



As we bid farewell to this year, let's carry forward the lessons learned, the faith shared, and the relationships built and strengthened. The new year brings with it renewed hope, fresh opportunities, and the chance to script new chapters in our journey together. Let's embrace the upcoming year with enthusiasm, determination, and a commitment to excellence. May we continue to support each other, learn from each other, and celebrate each other's successes; keeping in mind God is at the center of all that goodness. Wishing you all a peaceful and joyous end to this year and a new year filled with many moments of joy, growth, and blessings.

"The best way to spread **CHRISTMAS CHEER** is singing LOUD for all to hear."

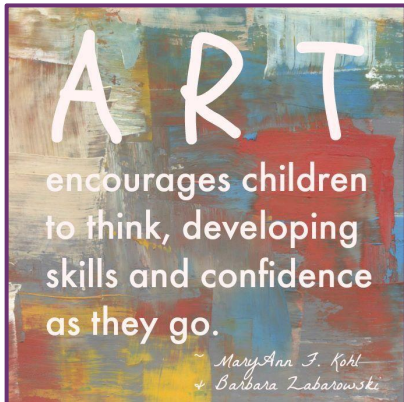
—Will Ferrell, *Elf*

Simon Shepherd is missing! It is census time in Bethlehem, and Simon is nowhere to be found. Bethlehem's best judge, Trudy Justice, is the only one who can preside over such a baffling case. Lawyers Matt Benlock and F. Lee Maybe fight it out to figure out whodunit!

Students at St. Mary School presented the Christmas musical, "The Mystery of Simon Shepherd" on Wednesday, December 13 at the Marit Elliott Performing Arts Center. Christmas musicals have long been a tradition at St. Mary's School. Based around the traditional story of the first Christmas, these plays have given generations of children the opportunity to get involved in a production and try their hand at performing in front of a big crowd of parents and peers.

The Little Saints Preschool also hosted a Christmas Program for their families on Friday, December 15th, that included an adorable Christmas Story play and snacks to celebrate Jesus' birthday!





Artist Carol Moore will again present an art residency for the SMS students from January 8th-12th. This year, Carol will focus her instruction on creative dramatics. Creative dramatics, also known as creative drama, is an educational and theatrical technique that combines elements of drama, storytelling, and improvisation to engage students in imaginative and expressive activities and games. It is often used in educational settings to develop creativity, communication skills, collaboration, and self-confidence in participants. In creative dramatics, students explore and enact stories, characters, and situations through improvisation and role-playing. Overall, creative dramatics provides a playful and interactive approach to learning and personal development, allowing individuals to tap into their imaginations, explore different perspectives, and engage in creative expression through the medium of drama.

Our facilitator, Carol Moore, a Central Minnesota Arts Board teaching artist and retired ECFE teacher, will be guiding the students through various activities and games. These activities will include storytelling, pantomime, improvisation, movement, voice work, and character development. Students will work individually, in pairs, and in groups to create and perform short scenes. Moore has a background in Theatre and has incorporated Creative Dramatics in her teaching for the past 20 years.

This activity was made possible through a grant from the Central Minnesota Arts Board, thanks to funds provided by the McKnight Foundation. SMS is also grateful to the Jane Mullen family for their continued support of our Partners In Art Program, which teaches our students about new artists each month during the school year.



- ♥ Thank you to Melrose Bowl for donating bowling to all our students in December!
- ♥ Thank you to the Grey Eagle Knights of Columbus for their recent donation of \$500 to St. Mary's School to purchase Bibles for our students. Every student at St. Mary's in grades 1-6 have a Bible in their hands that they will keep from year to year.
- ♥ Thank you to Granite City Door for donating a door for our boiler room to be up to code.



- Catholic Schools Week: January 26-February 2. This community-building week begins with our SMS/Alumni Mass and School Breakfast on Sunday, January 26th.
- SMS Auction4Education: **"Down on the Farm"** Mark your calendars for March 2nd, 2024!
 - **Raffle Tickets** are on sale now for \$100 each with a grand prize of \$20,000! Drawing will be held at 7:00pm the night of the auction.
 - **Dinner** at the Melrose American Legion on March 2nd from 5:00 to 8:00pm; free will donations for the food are appreciated. **50/50 drawings** will be held too; please join us there!
 - **Online Auction** at <http://www.bidpal.net/smsmelrose>. Online viewing begins on February 18th, online bidding begins on February 25th. Online bidding will close the night of the auction.
 - **Live Auction** for the classroom items will be held during the event-don't miss the excitement!
- Winter Open House: Monday, March 11th, 4:00-7:00pm

You can sponsor a child at SMS by donating to the Stacy Meyer Scholarship Fund at St. Mary's School or Sponsor A Child program through the parish. Contact SMS at 320-256-4257 or scan the QR code for more information.



Alumni and SMS Friends- To receive positive and uplifting messages from SMS, please sign up for our eNews at <https://mailchi.mp/3596b1349d3c/sms>, or use this QR code to access the site. *You will receive no more than one email per month.*

