

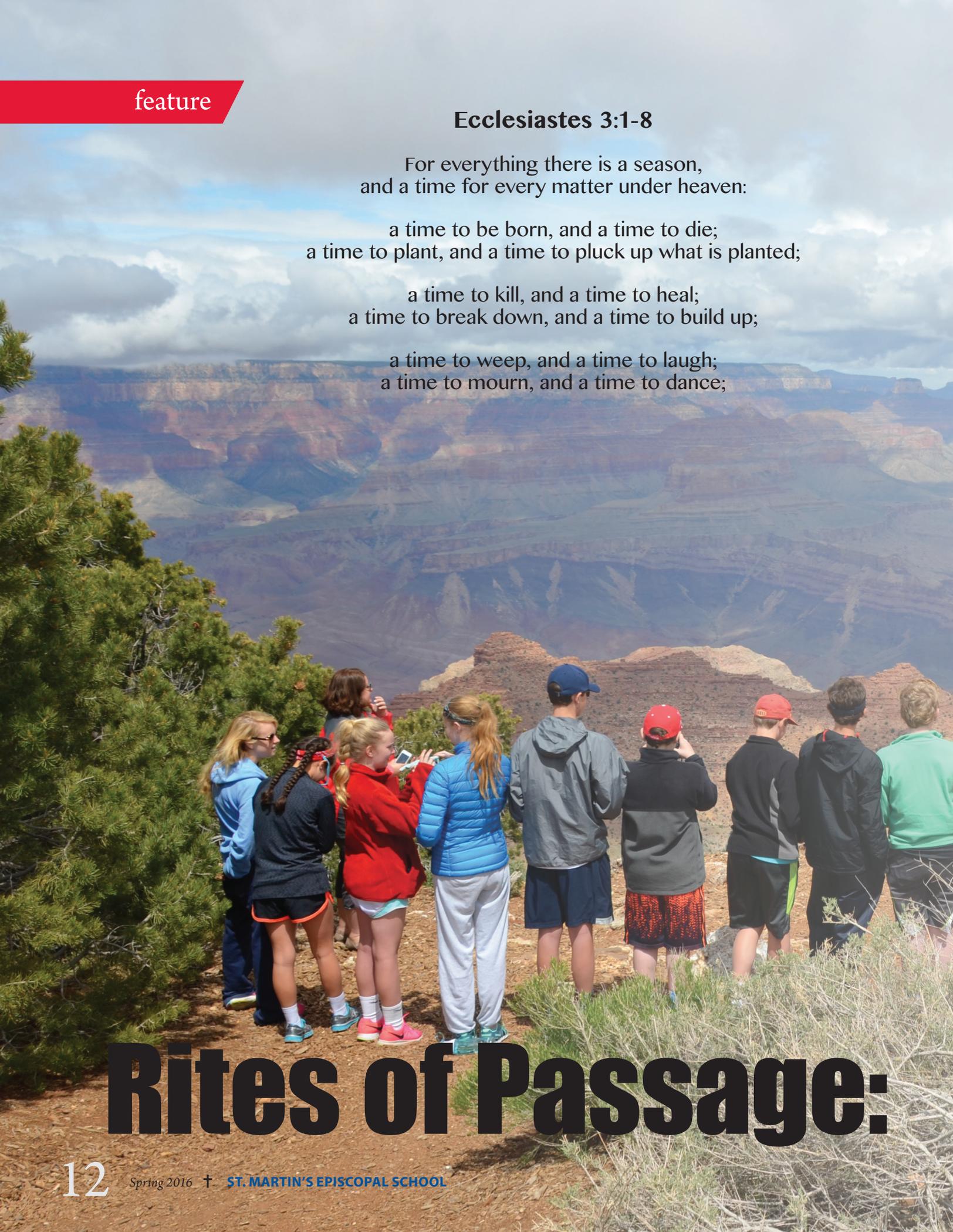
Ecclesiastes 3:1-8

For everything there is a season,
and a time for every matter under heaven:

a time to be born, and a time to die;
a time to plant, and a time to pluck up what is planted;

a time to kill, and a time to heal;
a time to break down, and a time to build up;

a time to weep, and a time to laugh;
a time to mourn, and a time to dance;



Rites of Passage:

a time to cast away stones,
and a time to gather stones together;
a time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing;

a time to seek, and a time to lose;
a time to keep, and a time to cast away;

a time to tear, and a time to sew;
a time to keep silence, and a time to speak;

a time to love, and a time to hate;
a time for war, and a time for peace.

Here's what's true:
The best of a moment is the moment itself.

Preparedness and anticipation add depth and significance to each moment.

And with each moment, we grow and prepare for the next.

Here's what we sometimes forget:

There is a perfect time for each moment and if we jump ahead, we can't go back.

Never is this truer than in childhood. Preparing children to squeeze the best from each moment — and in its appropriate time and order — is a critical role for parents and educators. St. Martin's Episcopal School takes these rites of passage very seriously.

What's more, St. Martin's structure, curriculum and philosophy offer the perfect setting for garnering freshness and excitement from each step.

By Kathy Florence

For everything there is a season...

...A time for every matter

“We are especially fortunate at St. Martin’s,” said Blythe Marsau, Director of Admissions. “Our Preschool - 8 configuration allows us the opportunity to be a part of our students’ childhood and early adolescence. Each stage is equally precious and incorporates a distinct set of needs, which is why we are designed with three distinct programs and led by three different principals for our early childhood, elementary and middle schools. The structure offers the perfect balance between growth and continuity.”

Indeed, a careful introduction of newness at each level of growth provides anticipation for what’s to come and builds pride with accomplishment. Mentoring programs simultaneously instill responsibility and accord with the older mentors and eagerness and respect among the younger students delighted to learn from their older role models.

“Children have one opportunity to be children,” said Guidance Counselor Christina Johnson. “We want to be sure they experience all of the best of childhood and that they

move toward adolescence at a healthy and appropriate pace and completely master childhood before moving on.”

It starts in Early Childhood

Everything is new for St. Martin’s preschool students. Being a part of a community begins when they enter their classroom and open the very basic of building blocks to learning and social interaction.

“Once our beginner and Pre-K students are comfortable with their classmates and teachers, they are excited and ready to move beyond to music rooms and science facilities. Students satisfy their insatiable thirst for knowledge in the science lab and outdoor classroom where they learn to explore, investigate and ask questions,” said Early Childhood Principal Cindy Alexander.



under Heaven

“Likewise, religion, guidance and chapel are all integral parts of St. Martin’s program,” she continued. “Here, students learn to develop enduring values and ethical behaviors such as kindness and responsibility.”

But each step is intentionally paced and carefully crafted with new responsibility and adventure.

Purposeful, Robust, Befitting

Once students step to Kindergarten, lunch in the school cafeteria and playtime on the big playground are rites of passage that confirm, reward and open their eyes to new activities that will become part of their daily school life.

In first grade, cubbies are no longer in the confines of the classroom, but are in the hallway. Tables are replaced with individual desks and PE classes are held in the school’s gym. However subtle, these markers show children that they are prepared for more and allow them to succeed at the new opportunities as they prepare for ones yet to come.

Deeper responsibilities and enhanced liberties are sprinkled throughout each elementary school year. It’s why second

graders change into a PE uniform for physical education class and students are allowed to play on the school’s Four Square court when they get to third grade. And why third graders say goodbye to cubbies and keep their books and gym clothes in their own designated lockers. And why the big salad bar is open to students beginning in fourth grade.

A big deal? You bet.

Delineations are intentional

“If every St. Martin’s student were able to wear their Halloween costumes to school, it might become ‘uncool’ to do so somewhere along the way,” said Mary McPherson, elementary school principal. “Rather, only pre-school students and eighth graders wear their costumes on Halloween. And they do it with gusto. Everyone really gets into it.”

A wildly popular tradition of St. Martin’s, students, faculty and parents form a circle around the school one October morning to cheer as early childhood students — escorted by the eighth graders — parade along the circle of spectators. It’s an honor for the youngest, and for the oldest students in the school. And it’s intentional for just that reason.

Likewise, fifth graders are invited to an after-school social in the spring each year. It’s a simple and fitting introduction to co-ed socials. But only Middle School students are invited to the school dances in the gym, keeping it a special and much-anticipated rite of passage for SMES’ oldest students.

“The boys typically clump together and run around the gym at that first dance,” said Social Studies teacher Jennie Paulsen. “The girls stay together and talk about the boys. But by the last dance of the year, you actually see most of the sixth graders dancing with each other. By the same token, the last dance of the year is bittersweet for the eighth graders. It is truly their last ‘childhood’ dance before the big world of high school. It is also the last social occasion at SMES for them except for their graduation ceremony. After 24 years, I still can get a little teary when I say goodbye to the eighth graders at the end of that last dance.”

Uniforms change

A staple of St. Martin’s culture, uniforms are an important aspect of limiting distraction and maintaining a clear environment for learning, but the changes as St. Martin’s





students grow are intentional. A formal uniform for chapel service is introduced in fourth grade. And in sixth, student uniforms change completely to delineate students as they reach middle school. With each change, students are ready for the outward symbol of their newfound position in the school.

What's more, a school e-mail address is assigned for each student in fourth grade as well as an iPad that can be used during school hours. And in fifth grade, students are allowed to take the iPads home to assist with their school work — all means of interjecting responsibility and road-testing maturity in appropriate and finite doses.

Fourth graders are ready to serve the school as safety patrols and take their responsibilities very seriously. It's also the year that they are introduced to intramural options.

In fifth, students can take on leadership roles in student council. They also look forward to their first overnight field trip — St.

Martin's annual visit to the UGA Marine Extension

Service at Skidaway Island. Further, they are able to participate in the music and band programs their fifth grade year.

Perhaps, most definitive of all, mentoring programs place responsibility directly on individual students to serve by example to younger students. Reading buddy programs and math pairing exercises prove worthy for both sides of the relationship.

And a favorite tradition each May pairs fifth grade students with seventh graders for the "Crossing the Green" ceremony. Seventh graders escort the upcoming middle schoolers to their new home with pomp, circumstance, welcome and pride.

Preparing for high school

Wide-eyed middle schoolers enter sixth grade with a grand set of new opportunities and responsibilities before them. Backed by the familiar, they find themselves in a new building, in a new uniform and with a new mix of students for each class, as they no longer change classes with their homerooms. More, there are new out-of-town field trips, sports and extra-curricular opportunities and brand new privileges before them. They are ready, and that realization prepares them with confidence for new adventures throughout their lives.

Once in Middle School, students take on leadership roles for the school's television, newspaper and yearbook programs. They travel to other schools representing St. Martin's in seasonal sports, chorus and band. And in eighth grade, students enjoy the benefits of being at the summit of their St. Martin's experience. Only eighth graders can take their lunch to the outside tables on Fridays. All Middle School grades make an overnight field trip each year with their class, culminating with a week-long trip to the Grand Canyon their final year.

"We work to stay intentional with each new opportunity presented to St. Martin's students," said Middle School Principal Skeeter Lee. "Children need new opportunity, responsibility and adventure with each passing year, but that combined with stability and continuity allows them to mature at a healthy and comfortable pace. Our students are poised and ready for high school when they leave St. Martin's on eighth grade graduation day. What's more, they are also ready to leave familiar behind and are confident that they will find their place in a new, expanded world."