.

Examen prayer: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WCPfNgmjFLc>

Examen prayer for children: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IBOySNESxb4>

As we begin a New Year, I pray it may be a source of blessing for your family and for the Mission we share at St. Brigid School.

If there is any way Our Lady of Hope Parish or I can be of assistance to you in your spiritual journey, please contact me.

Blessings,
Fr Paul Sullivan, S.J.

PRACTICE THE EXAMEN

The Jesuits of the US and Canada offer this brief video on doing an Annual Examen.

It can easily be adapted to a daily or weekly prayer. Scan the QR code below to view the video.



EXAMEN PRAYER FOR CHILDREN

Here's a 2-minute version that is especially for children.

Scan the QR code to view the video.



FAITH IS ALIVE AT ST. BRIGID SCHOOL



This year, Bishop Ruggieri and the office of the Superintendent worked to unify the Religion curriculum taught at all Maine Catholic Schools. The Spirit of Truth curriculum by Sophia Institute is the program he chose, and it is in use at St. Brigid School.

The daily, interactive lessons cover the breadth of the catechism in a meaningful and age-appropriate way. It is designed to connect with students of diverse backgrounds and differing familiarity with the Catholic Faith.

Not only does this curriculum help students understand their faith, but it also helps them internalize faith and apply it to their own lives. The program gives students time to reflect on how everything they are learning applies to their own lived experience. This is all brought to life in the everyday experiences in the school and with the help of Barbara Vassallo, students are carrying the lessons they learn out into the world.



[Parent and Family Activities](#)



TO LEARN MORE ABOUT UPCOMING
FAITH FORMATION ACTIVITIES FOR
FAMILIES
AT THE SCHOOL AND PARISH



[Our Lady of Hope Parish](#)



FAMILY FAITH ACTIVITIES

The vision of Fr. Paul two years ago gave a great gift to St. Brigid School in the creation of the position of a Spiritual Animator. This role is unique to St. Brigid School and allows for more opportunities to strengthen the faith practices of students, staff and parents.

In building faith in the school, the hope is to deepen the connections between the school community and the parish and with the grace of God, it may inspire families to deepen their relationship with God and their parish family, help families re-connect with the church, or bring families along to find their way to a life within a church.

Barbara Vassallo has worked to bring so many moments and experiences to the school, family, and parish life.

The connections she has made with the Society of Jesus have brought to life a series of faith conversations through the Faith Feeds Series presented by Boston College. Topics included: Hope, Reconciliation, The Rosary, Friendship, Gratitude, and Advent Faith and Love.

Our Lady of Hope sponsored two book groups, which Barbara promoted through the school. The books included "Jesus, A Pilgrimage" by James Martin, SJ and "Seeing with the Heart" by Kevin O'Brien, SJ.

Fr. Kevin O'Brien gave a talk in the OLH Parish Hall, sponsored by the Ignatian Spirituality Partnership of Maine at the end of the book group.



ONGOING SERVICE PROJECTS

Middle school students visit St. Vincent de Paul Soup Kitchen to help prepare and serve food to the clients who need those services.

They do random acts of kindness, such as assisting the crew at Evergreen Cemetery with fall clean up.

Parents and students visit the residents at the Maine Veteran's Home in Scarborough each month. In addition, younger students put their faith into action by visiting our neighbors at Park Danforth and Deering Pavillion. Whether it is giving time and attention to the residents with a visit,

sending letters through a pen pal exchange or delivering cards, singing songs, praying the rosary, playing games and having tea and snacks, the students are living the values of faith by exemplifying the Corporal and Spiritual Works of Mercy, which come from the foundations of our founding Sisters of Mercy.

These things also reflect the nature of the Ignatian Spiritual Vision--teaching students to live like Jesus and shining the light of God through their actions.

PRAYER SERVICES AND CLASSROOM FAITH ACTIVITIES

Weekly Mass is vibrant, thanks to the collaboration of Barbara and music teacher Andy Happel. Students practice Liturgical Music weekly, that is then sung during school Mass each week.

During weekly visits to the classrooms, Barbara leads students to create banners, learn verses from the Bible, study Scripture and deepen their knowledge of the Catholic faith. They are reminded to be Christ-like in all they do.

Faith Explorers is a new afterschool offering this year that uses the book "You Cat for Kids" and offers an opportunity for parents and students to grow in their faith, deepen their relationship with God, and each other and help them to develop and nurture the skills necessary for a lifelong love for living out their faith.

In addition, Barbara assists with the monthly rosary which is open to parents, staff and students, before school once a month. She organized the Living Rosary and supports other activities that align with the Liturgical life of the church. Activities include, celebrating All Saint's Day, the Mass of the Holy Spirit, Catholic Schools Week Family Mass, and working with the 8th graders on the Living Stations which will be presented on Good Friday.



DRAWING GOD

Through the Children's Ministry Partnership, guest speaker and author Karen Keifer visited St. Brigid School to read her book "Drawing God" to all the students, and lead drawing session with Barbara Vassallo.

Reflecting on the book, the students then had the opportunity to draw God from the vision in each of their hearts. The drawings were compiled to create beautiful books of expression by the full student body.

It was a testament to the truth that God is in all things and exists in everyone's heart in a very personal way.

Afterschool Activities Enrich the Student Experience



BAKING CLUB

MEpowered Pastries has been graciously hosting baking classes for our students for three years!

What began as a trial 6-week session has turned into a full year offering. The fall session runs from September through November, and the spring session begins in March and ends in May. There is even a special winter session for holiday baking!

A mixed age group of students in grades 1 through 5, work with the instructor following a bake-learn-play model. This is a hands-on approach where each child receives a recipe card, prepares the ingredients and either takes them home to bake, or bakes them in our kitchen. All supplies to finish each recipe are provided.

The popularity of this club has grown. It is encouraged to sign up early when the registration comes out in the fall. This year's sessions are full!

Special pricing is available for students who have a regular full or part time space in our aftercare program.

The program is open to all students in grades 1 to 5. Curious? Try it out next year. You might find you have a sweet talent!



TINY ARTISTS STUDIO

It's not often that we are able to find instructors to work with preschool and pre-k students in the afterschool enrichment programs.

Thanks to Julie-Beth Blancas-Ruiz for presenting the Tiny Artist Studio this fall!

Students were excited to engage in art processes and crafts! From drawing, watercolor exploration and tempera painting, to making and playing with cinnamon dough, the student's afternoon was filled with smiles, excitement and learning opportunities!

CONNECT KIDS

Connect Kids has been part of the afterschool enrichment offerings for three years! The goal of this club is to help students build skills in mindfulness, leadership, and self-agency that can be applied to life. It is open to students in grades 1-5.

The lessons learned through games and fun activities build connections and relationships among the students. This in turn, fosters a sense of compassion, gratitude, and empathy for others. Students are building confidence, leadership skills, and the ability to effectively communicate in positive and helpful ways.

This highly popular club has students returning each year, and we are now able to offer both a fall and spring session!

Special pricing is available for students who have a regular full or part time space in our aftercare program and sibling discounts are available.



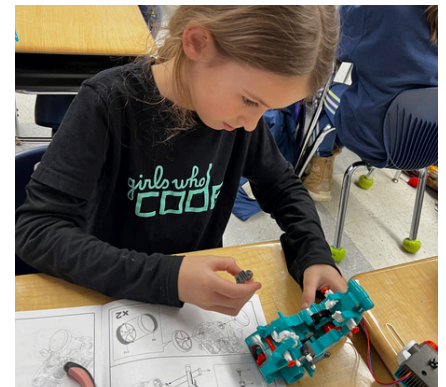
CREATIVE BUILDERS CLUB

Who doesn't love Legos? And how much fun is it to be challenged with a build?

Students in kindergarten through grade 2 were given the chance to use their critical thinking, problem solving skills and creativity to create things out of Lego's in this very interactive club.

Cooperation, teamwork, and fun were all elements needed to be successful in meeting the challenges presented each week.

This club brought afterschool play to a new level.



GIRLS WHO CODE

Girls Who Code is an international non-profit organization whose goal is to increase the number of women in the field of computer sciences.

This club inspires, educates, and equips girls in grades 3 - 5 with computing skills that will help them pursue 21st century opportunities.

Foundational computer science concepts are taught through hands-on lessons.

Students develop a new language through coding with a sisterhood of supportive peers and role models.

Thank you, Mrs. White and Mrs. Blancas-Ruiz for hosting this program!

AFTERSCHOOL ENRICHMENT



The afterschool enrichment program continues to grow. Interest has been high for the clubs offered with many full for the year!

The latest addition to the enrichment program is the Sounds of Silence Sign Language Club. It was originally offered to students in grades 3 through 8. The program is designed to teach students American Sign Language and Deaf culture.

Instructor Robin Sidders teaches in the style that learning must be fun. The students in the fall session worked to learn to sign some of the songs performed at our Christmas Concert. The success of this program is evident in the photo above. The students worked very hard to learn and present with beautiful reverence and skill!

Afterschool clubs are dependent on available instructors and student participation. We would love to offer more clubs for students in grades K-2 and middle school. Sarah Wagner, Director of Enrichment programs, continues to search for instructors for Stem Club, Drama Club, and other activities that will give opportunities for all students and affordable for all families.

If you have a skill, or business that would serve our students in our aftercare enrichment program and would like to offer your time to instruct a program, please contact Sarah Wagner.



Did you know parents are required to volunteer and be active in the community?

Contact Sarah Wagner if you would like to host an afterschool enrichment club.

EXTRACURRICULAR SPORTS PROGRAMS

BASEBALL



BOYS SOCCER



GIRLS SOCCER



SOFTBALL



GIRLS FIELD HOCKEY



CROSS COUNTRY



VOLLEYBALL



GIRLS BASKETBALL



BOYS BASKETBALL



OUTDOOR TRACK



A WORD ABOUT ATHLETICS

St. Brigid School athletes participate in the Southern Maine Middle School Athletic Conference, under the direction of Jobet Tardiff.

Mr. Tardiff shares, "With the Fall season behind us and winter sports strongly pushing ahead, I would like to congratulate the athletes for their stellar performances throughout the seasons thus far.

My first year with this great community has shown me just how much pride and spirit this school has."

INDOOR TRACK



Mr. Tardiff says, "As we continue with the school year, more sports options such as indoor/outdoor track, baseball, softball, and volleyball will become available.

Please watch for spring sports signups to open."



Welcome to Athletic Director, Jobet Tardiff!
Jobet is a 2025 graduate of St. Joseph's College of Maine. He joined our staff as a full time Physical Education Teacher and Athletic Director this fall.

Jobet's professionalism and enthusiasm for his roles have brought both the PE program and the Sports Program to a level of excellence!

MAZZONE MARKETING, LLC



WE ARE GRATEFUL TO OUR VENDORS:

We are so grateful to the vendors who consistently deliver quality uniforms and branded apparel to keep our students, parents, staff, and supporters looking sharp!

Students stand out in a positive way when they are seen in the community in their uniforms from Flynn O'Hara.

Athletes take pride in their performance and sportsmanship when they enter a field or court in sports jerseys supplied by Play it Again Sports.

Staff, families, and students show their pride when they show up to an event or wear their branded apparel created by Mazzone Marketing and Victor Rios SP out in the community.

Thank you to:

Joe Mazzone, alumni of St. Joseph's School and owner of Mazzone Marketing
Scott Rousseau, former parent of St. Brigid School students
Victor Rios, current parent of St. Brigid School student

Long time, continuous supporters are an integral part of our school community, and we are very appreciative of your commitment and service to St. Brigid.

Are you interested in supporting St. Brigid School through corporate sponsorship?

Are you an alumnus of a Catholic School? Would you like to honor or memorialize a teacher or family member by naming a classroom?

Contact Brooke Reid for more information: Brooke.Reid@portlanddiocese.org



We Love
to Make
You Smile

Dr. Chris "Topher" Pochebit

2004 graduate of St. Brigid, and 2008 graduate of Cheverus. Went on to major in Biotechnology at Endicott College while playing collegiate football. Returned home to Portland to graduate dental school at UNE. Dr. Pochebit enjoys all facets of dentistry and relieving patients of their predisposed fears they may have when visiting the dentist. He enjoys staying active with his wife Brittany, their three boys Daniel, Zachary and Ryan, and the family's yellow lab Franklin. Dr. P loves to stay involved in the community which he grew up and is currently the team dentist for the local Maine Mariners hockey team.



Cosmetic Dental
Care



Comprehensive
Family Dentistry



Adult Invisible
Braces



Dental
Implants



Crowns in a day

Accepting
New Patients!



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