

THE CHURCH OF ST. MARY

Ministry Handbook

Living a Life
of
Stewardship



The Church of
St. Mary

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Area Catholic Community Council

Pastoral Council

The Pastoral Council is the preeminent advisory body in the Come to the Water Area Catholic Community (ACC). They are tasked with building an identity as the Come to the Water ACC, assist in establishing and facilitating goals and objectives relating to the pastoral mission and foster participation in the total life and mission of the Church within the Diocese of St. Cloud. All other committees, councils, boards, and commissions report and are held accountable to this council. Any person who has been confirmed and is a member may be elected/appointed to the Council.

Parish Committees

Finance Council

This is an advisory council for the parish. It meets monthly to assist the pastor and the Parish Business Administrator with the decisions that affect the financial stability of the parish. The council is composed of the pastor, parish administrator, two trustees, one liaison person from the Pastoral Council, and seven members who are appointed.

Art & Environment Committee

Volunteers who have a gift for artistic arrangements follow the Church's guidelines in preparing the liturgical environment for the various church seasons.

Block Party Committee

This party is a parish fellowship event for the whole community. Food, music, and games provide something for everyone. This occasion offers many opportunities to volunteer and/or to donate to the food and game booths. There is an opportunity for creative people to develop "Theme Baskets" to be sold at the Silent Auction on the day of the festival. In addition, volunteers are always welcome to serve on the planning committee for this event.

Board of Education

This is an advisory committee for the parish whose task it is to review, monitor and evaluate the educational activities of the entire parish. This includes St. Mary's Elementary School, the Faith Formation programs and Adult Faith Formation programs. Board members serve a three-year term.

Cemetery Committee

The Cemetery Committee meets periodically to plan, develop, operate, and maintain St. Mary's Cemetery and Mausoleum.

Justice, Peace & Integrity of Creation Committee (JPIC)

The JPIC (Justice, Peace and Integrity for Creation) Committee assists our parish in understanding Catholic Social Teaching. JPIC achieves this by supporting, organizing, and training parishioners around the areas of direct service (charity), legislative advocacy, global solidarity and community organizing.

Liturgy Committee

The Liturgy Committee promotes programs of education, liturgy planning, ministry development and evaluation to help develop the liturgical life of the parish. They aid celebrants in enhancing liturgical celebrations of the parish.

Any member of the parish is eligible to serve as a member of this committee. Members of this committee are often nominated by other members in their ministry area.

Parish Life Committee

The Parish Life Committee seeks to emphasize the importance of human relationships within our parish community. With this purpose in mind, our committee hopes to promote enrichment for our fellow parishioners and to facilitate social opportunities that will meet the needs of all: the youngest to the eldest, married, widowed, divorced and single.

Assist with Hospitality at Parish Retreats/Events - If you enjoy hosting or entertaining, we need you! Throughout the year several different events are offered to the parish. It takes many people to make these events possible. Some duties would include preparing and serving refreshments, childcare, greeters, and other various duties. Please consider sharing your time and talent to help create a warm and inviting atmosphere to those who participate in these events.

Rummage Sale Committee

Once a year a rummage sale is held at St. Mary's School Gym with profits going to charity. The charities include, but are not limited to, the St. Mary's Benevolent Fund and the St. Mary's School Trust Fund. Volunteers are always needed to help set up and work the day of the sale.

Stewardship Committee

The Stewardship Committee educates parishioners in various ways throughout the year about how to embrace stewardship as a way of life. The committee encourages parishioners to give freely of their time, talent, and treasure. A Ministry Handbook is maintained on the parish website that offers many ways to become an active and involved member of our faith community. The committee plans the Annual Stewardship Renewal held every fall.

Spiritual Growth Opportunities

Eucharistic Adoration

Being involved with this ministry will help you make prayer and spending time with our Lord a greater priority in your life. Consider being a regular adorer in our Blessed Sacrament Chapel. We try to have two people present for each hour of Adoration. Bibles and other prayer and meditation books are available to enhance your hour of Adoration. Often you will not need them as the hour of silent meditation goes very quickly. If you are not able to commit to a regular time, you are welcome to come to the Chapel at your leisure.

Living Stations of the Cross

Each Lenten season the Living Stations of the Cross bring the death and resurrection of Jesus "to life". Members of the parish present a still-life portrayal of the stations of the cross. Dressed as people from the first century, this hour-long prayer is a visual reminder of the sacrifice and celebration that comes from Jesus' dying and conquering death; even death on a cross. The music, scripture and visuals of the Living Stations of the Cross are a way for many to enter into Easter with a fuller appreciation of Christ as both a human being and the Son of God. Whether part of the cast or simply someone watching from the pews, it provides time to reflect on the grace we have and continue to receive.

Marriage Preparation

All sacramental marriages that take place in any diocese in Minnesota must participate in two programs: 1. A diocesan approved Marriage Preparation Course (See <http://omf.stcdio.org/marriagecourse-information> for the dates the Marriage Course is offered) and 2. Take the pre-marriage inventory and review it with the pastor or a married couple trained in reviewing the inventory. Usually these are done at least six months before the wedding.

Prayer Link

St. Mary's Prayer Link is one way to bring your concerns to God with the support of St. Mary's community. All prayer requests are confidential. Anyone may be part of this ministry.

Pastoral Care

Community of Compassion

Community of Compassion is a bereavement support ministry to parish families who are grieving the death of a loved one. Volunteers serve as a "telephone friend" to a recently bereaved individual. This ministry is open to anyone who has experienced the death of a loved one longer than 18 months ago. Initial training is 1 1/2 hours. The ongoing time commitment is variable.

Divorce Care Ministry

Teams are being formed to help those who are struggling with the reality of divorce in their lives. Some are part of a presenting team; others will serve as people who give a listening ear and walk with someone who is dealing with divorce issues. Divorce Care ministers are usually those who themselves have undergone divorce and have come to some peace about it.

Funeral Lunch Ministry

Nine groups of parishioners from The Church of St. Mary provide cookies or bars and set up and serve funeral lunches. Needs include, kitchen help, servers, and volunteer bakers. Volunteers from each group coordinate the funeral lunch.

Head, Heart and Hands in Service

This outreach ministry engages volunteers to share presence, prayer and deeds with homebound parishioners through sacramental, spiritual and charitable forms of service.

Nightingale Tribute

The Nightingale Tribute is a brief inserted ceremony performed by nurse colleagues during a deceased licensed nurse's memorial, funeral, or graveside service to honor him or her for selfless service to others. The tribute offers fellow nurses an opportunity to commemorate and recognize their colleague's work while recognizing the nurse's unique contributions and service to saving lives. This program is two-fold: 1) spreading the word to families of deceased nurses of this program offering; and 2) recruiting interested nurses (retired or working) who would like to be a part of the Nightingale team for the Alexandria area.

Pens and Pals Faith-based Program

Recognizing the need to offer inclusion in Adult Faith Formation to parishioners with disabilities, Pens and Pals is a new ministry. It is intended to love and serve persons in our faith community with disabilities by creating a trusting partnership between all abilities of adult parishioners. God wants our lives to overflow with mercy, love and compassion. The Pens and Pals outreach program will engage parish volunteers in partnering with persons with disabilities in a variety of any-age, any-ability activities. This ministry is intended to provide friendship and inclusion to our parishioners with disabilities; and build a bond between parishioners of all abilities. "Whatsoever you do to the least of your brothers and sisters you do unto me" (Matthew 25: 40).

Tapestry of Faith

This outreach visitation ministry reaches residents of local nursing homes. Training and support are provided.

Outreach Programs

Angel Tree Gift Delivery

The Christmas Angel Tree program is a ministry in which parishioners purchase gifts anonymously for those less fortunate. Names are received from parishioners as well as various human service organizations throughout the community. Many families are blessed through the fellowship of both giving and receiving, as the gifts are delivered in person by parish volunteers in time for Christmas.

Caring & Sharing Room

The Caring & Sharing Room is a volunteer charity organization sponsored by The Church of St. Mary and is supported by several area churches, organizations and individuals. It collects, stores and provides used furniture and basic household items in good condition from community members and shares them with needy families in Douglas County through referrals from approved community service and crisis agencies. Volunteers can participate by being placed on a pick-up and delivery team that serves once every 6 weeks.

Cookie Connection

Parishioners contribute cookies during the Christmas season which are packaged and delivered to persons living in nursing homes, are homebound, or are alone and might not otherwise be able to enjoy this part of the Christmas tradition. Volunteers help by baking, bagging and delivering cookies.

Prayer Shawl Ministry

Knitters pray while creating shawls for parish members needing comfort and healing. Shawls are blessed by the Pastor before being delivered. Knitters are always welcome and encouraged to join this outreach ministry.

Serve Coffee & Rolls after Mass

Groups and parish members (individuals and families) volunteer to serve coffee and rolls Sunday mornings after 8 a.m. and 10 a.m. Masses. Volunteers of all ages and abilities can help serve coffee and rolls. Typically, 3-4 people are called upon for each Mass on Sundays to set up, serve, and clean up (supplies, food and beverages are brought in ready to serve by coordinators). This is great fellowship time for parishioners and visitors within the church. Providing regularly scheduled fellowship on Sundays adds value to us coming together as a community, getting to know the church family.

Thanksgiving Dinner

The Parish Life Committee sponsors the Thanksgiving Dinner. It strives to offer a complete Thanksgiving dinner with all the fixings for those persons in the community who might not otherwise be able to have a Thanksgiving dinner. Volunteers are needed for the preparation, serving, and delivery of these meals.

Liturgical Ministries

Altar Server

Altar servers assist around the altar, adding to the ceremony by carrying candles, incense, or the cross. Servers are to arrive 15 minutes before the liturgy begins. Servers usually begin serving in the middle of the third grade and can serve through adulthood. School-age servers, as well as adults, are needed.

Altar Server for Funeral Mass

Adults who are available and willing to act as an altar server for a funeral Mass are invited to consider joining this ministry.

Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion

Extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion help distribute the Eucharist at daily, funeral and weekend Masses. Help is also needed to distribute communion at the hospital and to the homebound. They work in a team environment and serve 1-2 times a month. Ministers must be confirmed, practicing Catholics. Attendance at an annual training is required.

Hospitality Desk Greeter

Greeters are people with a gift for hospitality who welcome parishioners and guests with a handshake and conversation and make an effort to introduce new people to others. Scheduling is done on a 3-month cycle at the Mass of your choice. Duties include welcoming visitors to The Church of St. Mary, answering any questions regarding the parish and registering new parishioners. This ministry involves being present at the kiosk 15 minutes before and after your designated weekend Mass.

Hospitality Usher

Ushers assist at the weekend Masses, welcome and seat people, take up the offering, invite members of the assembly to take part in the Presentation of the Gifts, guide parishioners to Communion, hand out the bulletin after Mass and ready the church for the next Mass. Ushers work in a team environment and serve one to two times a month.

Lector

Lectors primarily proclaim the Word of God at weekend Masses. The ability to be heard and understood is a requirement. The parish provides a resource entitled "Sunday Missal" to help readers familiarize themselves with the Scriptures. Lectors are scheduled in a 3-month cycle at the Mass of their choice. Attendance at an annual training is required. Lectors are also needed for funerals and daily Mass.

Sacristan

Sacristans are responsible for the “set-up” before and after Mass. This includes counting out the number of hosts and pouring out the wine to be used. Sacristans also perform other duties done behind the scenes that are essential to the orderly celebration of Mass. Sacristans are also needed for the school Mass during the week.

Technology/ AV Booth

Volunteers are needed at Mass to assist in the AV Booth. Volunteer positions include:

- Advancing PowerPoint slides
- Operating cameras to record & live stream Mass
- Controlling the sound system

Volunteers can be trained on any or all three positions. Training is provided.

Music Ministries

Cantor

The Cantor is responsible for greeting the assembly as Mass begins and providing musical leadership that fosters the "full, active and conscious participation" of the assembly. This ministry requires an audition.

Handbell Choir

The Handbell Choir enhances liturgical music at approximately one Mass per month, September through December, and April through June. Members need not have experience playing bells but should be able to follow tempo beats and read a line of notes.

Instrumentalist

Various instrumental leadership is welcome for enhancing the sung prayer of the community. All types of instruments are welcome, and all ages are invited.

Intergenerational Choir (IGC)

The Intergenerational Choir is a community infused experience that enhances the sung prayer of the congregation. The choir sings approximately one 10:00 Mass per month, October through May. Rehearsal is one hour before Mass. Everyone is welcome from Kindergarten to Adult!

Seasonal Choir (Christmas and Holy Week/Easter)

The Seasonal Choir will sing at the 10:00 P.M. Christmas Eve Mass and/or during Holy Week. (Palm Sunday - 10:00 A.M., Holy Thursday - 7:30 P.M., and Easter Vigil - 8:30 P.M.) Rehearsals will be Wednesday nights for 4-5 weeks prior to the Mass date from 5:00 - 6:30 P.M.

Small Group Ensemble

(Women’s Choir, Men’s Choir or other Ensemble)

Formed as needed.

Faith Formation

The Faith Formation Department at St. Mary's is a vital part of parish life. This department has an influence over more than five hundred students and utilizes more than fifty teachers, assistants, and substitute teachers. Some positions may require training, which will be provided.

Baptism Class

This Baptism class is offered one night every other month. It is required for those parents who, for the first time, are having a child baptized into the Catholic faith. Children who are 7 years old or younger are considered an "infant" regarding baptism within the Catholic Church.

If your child is age 7 or older, we will work with you to find the best pathway that leads your child to the sacrament of Baptism – and the other sacraments.

Little Saints Sunday School Classes

This is open to all children 4 years of age through kindergarten on Sundays from 9:50 to 11:00 a.m. The sessions run from the end of September until the Sunday before Palm Sunday. We need at least one teacher and one helper for each class, and we also need substitutes. We do not meet when there are school vacations, so no one must fear being tied down every single Sunday! Sharing your faith with these little ones is a special experience. All materials are supplied for you.

Elementary Faith Formation

Classes for Grades 1, 3, 4 & 5 are held on Wednesday evenings, mid-September through April. Small group leaders, substitute leaders and a hall monitor are needed. Training and materials are provided.

First Reconciliation & First Communion

Instruction for the sacraments of First Reconciliation and First Communion are taught to 2nd graders at St. Mary's on Monday evenings. Parent and child attend together to participate in guided lessons. Volunteers are needed to help lead the lessons.

Middle School Faith Formation Classes

These classes are open to Grades 6 - 8. Sessions run on Wednesday or Sunday evenings, mid-September through April. Small group leaders, substitute leaders, office help and other volunteers are needed.

Senior High Faith Formation Classes

Grades 9-12 meet on Wednesday or Sunday evenings. Confirmation preparation is open to students in grade 11 and higher. Small group leaders, substitute leaders, office help and other volunteers are needed. Other youth ministry activities may include retreats, rallies, mission, and service opportunities.

Vacation Bible School

These sessions run Monday through Thursday the first week after school dismisses for the summer. Classes are open to children ages 4 through Grade 3 from 9:00 a.m. to noon. Volunteers are needed to help with music, snacks, crafts, games, planning and daycare.

Adult Faith Formation

Men's Bible Study

Men are invited every Thursday at 6 a.m. in the gathering area of the church to study Scriptures that will be used in the next weekend liturgy. This meeting ends in time for attendance at the 7 a.m. Mass.

Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA)

RCIA is a process of formation for those inquiring and for those interested in joining the Catholic Church through Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist (full initiation) or from another Christian denomination through Confirmation, Eucharist and Reconciliation. It is also for those baptized Catholic but who have had little formation and need to receive Eucharist and/or Confirmation. RCIA meets on Thursday evenings. Volunteers are needed to be sponsors and to assist with hospitality and/or childcare as needed.

Theology Day

Theology Day is a chance for people in our community, who are seeking a deeper understanding of their faith and its place in their everyday lives, to learn from and interact with the theologians of Saint John's School of Theology Seminary. It offers a chance for these scholars to gain insights and grow in their faith, as well. A typical Theology Day consists of registration, followed by a period of conversation/presentation/lecture and refreshments. The conversation then continues as participants are given a chance to continue their discussions with one another. There is no fee for Theology Day, but registration is encouraged. Sessions are typically held in the Great Hall as scheduled.

Women's Bible Study

Come join fellow women parishioners as we learn more about the transforming power of the Bible with various program studies. We meet most Saturday mornings from 8 - 10 a.m. No prior Bible Study experience required. Call or email for more information.

St. Mary's School

St. Mary's Elementary School is dedicated to educating the whole child within a nurturing Catholic Christian environment for students in grades K thru 6. Opportunities for adults to be involved include being a Lunch Helper by assisting in preparation and serving daily lunch to students from 10:30 a.m. to 12:15 p.m. on a weekly schedule. Assistance is also welcomed in the library by helping to re-shelve and repair books throughout the school year and to help complete library inventory at the end of the school year.

Parish Library at St. Mary's School

Parishioners are welcome to check out books from the adult section of the school library on an honor system. The selection includes topics from religion, to history, to art and things in between. Donated materials to supplement this library section can be left at the Faith Formation Office.

Supporting Organizations

Christian Mothers

This group is a spiritual organization for Catholic women sixteen years and older. In October, they offer a Mass for their deceased members. In the spring they collaborate with the Daughters of Isabella in several projects such as planting flowers in front of the Great Hall and holding a Mother-Daughter Breakfast after a celebration of Mass for the members of the group.

Daughters of Isabella

This group welcomes all Catholic women sixteen years and older and their focus is on friendship, unity and charity. Daughters of Isabella meet every third Thursday of the month. They remember the birthdays of the elderly of the parish who are in a nursing home. They collect small annual dues and host a salad luncheon in June every year. The proceeds support several local charities including, but not limited to, Birthright and the St. Mary's School Scholarship Fund. They participate in preparing a breakfast and attending Mass for their living members in May. They offer a Mass for their deceased members in November and they gather to pray the rosary if one of their members dies.

Habitat for Humanity

Habitat for Humanity of Douglas County is a nonprofit, ecumenical Christian organization dedicated to eliminating substandard housing and homelessness here in Douglas County. All are welcome to help build homes, communities, and hope in Douglas County by volunteering in this ministry. www.hfhdouglascounty.org

Knights of Columbus

Membership is open to all practicing Catholic men aged 18 and over. The principles of the Order are charity, unity, fraternity, and patriotism. The Knights are involved in many ways that promote the Gospel and enable them to become a spiritual force for the renewal of the Church in holiness, unity and truth. The Knights spread charity and unity among people by their sale of Tootsie Rolls to raise funds for special needs children. They volunteer for Special Olympics. They contribute heavily to all pro-life programs, local needs when tragedies strike, scholarships, specific urgent needs of the parish and school or wherever their help is needed.

Love INC

Love In the Name of Christ is a Christian volunteer-based organization with the mission of bringing local churches and their resources together to reach out to those in need physically, emotionally, financially and spiritually. Multiple volunteer opportunities exist as Love INC encourages church volunteers to share their interests and talents with those in need. Volunteers are also needed to assist in the operation of the Clearinghouse (the call center that receives and verifies clients' requests). Join the Love INC team and grow in your faith as you model Jesus' teachings to others!

Mission Group

The St. Mary's Mission Group meets once a month for eight months of the year for fellowship and quilting. They are affiliated with the Mission Shop in our diocese and collect dental hygiene supplies for Guatemala. Their quilts are made and distributed around the world through the Diocesan Mission Office and, more locally, to the Red Lake Indian Reservation and to the Caring & Sharing Room in Alexandria. Quilters, 2-ply yarn and batting are always welcome in this ministry.

Faith Enrichment Opportunities

Beginning Experience

Beginning Experience is an international program that helps facilitate the grief resolution process for those who have suffered such a loss through separation, divorce or death and frees them to again love themselves, others, and God. This is accomplished by offering time-tested and copyrighted grief resolution programs presented by trained peers. Founded by a Catholic nun and rooted in the Christian tradition, the ministry's open, ecumenical spirit serves those of all faiths. Beginning Experience of Central Minnesota is just one of over sixty teams serving communities across the United States. Team members lead participants through a program of presentations, private reflection, and small group sharing. A sense of community develops in an atmosphere of care and support that is the hallmark of each Beginning Experience weekend. www.beginningexperiencecentralmn.org

Demontreville Retreat

Demontreville Retreats provide an opportunity for men of all religious backgrounds and convictions to spend a quiet weekend away from the noise and confusion of the business and social world. Retreats begin every Thursday at 6:30 p.m. and conclude after supper on Sunday evening. www.demontrevilleretreat.com

Koinonia Retreat

Are you thinking about doing something for yourself to enrich your faith journey? Koinonia is a community experience in Christian living designed especially for adults 20 yrs. and older. It is a Catholic Retreat program sponsored by the Diocese of St. Cloud. The scheduled weekends begin at 5:30 p.m. on Friday and end on Sunday evening about 5:00 p.m. Full or partial scholarships are available for those in need. Applications and dates are available at www.centralmnkoinonia.org

Marriage Encounter

The emphasis of Worldwide Marriage Encounter, a marriage enrichment program, is on communication between husband and wife who spend a weekend together, away from the distractions and the tensions of everyday life, to concentrate on each other. It's not a retreat, nor a marriage clinic, nor group sensitivity. It's a unique approach aimed at revitalizing Christian Marriage. This is a time for you and your spouse to be alone together. It is a time to rediscover each other and together focus on your relationship for an entire weekend. Every marriage deserves that kind of attention! www.wwme.org

Pacem in Terris Hermitage

Pacem in Terris (Peace on Earth) is a Franciscan Center of Spirituality located near Isanti, MN, called to serve God's people through prayer and by providing the opportunity to retreat into the silence and solitude of a simple hermitage environment. The hermitages are nestled amid the natural beauty of forest, prairie, and a wildlife lake. Away from the struggles and influences of a secular society, the hermit/guest enters into the freedom of a "desert-like" environment, following Christ's example where "he would often go off to someplace where he could be alone to pray." Once free from the fast-paced, noisy, and over-scheduled life the hermit can more easily be aware of their needs both personally and in relationships. It becomes possible to listen, truly listen, to one's inner voice and the voice of God – allowing God to become the sole retreat director. www.paceminterris.org

Residents Encounter Christ (REC)

REC is a two-day retreat for jail or prison residents, designed to give the residents a chance to learn about Christ and how He can change their lives. REC is based on the Paschal Mystery, the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Retreat Team positions are open to adults who have participated in TEC, Koininia, or Cursillo. The team is predominately staffed by Catholics, but non-Catholics are warmly welcomed. www.rec-connect.org

Retrouvaille

This program offers a weekend experience, with six follow-up sessions, designed to provide the tools to help put marriages in order again. It is for couples with troubled marriages, including separated or divorced couples, who want their marriage to work. For information and registration: www.helpourmarriage.org

Together Encountering Christ (TEC)

TEC is a three-day retreat weekend based on the Paschal Mystery and the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. TEC originated as "Teens Encountering Christ" in 1965 as a retreat experience for high school students. There are active TEC centers throughout the United States and foreign countries. CENTRAL MINNESOTA TEC began in 1978 and is one of several TEC centers in Minnesota. CENTRAL MINNESOTA TEC changed its name to "Together Encountering Christ" to better reflect the presence of both teen and adult participants on the weekends. The retreats are held on the grounds of Holy Family Parish, Belle Prairie, Minnesota, just north of Little Falls on Highway 371 twelve times a year. <http://www.cmtec.org/intro/index.html>.