



Our Lady of HOPE

CATHOLIC CHURCH

Our parish FINANCE COMMITTEE *Working Together to Ensure Good Stewardship of Our Parish and School Treasure*

An important aspect of stewardship is careful maintenance of our parish's treasure. That is what the Finance Committee for Our Lady of Hope sets out to do, by supporting the school and parish in financial matters such as budgets, tuitions, and fundraising. The committee consists of three voting members — Lisa Cox, Mitch Haag, and Chairperson Karen Sipes. Joining them in meetings are Fr. Paul Ferguson and Business Manager Melissa Cox.

"We review the monthly financial reports," Karen says. "We work with the school and parish to develop yearly budgets. We work with the school to come up with the K-12 and preschool tuition. We assist with anomalies that come up, standard operating procedures, and processes we may need to adjust."

Importantly, the three committee members bring different perspectives to the table.

"We all come from different backgrounds and perspectives," Karen says. "I've got an accounting degree and I'm an inactive CPA. Lisa works in the banking industry, and she has children in the school system. Mitch works as an engineer and manager in his group. He also has children in our Washington Catholic Schools.

"We review what's happening as far as the entire campus is concerned," she adds. "We'll give Father our recommendations on how things should be approached or

what direction to take. Father takes things in whatever direction he feels is adequate, but it's good that we have three diverse perspectives. We all bring something to the table."

However, the committee members don't just rely on their own experiences.

"We invite people to the meetings," Karen says. "When it comes to budgets, we invite the principal. If it's a building issue, we'll invite building maintenance. We try to get people closest to the topic and have a discussion to fill the education gap to understand the root of what's going on.

"Sometimes, we'll have to walk away from it and gather more information," she adds. "After everybody thinks for a while, we'll vote on the path we believe is the best to try."

Currently, the committee is focused on projects like issues with the high school gym roof after some heavy rains earlier this year, plus budgets and other economic endeavors.

"We're looking at teacher staffing and classroom sizes to see if we need to add teachers to accommodate larger classrooms," Karen says. "The good thing is the school is growing, so classrooms are getting larger. We try to figure



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A LOOK AT THE FINANCE COMMITTEE *continued from front cover*

“We have broad opinions that come to the table, so you can think of things from different perspectives. That’s what I enjoy. It brings me closer to God, being able to interact with others in the parish community. It’s nice to have that relationship with them.” — *Karen Sipes*

out what the classroom size would be to cap it for the best interests of the students and teachers. Those are the types of things we talk about.”

The members try to stay up to date with other committees and help in any way they can.

“As we’re going through budgets and items happening within the entire campus, we like to touch base with other committees to make sure we’re on the same pathway,” Karen says. “We can’t be going in different directions and have a good end result. We make sure everybody’s on the same page to get to the heart of what Fr. Paul’s direction of the campus is.”

Karen enjoys sharing her experience to help the parish in this essential act of stewardship.

“It’s my talent that I can give back to the parish,” she

says. “It’s something I absolutely love doing. It’s what I do on a daily basis, so it’s an easy talent to provide. I love working with others who have the same type of talent. We have broad opinions that come to the table, so you can think of things from different perspectives. That’s what I enjoy. It brings me closer to God, being able to interact with others in the parish community. It’s nice to have that relationship with them.”

The Finance Committee meets monthly on the fourth Wednesday at 5 p.m. During budget season, January through March, they meet more frequently — sometimes weekly.

“We always welcome more people,” Karen says. “We’re all busy. Sometimes, it’s hard to get everybody together. If we had a larger group, we could have a quorum for voting.”

The Finance Committee is always looking for more members. Those with a financial background are especially encouraged to reach out to Fr. Paul Ferguson at (812) 254-2883.

Giving Thanks to God for the *Gift of Time*

Dear Parishioners,

The next several weeks are certainly a busy time for us as Catholics, good stewards, good citizens, and faithful members of the Church and our parish. There are celebrations and commemorations both inside and outside the Church that are momentous in terms of faith, citizenship, and living as people of thanksgiving and gratitude.

We celebrate Veterans Day to honor and thank all those men and women who served in the United States Armed Forces in one capacity or another. Indicative of the importance of this day, every year at 11 a.m. Eastern, a wreath-laying ceremony is held at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier at Arlington National Cemetery.

We all understand that Americans celebrate a day of Thanksgiving on Nov. 27. What more can we say about this? It is a day that was faith-based from its very beginnings, and it is an indication of how much we have to thank God for in terms of the gifts we have received — our lives, our families, our Church, our Lord and Savior — everything we are and everything we have.

No sooner are Thanksgiving Day celebrations concluded than we begin that glorious season called Advent on Sunday, Nov. 30. This prepares us for and leads to Christmas. Indeed, this is both a busy and extraordinary



time of year! There is, of course, much more on which we could focus and about which we could think, meditate, and pray, but that is more than enough for us to consider and absorb.

From a stewardship perspective, I would like you to not only participate and focus on all the particular things that are about to happen, but also on one of our special gifts — the gift of time. The gift of time, which we all receive from God in equal amounts, is precious because it is a non-renewable resource. Although some of our time is committed because of family

responsibilities, work responsibilities or simply personal needs, we have an element of free will with how we spend a certain amount of it. We need to spend some of that time in prayer, in thanksgiving, in worship, and in works of mercy and ministry. Our time is perhaps more precious than any material gifts we receive from the Lord. How are we doing with that gift?

In Christ,

Fr. Paul Ferguson

Fr. Paul Ferguson
Pastor



THE MEAL MINISTRY AND T

Sharing Christ's Love and Compassion i



Meal Ministry volunteers working to prepare and distribute meals to the homebound



For several years, the Outreach Committee has been providing monthly meals to homebound folks. Beth Browning, Outreach Committee Chair, hopes to grow this ministry and reach more people in need more often.

“It’s not only our parishioners,” Beth says. “We have a few we deliver meals to who are not members of the church — elderly and isolated individuals who could benefit from the meal and a visit.”

It all happens once a month on the third Thursday, starting at 4:30 p.m. The Knights of Columbus lend space for this ministry effort.

“It’s a very small time commitment,” Beth says. “We cook the meals throughout the day, then meet at 4:30 in the afternoon. We have them divided up and back out the doors by 5 o’clock, delivering them. One person isn’t burdened with cooking everything. Everybody takes a portion and brings it together. We greatly appreciate the Knights of Columbus allowing us to meet and have the table space to divide everything up and get it packed and out the door.”

All of the food and labor are donated by those cooking and delivering. The Outreach Committee provides the to-go containers.

“I’ve probably got a dozen people that help out regularly,” Beth says. “We’d like to see a different group each month providing meals and delivering them. It doesn’t have to be a group — we welcome individuals also. They can be involved in many different ways — cooking, providing a portion of the meal, or helping deliver. We’d like to see folks only delivering a couple of meals so they have time to stop and chat for a few minutes, instead of feeling like they’ve got a carload and have to keep going. So for a group of friends, family, whatever, to take on this ministry, it’s a very, very short-term commitment.”

Taking time with those homebound recipients is an act of stewardship and fellowship. Even if they’re not part of the parish, they’re part of the community, and we’re still bringing Christ to them.

“Before COVID, we were delivering 45-plus meals a week,” Beth says. “Currently, we’re only providing 30. So I would like to see that number get back up there.”

Recipients can be put on the list by family members or neighbors.

THE OUTREACH COMMITTEE

With Our Community Members in Need

“For the most part, some of them are able to go to Mass with family members, but some of them are isolated,” Beth says. “We expanded beyond the church. We may deliver to somebody, and they say, ‘My neighbor would really appreciate a meal.’ So anybody’s welcome. We’ll just add them to the list.”

Recipients are grateful for the meals and visits.

“They look forward to it every month,” Beth says. “They often send thank-you notes, just thanking us for remembering them, the meal, the visit. They really appreciate it.”

As the ministry expands the list, they hope to expand both volunteers and frequency.

“We do wish we could do this more often,” Beth says.

“But right now, with the volunteers we do have, this is about all we can manage to get done. But the folks are really receptive to the meal and the visit, and just really appreciate being remembered. The people of the Outreach Committee really come through for us each month.”

Volunteers don’t have to do everything — they can just cook, pack, or deliver. The ministry will even accept donations to help cover costs.

“Sometimes, life’s just busy and we get the notion that we’re too busy to reach out to those homebound and isolated,” Beth says. “After we see how excited they are to see a different face — some of them may not see anybody during the week — it’s very heartwarming.”



To volunteer or to add someone to the recipient list, contact Beth Browning at 812-486-5783 or browningb65@att.net. You may also call the parish office at 812-254-2883.

Jubilee Christmas Brings Christ's Love and the Joy of the Season to Those in Need

When it comes to Christmas, most of us are blessed with more than we need, and many children have more toys than they could ever use. But for families in need, Christmas can be especially difficult. It's hard to imagine children living among us waking up to no gifts under the tree. Hopefully, those stories are few and far between thanks to the work of the Jubilee Christmas volunteers.

Connections coordinates this project, and many area churches and organizations contribute. Our Lady of Hope provides gifts for about 150 children through generous donations. Children are referred through schools and churches. All cases are reviewed before being added to the list. Teresa Joyce has coordinated our parish participation for several years.

"Jubilee Christmas makes sure that children in our community don't wake up to an empty tree, and that families feel the love and generosity of Christ through our parish and volunteers," Teresa says.

The program has assisted up to 700 children a year, but the need varies each year. Children ranging in ages from birth to 15 are eligible to receive gifts based on need. Parishioners can take tags from the tree, which will be set up by Nov. 18. Unwrapped gifts are due by Dec. 8.

"When we come together as a parish family to help with Jubilee Christmas, we're not just giving gifts — we're sharing hope, love, and the true spirit of Christ with our neighbors," Teresa says.

Parents and guardians come to Bethany Christian Church on Dec. 15 and may choose up to three gifts for the children. Then, they receive help wrapping the gifts. As each family leaves, they are given a food voucher. If they have a child from birth to 1 year old, they are also given a voucher for diapers.

For the older youth ages 13 to 15, there is a pizza party, and they take a bus to Walmart, where a mentor helps them shop.

Volunteers are needed to serve as hosts, door greeters, gift wrappers, and room organizers.

"All the area churches join together for a day of giving back to the community with Jubilee Christmas," Teresa says.

For Teresa, this community-wide opportunity to serve those in need is wonderful. She hopes all parishioners will get involved to support this wonderful project.

"When I see the relief and joy on parents' faces, I'm reminded why Jubilee Christmas matters," she says. "It's a simple way to love our neighbors and make the season brighter for their children."



You can grab an ornament from the tree or sign up to help in person for Jubilee Christmas on Dec. 15.



The Caring and Sharing Ministry

A Compassionate Group Offering Comfort and Grace in the Face of Loss

“I believe it is important that we as a parish support those going through losses and let them know that we care and pray for them. I feel so connected to people who have to suffer through life, having given up people they love. It touches my heart.” — *Yvonne Evans*

For over 30 years, the Caring and Sharing Ministry has been a quiet but powerful presence in the community. It offers comfort, prayer, and companionship to those grieving the loss of a loved one. It was founded in the spirit of Christ’s love and compassion by Yvonne Evans, who knows personally the impact that the loss of a loved one can have.

“I feel so dedicated to people who have lost someone they love,” Yvonne says. “I know what loss feels like, and I’ve seen how this ministry can be a lifeline.”

For many years, the ministry met at different members’ houses. However, in need of more space, the group now meets in Yvonne’s basement, which can hold up to 40 people. They gather together for prayer, coffee, and heartfelt conversation as they strive to be present for one another.

The ministry’s mission is to walk alongside those who mourn, offering spiritual support, emotional care, and a sense of belonging. Meetings are held on the second Monday of each month, and everyone is welcome.

Participants range in age and experience, from those grieving recent losses to others who have grieved for decades.

Each gathering includes prayer, Scripture readings, reflections from books on grief, and time for open sharing. Participants are encouraged to bring meaningful readings or memories to share. Cards are created and distributed in envelopes, inviting members to send a note of care to someone in need before the next meeting. It’s a small act with a big impact as it reminds others that they are seen, loved, and prayed for.

Twice a year, the ministry hosts a special prayer day in the spring and fall. These retreats include lunch, outdoor meditation, and deeper sharing. Sometimes a priest is invited to join, offering spiritual guidance, prayer, and presence. These retreats are open to all and provide a sacred space for reflection and healing.

“I often meet privately with individuals who just need to talk, cry, or sit in silence,” Yvonne says. “I print readings

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The Caring and Sharing Ministry *continued from page 7*

for members to take home and reflect on, and I always encourage them to share when they are ready.”

Over the years, the ministry has continued to grow and adapt. Each person who comes has experienced various losses — from children to parents and spouses. We have had men attend in the past and would love to see them join our group again.

“I believe it is important that we as a parish support those going through losses and let them know that we care and pray for them,” Yvonne says. “I feel so connected to people who have to suffer through life, having given up people they love. It touches my heart, and I feel like we need to come together as a community to support each other through this.”



If you have questions or would like to join, contact the parish office at 812-254-2883.

