

Dear Parents:

On Monday, October 24th, our guest speaker in Chapel was Rabbi Donald Kunstadt. Rabbi Kunstadt has served as the rabbi of Springhill Avenue Temple since 1987. He happens to be a good friend!

As Christians, to know and understand Jesus of Nazareth, one must develop “Hebrew” eyes so that one can return to the Hebrew/Jewish tradition in which Jesus was born and allow that tradition to shed light on Jesus’ thoughts, words, and deeds. This has been a passion of mine for some thirty years. In addressing the lessons found in both Deuteronomy and the gospel of Mark, the Rabbi helped us to understand the most important teaching of Jesus found in Holy Scripture.

Unfortunately, there are parents concerned about the presence of a Jewish Rabbi in Chapel. Our identity as an Episcopal School is not limiting; it opens us to the richness of many faith perspectives. Many of us are not Episcopalians or even Christians; thus our varied conversations and spiritual expressions are rich, diverse, and should be articulated with tolerance and understanding. Our capacity for unity within diversity is our most distinctive feature!

The Rabbi reminded our students of a fact that they should all be aware of: There are 22 major religions in the world plus many, many smaller groups, and there are many important differences between them. But at the heart of every religion is faith: the belief that there is something larger than ourselves, larger than our universe, something beyond what we can see and hear and touch, that gives meaning to our lives. The Rabbi reminded our students that Judaism, which began about 4,000 years ago, embraces one single, all-powerful and all-knowing God. This is the God of our Hebrew Lord, Jesus Christ. Obviously, Judaism does not embrace this Jesus as Savior, Messiah, or Son of God as the Rabbi clearly stated. Christians, he reiterated, claim Jesus as Savior, Messiah, and Son of God. In stating these two well known differences, the Rabbi was not teaching something new but emphasizing a fact that I would expect every student in our school to be aware of and understand.

Episcopal Chapel services encourage students to discover the presence of God in their lives and to *respect* all expressions of Christianity as well as all religions of the world. The school is committed to serving a diverse, interfaith student body. In Chapel, students will have an authentic experience of Christian worship that is unapologetically and identifiably Anglican. Chapel is also a place to welcome, affirm, and support the spiritual development of students of all faiths or no faith at all.

Finally, St. Luke’s Episcopal School values all of God’s children as sacred. This value is integrated into all aspects of our school life.

The Rev. Ken Cumbie, Rector and Chaplain
St. Luke’s Episcopal Church and School

