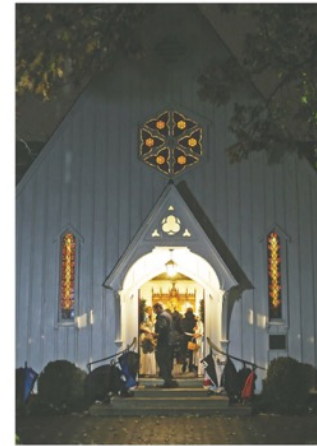


timeless

Lighting O' the Grove | Saint Mary's School



Executive Student Government members dressed as angels. Sophia Abatangelo, 18, second from right, talks to Lilah Wilfong, 17, right, on the patio of Smedes Hall at Saint Mary's School in Raleigh. Saint Mary's is the oldest continually operating school in Raleigh and they are celebrating their 175th anniversary this year. The 36th annual Lighting O' the Grove kicked off the holiday festivities on campus.



Saint Mary's School invites family, friends, and their Raleigh neighbors in the community to join them for Lessons & Carols before the 36th annual Lighting O' the Grove.

By Jennifer Wood
North State Journal

HOME IS GOOD for the soul, and Saint Mary's School is one of mine. I matriculated through these hallowed and historic halls for five years — tenth, eleventh, and twelfth grades as well as my freshman and sophomore years of college. I received a high school diploma and an Associate in Arts degree before moving down Hillsborough Street to complete my college education because as my parents explained, "they aren't adding more years — you have to move on." Clearly they understood that I would have willingly stayed right there in that grove of stately oak trees.

It is on nights like the Lighting O' the Grove that I am reminded why.

The evening began in the heart of the school, St. Mary's Chapel, with a traditional Episcopal service of Lessons & Carols. The lessons were in keeping with the service of the second Sunday of Advent, and the carols were extraordinary. Jennifer Moran serves as the academic chair, director of chorale programs, and voice instructor and the rapport between her and the 44-member chorale is evident in each arrangement. The group ended their vocal offerings for the evening with a rousing rendition of Michael Engelhardt's "And Suddenly," causing the congregation to break out in applause.

At this point in the evening chapel attendees filed out to gather in front of the main building on campus, Smedes Hall. Sunday evening brought rain for the Lighting O' the Grove so the luminaries that are normally placed throughout the circular drive were moved under the eaves of Smedes. The precipitation did not dampen the spirits of those who were present, and the event moved forward.

The Granddaughters Club is the oldest club on campus and they are the organizers of the Lighting O' the Grove and have been since its inception in 1981. In their hands each luminary is prepared and lit. "As members of the Granddaughters Club, we sponsor the luminaries, which represent all Saint Mary's alumnae and special members of our school community who have died in the past year," said senior and Granddaughters club member Katie Rascoe. "Since our club is for descendants of Saint Mary's alumnae, the luminaries mean a lot because they represent the legacy of our family members who have come before us."

"This event is a way for students, alumnae, families, and the Raleigh community to come together on one special night to celebrate the spirit of Christmas," said Rascoe. "For the boarding students who are not at home in the weeks before Christmas, coming together like this in fellowship makes it feel like family and home away from home."

Despite the rain, attendees left in high spirits feeling the peace on earth and good will to all the chorale sang about. If you are in the Raleigh area during the holiday season, make your way by 900 Hillsborough Street — the lit Christmas tree and the new addition of the orbs of white lights perched in the old oak trees bring the magic of the season to life.



Seniors Jane Ives, 18, right, and Ella Bristol, 18, left, wait at the front door for the annual Lessons and Carols service to end at Saint Mary's Chapel.



The chorale performs during the annual Lessons and Carols service at Saint Mary's Chapel.

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Katie Rascoe, Class of 2018, Granddaughters club member from Edenton