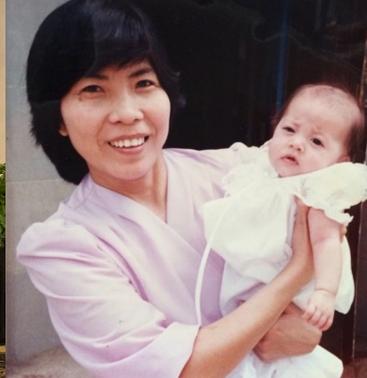


# Our Way of Life



Living  
a Life  
of  
Stewardship



The Church of  
St. Mary

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## A NOTE FROM FATHER MATTHEW

*Dear brothers and sisters in Christ Jesus,*

We have stated our Area Catholic Community mission as: “*To build God’s Church across generations by living the Eucharist.*” I would like to focus today on “*across generations.*” We are stewards not just of our present gifts; we are also responsible to maintain the traditions and gifts we have received from the past, to plan for the future, and to teach our children to be good stewards as well.

I am grateful for the wisdom that I have received and continue to receive from the elder members of our community. They remind me daily of how much I still have to learn and how good God is to us all. The history of our parish is long and rich, and we have much to be thankful for in the traditions and the gifts that have been passed down to us. Every day I hear another story of how our predecessors sacrificed and gave of themselves for the parish we now enjoy.

I am humbled by the time I am blessed to share with our young people in classroom visits at St. Mary’s and St. Agnes Schools, and in our Faith Formation programs. As cliché as it sounds, I learn as much from them as they

might learn from me. When my lessons are successful, I have the joy of seeing understanding bloom in their eyes. When my lessons are less successful, then I learn to adapt and to listen in new ways. Some of my favorite moments are when I have finished my lesson

need to grow in their faith. These questions often become the seeds of future lessons or homilies, as they will often ask a question that prompts me to learn more. They give me hope for the future of our parish and our Church.

Education is an effort to improve the future. We teach our children virtue so that they may succeed not just now, but far into the future, even after we are no longer present in their lives. We involve our children in every part of the life of our parish so that they can grow and extend the mission of the Church in new and beautiful ways. We want them to grow to love what we love, to value what we value, and to pursue the good things that first inspired us. Every moment we spend with our children is an investment in their future—a stewardship of time in its broadest sense. We foster the talents and treasures that each child brings to the life of our individual families and our parish family. And together we build God’s Church across generations by living the Eucharist. This is our mission, our joy, and our hope.

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*Peace in Christ,*

*Father Matthew Kuhn, Pastor*

and have time to answer their questions. It is in these moments that I learn what they value, what they are pondering, and what they

# HARVEST PACK FOOD PACKING EVENT

Hosted by  
The Church of St. Mary

**FEBRUARY 27, 2023**  
**10:00 AM - 8:00 PM**

The opportunity to provide food to those in need is within our reach. Get involved in a fun event with the whole family!

To donate and register for the event, scan the QR code or go to:  
[stmaryalexandria.org](http://stmaryalexandria.org)



## HELP PACK 75,000 MEALS!

On April 6, 2022 the St. Mary's community came together in a food packing event for Harvest Pack. This multi-generational event packed over 66,000 meals. 20% of the meals were delivered to the Outreach Food Shelf in our local community, and the remaining meals were distributed to the Children's Health Ministry in Haiti.

Help build justice and feed the hungry by joining the next food packing event at St. Mary's on Monday, February 27, 2023. With your help, we will meet our goal of packing 75,000 meals! Sign up to help with the event set-up, food packing and clean-up with your friends, family and neighbors! All are welcome! Training will be provided. This is a fun event that



*Food packed at St. Mary's distributed at Children's Health Ministry Center in Haiti*

builds community while helping our neighbors. We hope to see you there!

Sign up to help at [stmaryalexandria.org](http://stmaryalexandria.org).

## FAREWELL TO KATHY FISCHER, FAITH COMMUNITY NURSE



Kathy Fischer will be ending her career as the St. Mary's Faith Community Nurse at the close of 2022. She has served St. Mary's in that role for over eighteen years and her ministry has been a shining example of stewardship in action.

Kathy began a career serving others working in the United States Army Nurse Corps for sixteen years, then taught in the nursing program at Pacific Lutheran University in Tacoma, Washington. After moving to Alexandria with her husband and young family, her service as St. Mary's Faith Community Nurse began in 2004.

Entering a career of service was influenced by Kathy's upbringing. Raised in a farm family of ten children, everyone was expected to help with the farm, with younger siblings and in the local church. Kathy shares one of the underlining values of her family was, "What can I do for others?"

It was an outward looking way to live."

Kathy explains, "As a military nurse, the focus was something bigger than myself; assisting soldiers, assisting family members, always the focus was on supporting others because it was an obligation to do that. The obligation was to the military or to the family, but now, I look at it as an obligation as a human being. Striving to learn more and striving to do more comes from my upbringing and the military just reinforced that, including the concept that what we do isn't about us. What we do is for others."

How can you want anything else? Everything else is stripped away. All that matters is love.

It would be too long of a list to name every program Kathy has started here, every ministry she has led and every person's life she has touched. While she has made a difference in the lives of many during her years as a Faith Community Nurse, she has in turn been impacted. One of her central roles at St. Mary's is visiting the elderly who are homebound. "I have learned more in the past eighteen years from my clients than from any boss or co-worker. I've learned about life, persistence, and resilience. They have shown me how to move forward with grace

and acceptance despite tragedies in their life. They wake up looking forward to each day."

Parishioners have allowed Kathy to be witness to sacred moments in their lives, including dying. Something she tells families who experience a loved one's death is, "You loved this person here and now you are loving them into their next home, loving them out of this life. When the last thing someone realizes at death is being loved, how can you want anything else? Everything else is stripped away. All that matters is love."

She will always remember one experience, early in her St. Mary's service. She was present at a man's death. "His last words were to his wife, 'I love you.' To be there at that moment, to see the serenity of that moment and witness that she will hear those words and carry those words for the rest of her life - I got to witness that. At death, there is an awareness of your loved one's presence and that is the last thing they realize - that love from someone."

Kathy reflected on advice from a former supervisor who encouraged her to impact the people around her and not worry about changing the world. Every positive action, every smile, every deepening of a relationship spreads out into the universe affecting others in a ripple effect. Kathy's service has most certainly created a ripple effect of goodness to our community and our world. Thank you, Kathy!

# Legacy of Faith Through Generosity

By Laurie Bienias



The gift of faith is a precious thing. Reflect and remember who in your life inspired your faith. Was it a parent, grandparent, teacher, coach, priest, or friend? What did they say or do that caused you to grow in your Catholic faith? Our lives are a living witness of faith to others. Living a life of Stewardship is just that. Through generosity our faith is lived out and passed on.

People come in and out of our lives and we never know the impact they will make. A gentleman vacationing in the area attended daily Mass and commented to me on what a beautiful parish campus we have. He was interested in learning about programs and activities we offered to the children. He was impressed but asked if there were more things that we wished we could do. We brainstormed and dreamed of new possibilities. We then met again with his daughter, and I discovered the wonderful and inspiring ways they are making a difference in the lives of others.

They help run a Foundation in honor of a family member who was a Catholic school teacher. She took great care of her students and passed her faith on to them. Her life was a witness to others, and she encouraged them to learn and grow in their relationship with Christ and the Catholic Church. They continue her legacy by anonymously funding various faith experiences for children and families. Our list of additional faith opportunities that we brainstormed came true when they presented the Faith Formation Department with a check for \$12,716. I never dreamed in this chance meeting what an impact he would make.

As I discussed this donation with committees, our school, and parish, the most wonderful thing happened. Each project that was funded inspired additional people to share their gifts, talents, and resources; making the projects not only possible, but better!

Some of the projects we have done so far:

Helium Rosary Balloon Release: Two events were held in October to celebrate the Month of the Rosary and Respect Life Month. With prayer and song over 500 St. Mary's School and Faith Formation students, staff, and parishioners witnessed a helium rosary balloon release.

Children Saint Books and Bibles: Our Little Saints Sunday School program gave each child a children's bible and Saint book. Our Middle School students received Catholic Youth Bibles.

Missions: High Schoolers were helped with the expense of attending Steubenville in Rochester.

Mass Book Bags: We are adding additional Mass Book Bags to keep our smallest Mass goers engaged.

And there is more to come!

We have been blessed through their generosity. May we be encouraged by them to look at our lives and ask, how am I using my gifts to increase faith in others and make the world around me better? Let's live our lives looking for ways to grow our Catholic faith in others and leave a legacy of faith.

*"For I was a stranger and  
you welcomed me."  
-Matthew 25:35*



# HOPE HAVEN

HOMELESS TO HOPEFUL

St. Mary's Hosting Dates

# JANUARY 2 - 15

Remember Hope Haven? An overnight lodging initiative for the temporary homeless. St. Mary's will be cooperating again this year with the United Way and West Central Minnesota Communities Action in overnight hospitality for the homeless.

**Provide Food**  
(Breakfast, Sack Lunch  
or Supper)



**Be an Overnight  
Volunteer**



**HELP BRING  
HOPE TO OTHERS!**

## WAYS TO SIGN UP TO HELP:

- Scan a QR Code
- [stmaryalexandria.org](http://stmaryalexandria.org)
- Call the Parish Office at 320-763-5781





## LUKE'S LATEST LITURGICS

Greetings from Liturgy and Music at St. Mary's! This fall we have been busy in many aspects. Our bell, children's, and young adult choirs are up and running again. Soon, we would like to also bring back our adult choirs. We have been adding to our musical ranks and always look forward to where we can improve and deepen our musicality. This fall, we have also been slowly incorporating the use of Ministry Scheduler Pro. This online scheduling system is slowly making it easier to schedule liturgical ministries. One of the highlights is its ability to quickly send out sub requests and automated reminders. The 21<sup>st</sup> century world and Catholic Church is requiring greater use of technology to reach multiple generations and keep up with life's

pace. Right now, our weekend sacristans, servers, lectors, and AV volunteers are using this system; by year's end we are hoping to have most of our liturgical ministries utilizing Ministry Scheduler Pro.

Our Liturgy Committee has been busy working together to reflect on the future direction of St. Mary's worship life and culture. Part of that includes defining the mission of the Liturgy Committee itself and how we work together for the good of the parish. COVID and changes in leadership make it necessary for us to review this. It is the right thing to keep in mind the spiritual needs of others as we plan our liturgies. How is worship experienced at St. Mary's? Are we lifting the hands and hearts of the parish? Are we truly worshipping God rather than ourselves? These are the sorts of questions we contemplate as we also figure solutions. At the time of this writing, we are also putting the final touches on our Remembrance service preparation.

This service honors and remembers those from St. Mary's who have passed away over the past year. Songs, words, and candles are just a few of the liturgical elements incorporated. The Remembrance service helps surviving loved ones process the mystery of death. Our Catholic faith teaches us that death is not the end, because Jesus Christ overcame death through suffering, dying, and rising. All liturgies we celebrate together have this at its core.

There are many more happenings within Liturgy and Music that could fill pages and pages here. Please pray that St. Mary's may continuously strive to be vibrant, faith-filled people at work for the mission. May our hearts and hands always reflect who God is and calls us to be. There is always much to be done!

*Your companion in Christ,*

*-Luke VanOverbeke*

**EXPLORING PRAYER**  
A seven-part series

So often we hear exhortations to pray: "pray more," "pray better," "have a personal relationship with God." What does that really mean? Still more, how do you do it? This Advent and Christmas, take some time to explore the nature, facets, and possibilities of prayer with Fr. Rick. We will dive deep into meaning and learn practical techniques to aid you in this most important and sublime of human activities.

**SATURDAYS | 7-8:15 PM**  
**December 3, 10, 17 & January 7, 14, 21, 28**  
The 1<sup>st</sup> Meeting will be at The Church of St. Mary  
Check the bulletin and Facebook pages for location week by week

**Come to the Water**  
CATHOLIC COMMUNITY  
ALEXANDRIA | BELLE RIVER | ONTARIO

*Christmas Liturgy Schedule*

**Christmas Eve**

**4:00 PM & 10:00 PM**

*(incense used at both Masses)*

**Christmas Day 9:00 AM**

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*Individual Confession*

**Every Saturday**

**during Advent**

**2:00 - 4:30 PM**



The Church of  
St. Mary

420 Irving Street  
Alexandria, MN 56308

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St. Mary

