

Choir School NEWS

A NEWSLETTER FOR ALUMNI & FRIENDS OF SAINT THOMAS CHOIR SCHOOL

SAINT THOMAS
CHOIR SCHOOL



SPRING 2023

The Academic Issue

While the boys regularly get the chance to share their school work with each other, there is often so much other news that what is happening in the classrooms does not make it into these newsletters. To remedy that, we have decided to call this the “academic issue,” and to devote nearly all of it to giving you a peek at all of the exciting activities and projects that await the

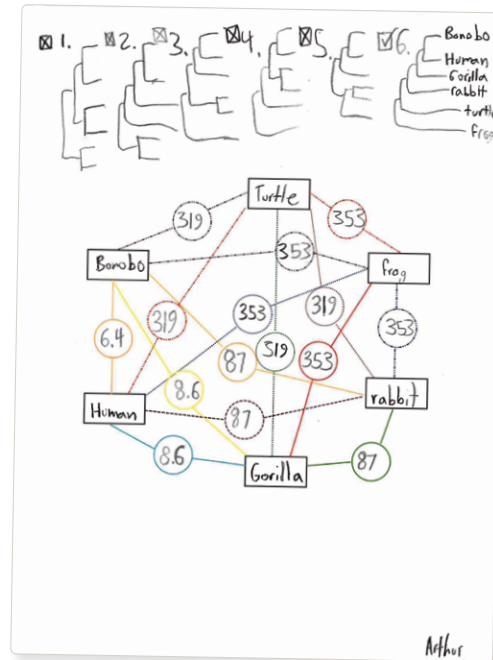
boys every school day. On these pages you will find just a taste of each subject, but most have additional content that can be accessed digitally by scanning the QR code on the next page.

We hope you find something that piques your interest!

SCIENCE Matthew Gilbert

Have you ever wanted to see your family tree and how you are related to your cousins and ancestors? Not your human family, but the family of all living things of which you are a part. Fifth and sixth graders used published genomic data from public databases to construct a family tree called a cladogram. We started by picking five different organisms, usually groups of mammals, birds, or plants, and looking up how long ago pairs of species shared a common ancestor using the website www.TimeTree.org. After determining how closely or distantly related they are to each other, the boys then had to choose the correct tree shape and put the species on the correct branches.

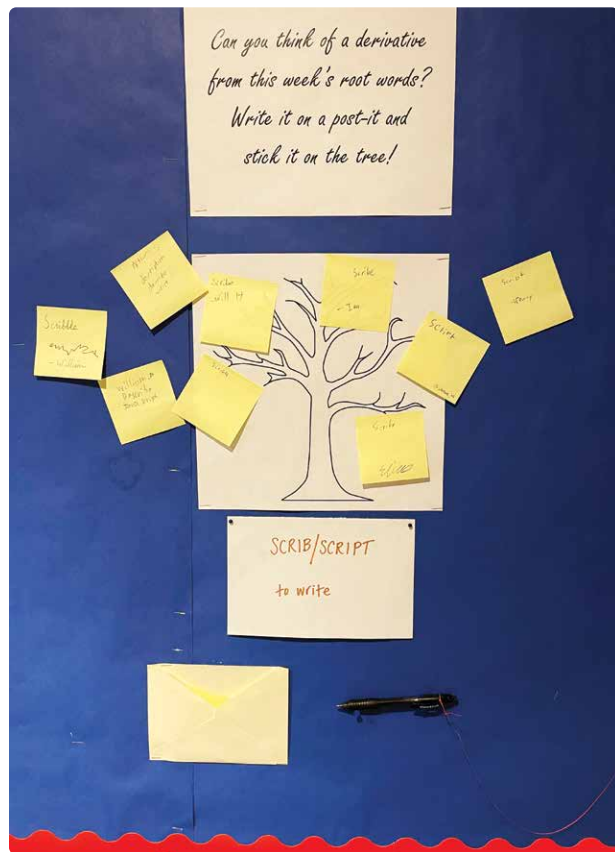
Once we mastered trees for five species, we went up to six. This is far more complicated because there are many more possible tree shapes (6 vs. 3). There were surprises along the way. Some plants we consider fruits are more closely related to nuts than to other fruits. Cows are more closely related to whales than to horses! The boys enjoyed choosing their own species and solving these little biological puzzles.



HISTORY Calvin Wentling

The seventh grade recently completed a unit on early medieval Europe. We first examined the emergence and spread of the Christian Church amidst the decline of the Roman Empire. Then we studied the design and purposes of monasteries and the lives and duties of monks. Much of our discussion also focused on the decentralized nature of political control, leading to the development of various smaller kingdoms. We capped off the unit with a project that had students create a fictional but realistic medieval city, draw a map including all the staples of medieval life, and design a coat of arms to represent their city.

The eighth grade are finishing up a unit on the American Revolution and the War for Independence. In the wake of the Seven Years' War (French and Indian War), the British parliament passed increasingly stringent laws that began to stir up revolutionary fervor among the colonies. After studying examples of pamphlets that were circulated at the time and looking at propaganda posters of the more recent past, students chose an act of Parliament to deride in their own anti-British pamphlets.

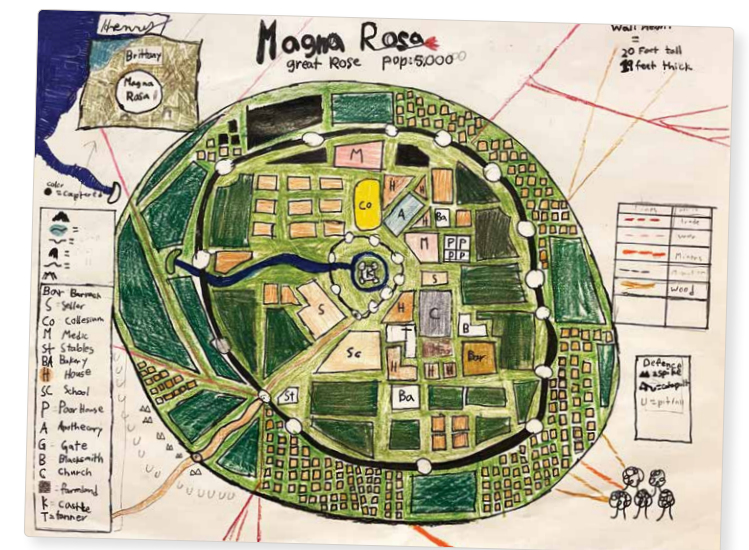
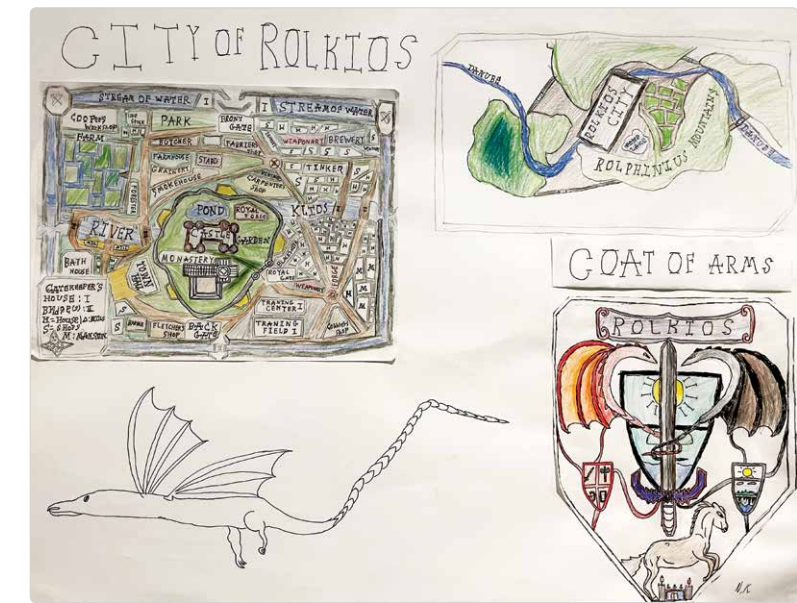
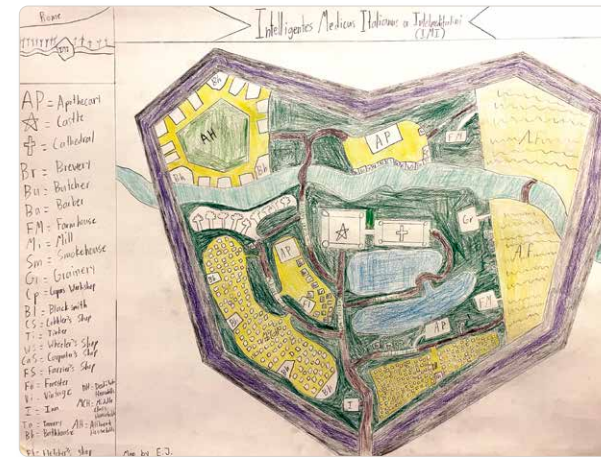


LATIN Margaret White

Did you know that 75% of English words with two or more syllables are derived at least partly from Latin? This fact was the inspiration behind a new interactive bulletin board in the hallway outside the Latin classroom. The board presents students with a new Latin root each week and asks them to identify English words containing that root. While only grades 6-8 take Latin class, this activity is open to all grades, and some of the most creative entries have come from younger students who have not yet begun studying Latin. Our first root word was "spec, spect—to see, look, observe" and 14 students, plus one faculty member, participated. They came up with the following list of English derivatives:

- | | | |
|-----------|-------------|-----------|
| Expect | Spectacles | Specter |
| Inspect | Spectacular | Speculate |
| Respect | Spectate | Suspect |
| Spectacle | Spectator | |

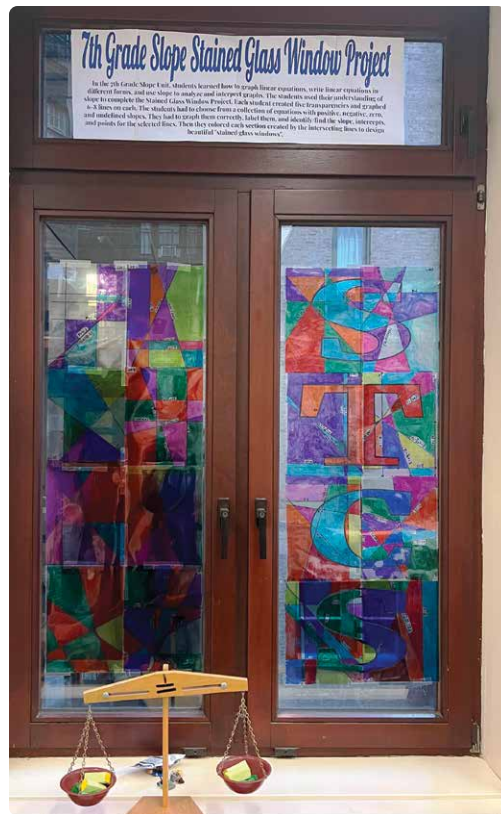
Can you think of any words from this Latin root that aren't listed above?



Want to know more about what the students have been up to?

Scan the QR code to the right to view additional content for most classes including photos, video, and examples of student work.





MATHEMATICS Lissy Hodge

Math projects are a great way to elucidate student thinking while promoting creativity, cooperation, flexibility, and sometimes answering the age-old question, “when will we ever use this?” Further, the projects allow students to show their deep understanding of concepts in more creative and abstract ways than formal tests and quizzes.

The seventh grade students recently completed the stained glass window project. We had just finished our Slope Unit, where the students learned how to graph linear equations, write linear equations in different forms, and use slope to analyze and interpret graphs. The students used their understanding of slope to transform the math classroom windows by completing the stained glass window project. Each student created five transparencies and graphed 6–8 lines on each. The students had to choose from a collection of equations with positive, negative, zero,

and undefined slopes. They had to graph them correctly, label them, and identify/ find the slope, intercepts, and points for the selected lines. Then they colored each section created by the intersecting lines to design beautiful “stained glass” panes that were hung in the classroom windows.

It was wonderful to see the students’ creativity come alive through this project!



SOCIAL JUSTICE Residential Faculty

The social justice program at Saint Thomas Choir School started in 2017. The residential faculty have all participated in the teaching and planning of the social justice course. The course is taught in grade bands to increase collaboration and unity: third and fourth grade together, fifth and sixth grade together, and seventh and eighth grade together. Last year, a committee was formed to help with the continual development and growth of the social justice program. This year, the committee created an overall mission statement as well as mission statements for each grade band.

Here is the mission statement for the social justice program:



The purpose of the social justice program at Saint Thomas Choir School is to empower students to create and foster an inclusive community centered on belonging. We will challenge the students to live their values in the world and, in the words of the Baptismal Covenant, “to strive for justice and peace among all people, and respect the dignity of every human being.”

ENGLISH

Bebe Morrissey

In the fall semester, Grade 8 English read Harper Lee’s classic *To Kill a Mockingbird*, Grade 7 English read S.E. Hinton’s classic *The Outsiders*, and Grade 6 English read Mildred Taylor’s classic *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry*.

Students filled out chapter notes as they read and then, using these notes, began writing literary essays. Students also referenced an overview, rubric, checklist and reminder list, and outline template, similar to what they will likely see in high school. The writing process included opportunities to explore themes, craft individual thesis statements, brainstorm ideas, create an outline, draft and revise paragraphs, and give and receive peer feedback. They also received teacher feedback as needed. Students started



planning their work to meet deadlines during this particular writing piece. At the end of the process students published their essays by posting them on the

writing wall in the English classroom. They were proud to share their work with the school community!



This fall, the third and fourth graders focused on identity and answering the question “Who am I?” This will culminate in a “Community Flower Garden” where the students will create identity flowers and share them with others in the school community. The fifth and sixth graders answered the question “Who are we?” by completing a Family Origins Project. Each student presented about his family, their heritage, and what led them to where they are now. The seventh and eighth graders started the year by creating a video to capture and encompass what the Social Justice Program looks like at STCS. They organized the process, captured videos and pictures, conducted interviews with students, faculty, and staff, and edited the video as a group. In the spring, the seventh and eighth graders will engage in discourse about issues that affect our society and explore ways they can take action.

In January, the Choir School partnered with Rise Against Hunger to host a meal packaging event for students, parents, and other community members. Students learned about the global impact of hunger in social justice class and then on January 16, in observance of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. National Day of Service, more than 80 volunteers gathered to package over 12,000 meals to be sent overseas to individuals in need.

THEOLOGY Mother Alison Turner

Amidst all the school traditions of Advent and Christmas, Theology Class this month was a time for creating connections between our communal celebrations of music, art, poetry and scripture. While our younger students enjoyed participating in their annual Advent art projects, grade seven and eight students prepared some thoughtful poems for the season of Advent, based on their experiences and observations as choristers and acolytes at Saint Thomas.

Advent Poem

by Constantin L., 8th grade student

*The candle flames are
burning bright,
awaiting Jesus through
the night.*

*Hope and peace and lots of joy
all await a little boy.*

*Christ is coming
Christ the Lord*

All ye armies drop your swords

Come to Bethlehem

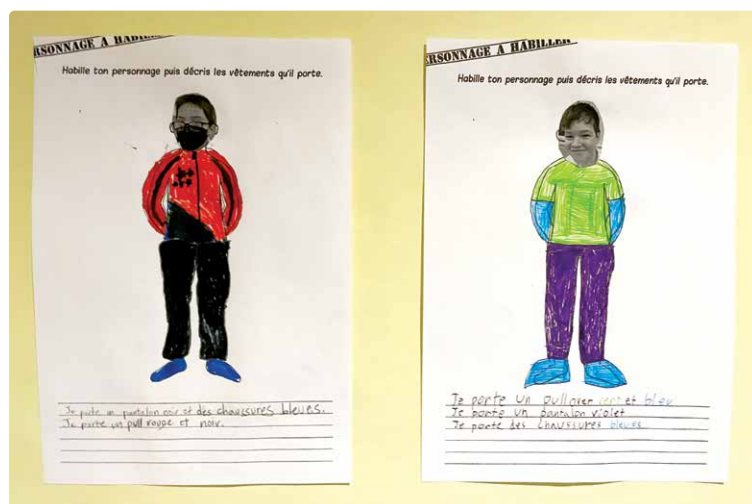
*Come and see a little boy
is born with glee,*

Born to live and die for me.

This year's Advent festivities also included a special appearance by the acolytes as the Three Kings at the annual Saint Thomas creche service, and a visit on St. Nicholas Eve, December 5th, by the famous patron saint of children. Saint Nicholas quizzed the boys before giving a symbolic gift representing the two natures of Christ.



FRENCH Veronique Buelens



Recently in French class, students did an art activity to reinforce vocabulary related to body parts and items of clothing, as well as the grammatical gender and number of nouns, i.e. masculine vs. feminine and singular vs. plural. Each student created a character based on himself, drew the character and his outfit, and described the clothes he was wearing. Here are some examples of the students' creations

MUSICAL STUDIES

Maks Adach

Alongside the usual study of music theory, this term's Musical Studies have included a new emphasis on practical musicianship and music appreciation. The third and fourth graders have enjoyed working through Hindemith's musical exercises, including sight-reading melodies to solfege while clapping an independent rhythm—quite the brainteaser!

The sixth grade has been honing their sight singing skills with Zoltan Kodaly's two-part folksong arrangements and a collection of English folksongs compiled by yours truly—ask any student about a man named George Clokey and you may very well get a musical reaction. In addition, they have been compiling what they have named 'the magic board of fun'. Although the said board may not be magical, it certainly is fun! It is a musical timeline of all the pieces that they are singing in the choir. It is great for them to see, a) how much music they actually sing, and b) what musical eras those pieces come from.

Meanwhile, having spent four years learning liturgical choral music, the eighth grade have been finding what lives outside of that particular sandbox. They are currently on a whistlestop tour of the history of music. So far, we have visited Renaissance Italy, eighteenth-century Vienna, Handel's London, Medieval England, and the inside of Olivier Messiaen's mind (a destination in and of itself...). On our journey, the boys have each researched and produced an oral presentation on a set-composer. From there, we have listened to works by said composers and learned about their various compositional ideas and techniques. Our musical tour is augmented by a liberal dash of amusing anecdotes, curious facts, and interesting (yet unusual) information. Each lesson is packed with lively discussion and informed follow-up questions.

To see a picture of the "magic board of fun" plus extra content from other subjects, don't forget to scan the QR code on page 2!

Holy Week Services at Saint Thomas Church

The boys of the choir appear only at select services during Holy Week. See their schedule below to find out when you can catch them singing. For a complete Holy Week calendar, visit saintthomaschurch.org/events.

SUNDAY, APRIL 2 | Palm Sunday

11 a.m. | The Liturgy of the Palms and Solemn Eucharist of the Passion
4p.m. | Solemn Evensong

THURSDAY, APRIL 6 |

Maundy Thursday
5:30 p.m. | The Mass of the Lord's Supper

FRIDAY, APRIL 7 | Good Friday

5:30 p.m. | The Celebration of the Lord's Passion

SATURDAY, APRIL 8 | Holy Saturday

5:30p.m. | The Great Vigil and First Eucharist of Easter

SUNDAY, APRIL 9 | Easter Sunday

8 a.m. | Procession and Solemn Eucharist
11 a.m. | Procession and Solemn Eucharist
3p.m. | Solemn Evensong and Procession

Alumni News & Notes

For complete and up-to-date information, please see our new website, www.choirschool.org, or follow us on Facebook and Instagram @choirschoolnyc.

LISA HANCOCK, award-winning New York City photographer and daughter of Gerre Hancock, who served as organist and master of the choristers from 1971 until 2004, returned to the choir school in her professional role. As the owner of "Hancock's Headshots," Lisa has taken thousands of photos of actors, musicians, and executives, and now counts the faculty of Saint Thomas Choir School among her distinguished clients. She also took photos of each of the boys for the school to give as a Christmas gift to their parents.

An **ALUMNI GATHERING** is planned for the first weekend of March in Washington, D.C. We have alumni and choir school faculty working on a location, date, and time. All alumni, parents of alumni, former faculty, and prospective families are invited to attend. Head of School Christopher Seeley and other school faculty look forward to meeting and greeting alumni. Please watch social media for details. If you do not have accounts with Instagram, Facebook, or LinkedIn, contact Margaret White, admissions@choirschool.org.

SATURDAY, MAY 6, 2023, the boys of the Saint Thomas Choir of Men and Boys will be featured at a choir festival for churches in the Philadelphia area. The Rev. Sean Mullen '81, rector of St. Mark's Church and Robert McCormick, Organist and Choirmaster, have invited local parishes to participate in a choir festival. The Saint Thomas boys will participate in the festival Evensong and sing a featured concert following the Evensong. We hope to see many alumni, families, and friends at the event. Please watch social media for further details.

Alumni, we want to hear from you!

Send your news and updated contact information to alumni@choirschool.org.

Calendar of Events

All events take place at Saint Thomas Church unless otherwise specified
For complete information regarding the details of events and services,
please refer to saintthomaschurch.org/events or choirschool.org.

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 22, 2023

Noon and 5:30 p.m.
Ash Wednesday services sung
by the Choir of Men and Boys of
Saint Thomas

FEBRUARY 22-25, 2023

Choir School exhibit at the American
Choral Directors' Association
convention in Cincinnati, OH

FEBRUARY 23-28, 2023

Admissions trip to Texas including
Choir School exhibit at Diocese of
Texas in Galveston, TX

FEBRUARY 23-MARCH 4, 2023

Choir School winter break

MARCH 2-4, 2023

Admissions and alumni trip
to Washington, D.C. metro area

MARCH 7-10, 2023

Choir School exhibit at the
Episcopal Parish Network
conference in Jacksonville, FL

MARCH 16-18 and 23-25, 2023

Overnight auditions at the
Choir School for boys applying
to enter grades 3-6

APRIL 1, 2023 | 3 p.m.

Music for Passiontide: A Choral Festival,
presented by the Choir of New College
Oxford and the Saint Thomas Choir of
Men and Boys

APRIL 2-9, 2023

Holy Week at Saint Thomas Church
See Page 7 for schedule of services

MAY 16, 2023

World Premier Concert: *American
Lamentations* by Trevor Weston '81





Contact Us

Saint Thomas Choir School
202 West 58th Street
New York, NY 10019

212.247.3311 | www.choirschool.org

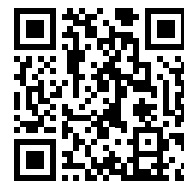
Christopher Seeley, *Head of School*
Ruth S. Cobb, *Interim Director
of Admission*

Connect

-  Saint Thomas Choir School
-  ChoirSchoolNYC
-  stcs_girlscourse
-  Saint Thomas Choir School

For news and
events visit
our website

Scan 



Do you know a boy
who loves to sing?
www.choirschool.org

Saint Thomas Church
Saint Thomas Choir School
202 West 58th Street
New York, NY 10019
212.247.3311
www.choirschool.org

