



The Belltower Beacon

A publication to inform, welcome and inspire the spirited community of St. Christopher.

Volume 20: Issue 79

September 2020

CENTENNIAL PARK IS OPEN

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

Centennial Park	1
Outdoor Mass	2
Dedication	3
Raffle	4
Centennial Park	4-5
Deacon Tom	6
Mindy Deckert	7
Live Streaming Mass	8
Prayer for Solidarity	9
Mrs. Greene	10
Capital Campaign	11
Return to Church	11
Graduation	12
Parishioner Spotlight	14
Prayer	15
First Communion	16-17
Confirmation	18-19
RCIA	20
Vacation Bible School	21
Youth Group	22
Healing Rosary	22
Church Chatter	23
Upcoming Events	24



Saturday, July 25 was the Feast of St. Christopher. Although we did not formally celebrate the feast liturgically, we did celebrate in a very special way by opening Centennial Park that weekend. During a time when life has not gone according to any of our plans, it was certainly one occasion for joy and celebration. We can all be proud of this accomplishment! I am grateful to three moms in our school: Allison Coale, Andrea McGannon and Maggie Watson. They had this vision over two years ago and came to me and our school principal, Scott Raiff, to suggest the need for a new playground and the idea of something bigger. They organized meetings, prepared plans and invited parishioners to offer comments and suggestions along the way. Thanks to the generosity of parishioners who supported our Centennial Capital Campaign, we were able to complete the work this summer. Thanks also to Mr. Jim McKnight who served as the landscape architect for the park and to F. Buddie Contracting who provided the labor and materials to get the work done in a timely manner.

A formal dedication and blessing of Centennial Park took place on Saturday, August 29. COVID-19 prevented us from holding our annual Block Party but we were able to celebrate the outdoor Mass and use that as the occasion to gather as a parish community for this joyful occasion in a

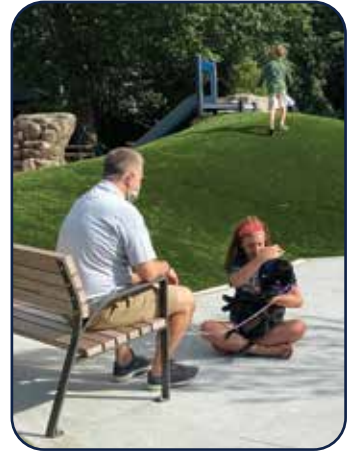
safe way. The Mass took place using our parking lot where parishioners could remain in their parked vehicles and listen to the Mass on their car radios. The annual parish raffle winners were chosen at the end of the liturgy. It was a great day and helped take the place of our normal Block Party in a very festive manner. Please enjoy the pictures that accompany this article.

Since it opened, the park has had many visitors and the comments have been very complimentary. Most agree that the end result has exceeded their expectations! If you have not yet visited, feel free to do so and when you do please practice social distancing and remember to wear your mask. If your children are using the playground please follow good health practices. If you stop in the prayer garden to see the statue of St. Francis of Assisi, do so with social distancing and masks. When you are looking for your paver brick, please do it safely. Security cameras have been installed and updated to watch over the entire park as well as other areas around our entire campus. There are two hand sanitizing stations and four trash receptacles available for your use as needed. Signage is present to remind all of us to use the park with respect for each other as well as for our environment. Centennial Park is for all of us to gather, play and pray!

Fr. John Chlebo



Mass





Dedication



Raffle



RAFFLE WINNERS!

\$3,000 Grand Prize:

Ginger Palmer

\$2,000 Second Prize:

Terry Stanton

\$1,000 Prizes:

Joe & Sally Smith

Mary Ann Kochera

Jim Laux

Kennedy Teater

Venera Foti

The Park is Open!





BELLTOWER BEACON

A TRIBUTE TO THE LEGACY OF DEACON TOM LONG



It is with utmost respect and deep gratitude that our parish family congratulates Deacon Tom Long in his well deserved retirement after many years of selfless service. With a unique perspective on the St. Christopher community, Deacon Tom has been a member of our parish family all of his life. In fact, Deacon Tom is the third generation in his family to belong to St. Christopher. His adult children are the fourth generation to grow up in Rocky River and attend St. Christopher day school. The first generation of Longs (his maternal grandparents) moved into the area in 1928 when they built a home on Battersea Blvd. Deacon Tom's parents, Ruth and Jack, were married at St. Christopher in 1943 and moved into the same Battersea home where they raised Tom (born April 21, 1950) and his brother, Tim. The sons were baptized and educated at St. Christopher. Tom would follow suit by raising his children at St. Christopher as well.

About growing up in the city, Tom explains that they were somewhat of a minority as one of the few Catholic families on his street. He states: "The memories of life back then are legend and give me a great deal of joy in reminiscing about those days." For example, at the crowded day school it was not uncommon to have 50 students in a classroom. Deacon Tom finds humor in the way that recess was handled as compared to today's cautions and safeguards: "Recess on the playground was mayhem since teachers did not have recess duty at the time. If an 8th grader ran over a first grader, you just picked up the little one and took him or her to the nurse." One of his greatest joys, though, was when Tom became a server under the tutelage of Fr. Bill Eylar, who instilled in Tom a love for the Mass and for Church.

It should come as no surprise that the Diaconate would interest Tom. Though he felt called at an early age, he had to wait until the minimum age of 35. By then, Tom and Kathy were busy with careers and family. His passion for the diaconate stayed in his heart, but God's perfect timing came in 2005 when Fr. John Chlebo suggested he apply. After discerning with Kathy, together they

embarked on this faith journey of becoming Deacon and wife in service to God's Holy Church. Throughout the training, Kathy worked alongside Tom to support his efforts. On May 1, 2010, Tom was ordained at St. John Cathedral and assigned here. Deacon Tom explains that a deacon is not defined by what he does. "He is not a mere functionary but is part of the Church's triad of ordained service – bishop, priest and deacon." Tom's duties at St. Christopher have included preaching and assisting at Mass; preparing parents and baptizing infants; and helping engaged couples in Pre-Cana. He continues to teach Confirmation.

Deacon Tom graduated from St. Edward and was strongly impacted by a retreat led by teacher/singer/composer Bob Hurd, who became a successful composer of Catholic worship songs. Upon entering John Carroll, he knew his interest in science would lead to a bachelor's degree in physics. He recalls joining John Carroll's ROTC battalion while there because "the Vietnam war was raging and I needed to prepare for eventually being called to service." In 1975, Deacon Tom received his master's degree in science from John Carroll.

While at John Carroll, Tom also won the heart of his future bride, Kathy. They married on July 21, 1978, settled in Rocky River, and raised three children at St. Christopher: Brigid Groves (pharmacist/Dublin, OH), Matthew (auto repair tech/Portland, OR) and Timothy (video production manager/Fairview Park). For many years Kathy was the second grade catechist here; she also facilitated Confirmation preparation and taught second grade at our day school. When their children were old enough, they became involved as well – the boys as servers and Brigid as lector. It was not unusual for the entire family to be serving Mass together. Oftentimes, Kathy was a Eucharistic Minister while Tom sang in the choir.

Tom always had an interest in science because "the subject illustrated the workings of our world but also the grandeur of the universe that only God could have created." His career in science took him to several major corporations in the greater Cleveland area. Despite the prestige of such positions, none impressed him as much as teaching physics at Benedictine HS in later years. While it was a constant challenge, it was also a constant reminder that he had a tremendous

opportunity to show young men how to live as responsible human beings. Deacon Tom stresses that "no regular job can provide that experience."

According to Deacon Tom's children, they owe their helpful and volunteering spirit, their love of church and community service to parents who modeled these. Their faith journey was a joint family venture. Together they participated in the life of their



parish, contributed to its growth and well-being, and created fond memories to last a lifetime. Tom has always been an actively involved father who made up stories, supported their efforts and taught them to love animals. One of their favorite memories was when Tom officiated at Brigid's wedding. He surprised them all by bringing their childhood toy and telling the story about a lost and restored stuffed penguin called "Dear Life Monkey." In the end, the "monkey" was used to illustrate the need for a couple to "hold on to each other for dear life." In 2019, the children took Tom to Rome to visit the Vatican, Sistine Chapel and Pope Francis. They also took him on a Mediterranean cruise, a family trip that they will never forget.



To Deacon Tom retirement does not mean the typical leisurely events or mad dash to complete or experience things before one dies. Describing "the darkest time" of his life being when Kathy was diagnosed with cancer in 2014 through her death in 2016, retirement to Tom means a time to step back and reflect on what really matters - blessings received, love given and accepted. In his case, it means reflecting on "the gift of a partner who had the goodness, grace and patience to accompany me on this journey we call life." The contributions made by Tom and Kathy Long will have a lasting effect upon future generations of St. Christopher parishioners. They are a couple that exemplified family togetherness, love of God and selfless giving.

As committee member, facilitator, Catechist and Deacon, Tom is willing to take on any task in order to share and live out the Gospel. Deacon Tom's contributions will not stop at retirement, as he continues to help with our Confirmation program, at Mass and wherever the parish needs him. Due to health concerns, he continues to stay close to home with his three feline friends: Molly (age 17), Chloe (10) and Hannah (7). He misses being present for Mass and misses interacting with members of the congregation. We look forward to a time when we can all be worshipping alongside Deacon Tom in a safe, healthy environment.

Carmen Everett DeHaan

WELCOME BACK, MINDY DECKERT



All roads lead back to St. Christopher for first grade teacher Mindy Deckert. She'll once again be teaching first grade this fall, having previously taught first grade at St. Christopher from 2014-2018. Prior to teaching first grade, she also taught literacy and math intervention at SCS. "I am so excited to be teaching again at St. Christopher," said Mrs. Deckert.

She and husband Brian have two girls: Olivia Mae and Alyssia Anne. Back in 2014, they were just babies; now Olivia is in second grade and Alyssia is in first grade.

Mrs. Deckert professes a goal of instilling a life-long love of learning not only in her girls but in all of her students. "I have a strong belief that all children deserve the opportunity to learn and grow towards their fullest potential," said Mrs. Deckert. "Students thrive when they feel safe and inspired within a rich learning environment. I have noticed that students are most successful when learning activities are of high interest and encourage creative thinking. Most importantly, teachers must meet the unique needs of all students through differentiation, kindness and understanding."

St. Christopher has been an important and dynamic part of Mrs. Deckert's professional career. "Although my life and family's needs have taken me in different directions at times, all roads have always lead me back to St. Christopher," said Mrs. Deckert. "I think of the St. Christopher community as friends and family and I am very fortunate to be again welcomed back into such a caring and faith-filled environment. I cannot wait to meet a new class of first grade kiddos this year! I am so very blessed."

Beth Van Horn

LIVE STREAMING MASS



Back in March the church closed for public worship due to the spread of COVID-19. At that time we quickly scrambled to put together a team to pre-record Masses so that all of you could attend online, even though the obligation to attend Mass was lifted. I remember thinking that the pandemic would likely get under control and we would return to our normal lives some weeks down the road. As we know now, that was wishful thinking. Furthermore, getting the news that all Masses were cancelled up to and including Easter was just so shocking and disappointing. It wasn't until the end of May that we cautiously began to gather in small numbers for public worship.

Now that we are back in church with limited seating, the new norm is very different. We are wearing masks, sanitizing our hands, keeping safe distance, and congregational singing has been suspended. This last point is especially hard for me. Nothing gives me greater joy than to hear your voices lifted in song. However, we are being SAFE by doing this since singing (as well as shouting) has been shown to be a super spreader of the virus. In fact, it spreads 10 times the droplets compared to talking. Once we have turned this chapter of COVID-19, I look forward to getting back to the task of encouraging your full participation in the music.

I would like to thank all the staff, parishioners and others who have made our video productions possible. Kevin Tennant has done most of our video recording over these months. His special touch has made these videos very captivating. Kevin is a Senior Event Specialist for Quince Imaging, in Sterling, VA, where he does live event video and display production events. You also see Kevin's daughter Hollie pictured here, who has patiently sat through hours of recording in the church. Hollie is a member of the Youth Choir and attends St. Christopher School. Her version of This Little Light of Mine was our most watched video, hitting over 10,000 views. Molly Fuerst, St. Christopher School Technology Teacher, also helped us in the early stages. She was instrumental in getting us set

up with equipment and working out the wrinkles and we thank her. Efrain Hernandez has had the task of mixing multiple audio tracks from different locations in the church to give us the best sound possible. You may have also seen and heard Efrain playing drums at an occasional Mass over the past year. Efrain is a music producer and professional drummer with the Michelle Romary Band and other organizations. He is also owner and drum builder at EHC-drum. I thank all of these people for sharing their time, talent and creativity so that we could provide you not only the Mass, but also other devotional and informational videos as well as music video releases. In all, we have had approximately 70,000 views between Facebook and YouTube. Once we resumed public worship, Logan Feldkamp, our Pastoral Minister, started to record the 5 p.m. Mass each weekend for release on Sunday. We also thank him for continuing to make the Mass available in





this manner. We certainly thank all our music ministry team members and staff members who have shared their talent in these Masses and videos and ones to come in the future. These include Laura Avdey, Chris Albanese, Vicki Arguello, Brian Altman, Teresa Blair, Michelle Federico, Judy Grachanin, Evan Guhde, Stacy Hetrick, Mary Kelly, Allegra Marino, Kathy Popp, Michelle Romary, Hollie Tennant, Kayla Timic, Patrick Walsh, Paul Wilms, and Catherine Van Curen. Please forgive me if anyone has been accidentally omitted.

Please continue to watch our videos, even if you are attending Mass. Like us on facebook or subscribe to the church YouTube channel. When you feel compelled, please share the videos on your own social media page. What an easy way to evangelize and spread the Good News! Just click share!

Remember if you are not on social media, you can always view videos by visiting the parish website at stchrisparish.com. We are exploring the possibility of setting up equipment which will give us the ability to livestream as well. We will keep you posted on that project.

It has been a gift to return to St. Christopher Church and reconnect with so many of you, and to meet so many new parishioners. I look forward to the day when COVID-19 is behind us and we can get back to church in person with full heart and voice.

Please keep yourselves safe everyone.

Bob McMurray

PRAYER FOR SOLIDARITY

For all who have contracted coronavirus,
We pray for care and healing.

For those who are particularly vulnerable,
We pray for safety and protection.

For all who experience fear or anxiety,
We pray for peace of mind and spirit.

For affected families who are facing difficult decisions between food on the table or public safety,
We pray for policies that recognize their plight.

For those who do not have adequate health insurance,
We pray that no family will face financial burdens alone.

For those who are afraid to access care due to immigration status,
We pray for recognition of the God-given dignity of all.

For our brothers and sisters around the world,
We pray for shared solidarity and an end to racism and all forms of division.

For public officials and decision makers,
We pray for wisdom and guidance.

Loving God, during this time may your Church be a sign of hope, comfort and love to all.

Grant peace.

Grant comfort.

Grant healing.

Be with us, Lord.

Amen.

*adapted from COVID-19 Prayer for Solidarity
U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops*

MRS. GREENE RETIRES



Kindergarten teacher Paula Greene retired at the end of the 2019-2020 school year, bringing to a close her 22 years of teaching at St. Christopher. If your child was a student of Mrs. Greene's you know that she is the embodiment of patience, grace and kindness and that she is beloved by students and parents alike.

According to Mrs. Greene, teaching was the only vocation for her. "I love interacting with young children. In high school there was a program where we could read books to young children at the local elementary schools – and I really got hooked then." This led her to obtain her degree in Early Childhood Education from Edinboro University in Pennsylvania.

Her first teaching position was at St. Rose Parish in Cleveland teaching fourth grade. Soon after she began teaching kindergarten at OLA, followed by a stint teaching first grade at St. Raphael in Bay Village. That year is also when she married her husband Bob who is a corporate pilot for Sherwin Williams.

Soon she and Bob started their family, moved out of state for a time, and then returned to Ohio. They settled in Rocky River and attended St. Christopher Church where Mrs. Greene took part in the RCIA program, sponsored by her husband Bob. Sr. Patricia Twohig, CSJ, the principal of St. Christopher at the time, approached Mrs. Greene about an opening for a kindergarten teacher. As they say, the rest is history.



Mrs. Greene recalls that when she began teaching at SCS, the "Trinity" building (the former convent building that now houses the preschool) was separate, and not connected to the school.

"I think back to when I began teaching at St. Christopher," recalls Mrs. Greene. "My daughter Emily was in the first grade and my son Matthew was in the fourth grade, and we all went to school together. It was so nice to be working where they attended school." Those children are grown now of course. Emily lives in Columbus and works in management information systems and Matthew lives in Chicago and is a craft cocktail designer and restaurant consultant.



Mrs. Greene said she'll feel a sense of withdrawal when the school year starts and she's not in her classroom. "I am going to miss the interaction with my co-workers and especially with my students. There is nothing quite like teaching a child to read – when you see them make that connection between the letters turning into words and that light bulb goes off and they're able

to read that first sentence." She said it will also be odd come fall to not be taking the hayride and picking pumpkins at the annual Red Wagon Farm kindergarten field trip.

She and husband Bob are avid sailors and have been enjoying cruising Lake Erie on their 32-foot sailboat. Sailing is something their family has done since their children were young. Due to her school schedule, the Greens have never sailed at the end of August and into September. Now they're looking forward to spending lots of time on the water this fall.

Beth Van Horn



CAPITAL CAMPAIGN UPDATE

At the time of the March issue of the Belltower Beacon our Centennial Capital Campaign had successfully passed the 2 million dollar mark towards the goal of 3 million. The onset of COVID-19 understandably slowed the momentum. Since that time we have inched up to nearly 2.2 million dollars in pledges. We plan to reach out to parishioners this fall who have not yet made a pledge. In the meantime, those who had made a pledge have been faithful in their payments and I am grateful for their support.

As you know, Centennial Park was a very visible part of this campaign and it has been completed, opened and dedicated this summer. Read more about the Park elsewhere in this issue. Also this summer there was tuck pointing work done on our Pre-School Building and Gymnasium. The Pre-School Building also received an upgrade on the HVAC. One of our major goals next summer is our parking lot that needs to be redone. It comes with a hefty price tag in the \$750,000.00 neighborhood. We are keeping an eye on our roofs and HVAC equipment on the Parish Center and School Building. These will be addressed as needed as they approach 20 years of service. There is also preparation and planning to be done in anticipation of celebrating our 100th Anniversary as a parish in May 2022. Your continued support and generosity is greatly appreciated as we keep up with these practical and necessary repairs and maintenance to our parish campus! May God Bless Us!

Fr. John Chlebo

THE RETURN TO CHURCH



When the last Belltower Beacon was published in early June, we were just returning to celebrating Mass in the church. There remained NO obligation to attend weekend Mass and attendance was sparse. Social distancing was in effect even in church.

Sanitizing hands and wearing masks were required by everyone entering. The church was marked to indicate where to sit and stand and where not to sit and stand, there was no singing and Communion was single file. Sanitizing throughout the church takes place after each event. This important effort is time consuming and labor intensive for our maintenance staff. We also record the 5 p.m. Mass on Saturday each week and make it available online for people to watch at home.

As the month of September begins not much has changed. The attendance has increased over time. The early weeks saw an average attendance at a weekend Mass of less than 50. Late June and most of July saw that number rise to 50-60 per Mass. August saw an increase to an average of 75 at each Mass with a couple of Masses topping 100 due to the 1st Communion celebrations taking place during that time. People have been very good at wearing masks and keeping social distance. The Parish Staff along with volunteer ushers have been helpful welcoming and directing people. Those attending have expressed feeling comfortable and safe and seem to appreciate the guidelines that have been put in place.

In addition to the 1st Communion celebrations, the Sacrament of Confirmation was celebrated with students that are now in 10th grade. This was delayed from the original May date and accomplished on five different week nights in August. The current 9th grade students are scheduled to be confirmed in October and this should take place albeit in smaller groups. Baptisms are taking place but only outside of Mass and one family at a time. Funeral Masses are again being held in the church but most have been more private family gatherings because of limited seating that social distancing requires. The same is true of weddings as couples adjust to the limitations that are currently in place.

One challenging area we are faced with is collections. We are not able to take up a collection during Mass. Baskets are available upon entering and exiting and people have used them. This seems like a good opportunity to remind you to please be faithful in your financial support of the parish and make our parish a regular part of your weekly or monthly budget. We are grateful to those who have made the effort to do so. However, during this pandemic time contributions are down about 20%. Please consider using direct debit or your credit card for your contributions. We receive about 30% of our regular Offertory income this way and it is very helpful to the parish. We are very grateful to those who have made use of this method for their contributions. If you wish more information about direct debit and credit card donations go to our website, stchrisparish.com. Go to the "Parish Info" drop down menu and "Online Giving" to find the details. Credit card information can also be found on our parish app under Donate. Feel free to contact the Parish Office if you have any questions.

Fr. John Chlebo

ST. CHRISTOPHER SCHOOL HOSTS FIRST EVER OUTDOOR GRADUATION CEREMONY

St. Christopher School, like all schools throughout Ohio, finished the 2019-20 school year teaching students remotely. The switch to virtual learning presented challenges to students, parents, and staff. However, our school community's commitment to educational excellence and growth, in addition to the effective utilization of educational technology, allowed learning at high levels to continue. Unfortunately, while instruction continued to take place during the COVID pandemic related closure of school, many year-end events had to be cancelled; including field trips, class parties, the school play, and other school performances.

Our 8th grade class, more than any other one, was most impacted by the closure of school. The class golf outing, trip to Washington DC, and Retreat Day were just a few of the traditional, year-end events that were cancelled because of the pandemic. It also appeared that their graduation prayer service/ceremony and reception would also have to take place virtually or be dramatically altered in some way. Social distancing requirements would not allow for a ceremony in the church and an indoor reception. It seemed like the 8th grade class would experience another disappointment. The collaborative efforts of the SCS staff, parents, and PATHS leadership (our school's parent organization), however, resulted in our school's first ever outdoor graduation.

The graduation ceremony took place on Sunday, May 31 and we were blessed with perfect weather. The event kicked off with a parade of our graduates and their families down Lakeview Ave and along the Detroit Road. Fr. John and Fr. Tim, the school and parish staff, also participated in the parade. The parade route was lined with SCS students and families, both past and present, and our marchers received an escort from the Rocky River Police Department. The sirens and lights were a big hit with the younger folks in the crowd! Yard signs with our graduates pictures also adorned the parade route.

In order to reduce crowding and maintain appropriate social distancing, the ceremony itself was only open to the graduates and their immediate family members; with folks gathering by the cars in the parish parking lot. The ceremony began with a blessing and remarks by our pastor, Fr. John. It also included a Scripture reading, a "history" of the 8th grade class, remarks from the school principal, a sharing of class memories, and a recognition of "legacy families" (those who would no longer have a child at SCS). All graduates also received an amazing gift bag, a class t-shirt, and SCS face mask, courtesy of PATHS. After the diplomas were awarded, family pictures taken, and a final blessing, students and their families enjoyed cupcakes and refreshments provided by PATHS. The evening concluded with a viewing of the class video, which was projected on screen outside the parish gym.

Our first ever outdoor graduation was a huge success. Many families shared that they would like to see the parade and other elements of the outdoor celebration to be incorporated into future graduations. The SCS staff would like to thank everyone in the St. Christopher community for their support and prayers during the challenges of the COVID pandemic. We are especially grateful to Fr. John, Fr. Tim, PATHS, and our incredible school parents. Their collective efforts helped to turn an initial disappointment into a truly special and memorable event. **Below are the names of our 8th grade graduates.** We will truly miss this extraordinary group of students at SCS and wish them the best of luck as they continue on their journey to high school.

Scott Raiff

2020 GRADUATES

Jason Dubbs
Timothy Hill
Jennifer Kempton
Katie Kissling
Mariella Mayer
Michael Polito
Carmen Moliterno
Brooke Reinart
Amelia Kleinert
Thomas Kilbane
Emilia Ripepi
Elizabeth Spicer
Olivia Elwood
Mary Alice French
Fitzwilliam Lokiec
Isabell McManamon
Keegan Musbach
Ian Roth
Michael Sas
Luke Wnukowski
Aislinn McGill
Ava Toth
Joseph MacBride
Caroline Neitzel
Caroline Johnson
John Ehlert
Stephen Bucha
Theodore Bucha
Patrick Laudolff
Giovanni Duniec
Carli Joy Konold
Cameron Wirth





JANE AND ELLEN: A LEGACY OF SERVICE



Jane Blaha Vitou and Ellen Blaha Miner, sisters and lifelong parishioners, are carrying on a legacy of service started by their parents George and Terese Blaha. "They were role models who encouraged us to do works of service," Jane said. George and Terese, now deceased, were members of the parish for more than 50 years.

If you don't happen to know Jane or Ellen, you may be familiar with the recent food drive they started to help St. Christopher parishioners at the beginning of the shut down for the coronavirus pandemic. The idea for the food drive came about at the beginning of March when many businesses were shutting down, affecting many they knew. Those affected included some of their many nieces and nephews, and they felt a strong desire to help. Both Jane and Ellen are avid walkers, and when on a long walk one day Jane realized one way they could help was to provide food to those in need. They decided to enlist the help of other parishioners and started a GoFundMe page raising over \$16,000 for the purchase of food. During the month of April, Jane and Ellen facilitated the purchase, collection, drop off, sorting and distribution of the

food. This food went to many Rocky River families and was also distributed to several other area parishes in need. These parishes included St. Ignatius of Antioch, St. Vincent De Paul and a contribution of some of the funds raised to Urban Community School. Jane and Ellen said they were overwhelmed with the outpouring of help from fellow parishioners.

Jane and Ellen, along with a sister and two brothers, were raised in Rocky River on a street within walking distance of St. Christopher and attended St. Christopher school. They have fond memories of walking home for lunch during their time as students. They also remember some of their teachers being nuns who lived in what is now the kindergarten and preschool building. Jane remembered that to foster an interest in becoming a nun, the 7th grade girls were brought over to the convent to see how the nuns lived.

As they stayed members of the parish and the Rocky River community into adulthood, both Jane and Ellen have had contact with their former St. Christopher School teachers over the years. Jane's four sons were taught by some of the teachers she had while she attended St. Christopher. Ellen has had contact with some of her grade school teachers in recent years in her career in home care and as a nurse practitioner.

While Jane's children attended St. Christopher school, she was very involved in the school as a parent volunteer. Her service to the school ran the gamut from being a room parent, to helping create the annual school fundraiser which continues to this day. The first school fundraiser, which was called The Midwinter's Knight, was held approximately 19 years ago at St. Christopher and was one of the first events held in the then "new" Parish Center. Jane and the members of the committee were able to raise several thousand dollars for the school without a budget.

Jane, who is a realtor with Keller Williams Citywide, has worked in real estate for approximately twenty years. She said she

was thankful for a career which allowed her to set her own hours and to have the ability to devote time to her children, the school and the parish. After graduating from St. Christopher School, Jane attended Magnificat High School. She continued her Catholic education by studying at the University of Notre Dame and earning a degree in Finance.

Jane and her husband Jim Vitou, who were married at St. Christopher Church thirty years ago, purchased the home in which she and her siblings grew up from her parents approximately seventeen years ago. There they raised their four sons Dan, Bill, Jack and Michael who range in age from 29-23.

When the house across the street from Jane and Ellen's childhood home was available for sale about 10 years later, Ellen and Brian Miner, her husband of nearly 25 years, were able to purchase it. Ellen and Brian, who were also married at St. Christopher Church, moved in with their three sons Riley, Leo and Charlie who range in age from 23-18. Jane, Ellen and their families have been able to quarantine together during the pandemic.

George and Terese Blaha modeled the importance of service in their everyday lives and engendered that desire to serve in Jane and Ellen. They felt so blessed in their lives and wanted to give back, expecting their children to do likewise. George, a native Cleveland, was a 1957 graduate of Saint Ignatius High School and worked in sales. He was instrumental in the St. Christopher building committee; helping to plan the construction of the gym. He was also a Eucharistic minister and distributed communion to those unable to attend Mass. Terese was also a native Cleveland and attended St. Stephen High School. She was active in the Ladies' Guild, and quietly served others by providing meals to parishioner's families in times of need; whether it was because of the birth of a child or a death in the family.

It was a desire to help their parents maintain an active social life that prompted Jane and Ellen to start the Social Club Lunches which were held on the last Friday of every month after the 11 a.m. daily Mass. When their parents were both suffering from dementia, they realized their social opportunities were very few. Jane and Ellen decided to help their parents and other parishioners maintain social contacts and friendships by hosting the Social Club Lunch. This luncheon allowed their parents to socialize with many of their parish friends.

Though Terese Blaha passed away in December 2017 and George passed a month later in January 2018, Jane and Ellen maintained the Social Club Lunches to provide a social outlet for the many parishioners who enjoyed them. Unfortunately, the Coronavirus pandemic has caused them to suspend this popular monthly event until it is safe to restart hosting them.



In addition to the creation of the monthly lunches, their parents' dementia and their need for reliable home care prompted Ellen, a Certified Nurse Practitioner, to start a home care business located in Rocky River. When searching for and interviewing home care providers, Ellen realized

the importance and the difficulty of finding good care givers for their aging parents. She started her home care business, which is named Daughters with Degrees, in 2017. She now employs some of the same caregivers whom she had hired to care for her parents. Last year Eileen McGunagle became Ellen's business partner and the two run Daughter with Degrees home care together.

After St. Christopher, Ellen continued her Catholic education at Magnificat High School. After high school she attended Ohio Wesleyan University earning a Bachelor of Science in Nursing. She later went back to school to earn her Master of Science in Nursing degree graduating from Kent State University.

Jane and Ellen and their respective families are hopeful about the future at St. Christopher Parish. Though no one knows exactly what the future holds regarding the COVID-19 pandemic, they were very thankful for the generosity of their fellow parishioners in the food drive and very complimentary of how Frs. John and Tim have handled the pandemic thus far.

Annemarie Polito

PRAYER CHANGES EVERYTHING

As Catholics, we know our prayers – Our Father, Hail Mary, Apostles Creed, Glory Be and the Act of Contrition. We are told that through prayer, “we” come to know Jesus, and I believe that to be true. I remember my first spiritual director telling me that the more I pray I will come to know the heart of Jesus – just talk to him. At the time, it was like she was speaking Martian to me.

As my faith life grew I then began to understand what she meant. I remember from high school campus-life meetings the leader would tell us to “just rap with the Lord.” (For those born after the 1960s, “rap” was a hip term for talking.) Give your troubles to Jesus!

So I tried talking to Jesus. I would ask Jesus why things happen as they do, I would ask for his help in different situations and go to him with my fears for my friends and family. I would feel relieved after my talks with Jesus because I wasn't carrying every detail with me.

One day as I was beginning to pray the Our Father, I thought, why not talk (converse) to God? So I began:

Gracious Lord who reigns in heaven, your name is above all names. I give thanks for your kingdom on earth where I try to serve you, serve others and care for creation. Help me to know your will for me and give me the courage to follow your will. I give you thanks for the gift of life, and the gift of my family and friends. You guide me in providing food and shelter for my loved ones. I know I am not perfect Lord, I am a sinner-forgive me my transgressions and open my hearts to forgive those who have wronged me. Keep my heart open to your love and help me to make good choices and avoid sin through my days. Amen

Those are MY words. What would be your prayer to the Lord? Please respond by email if you wish: rimbrigiotta@stchrisparish.com

So what REALLY is prayer? St. Therese of Lisieux wrote, “For me, prayer is a surge of the heart; it is a simple look turned toward heaven, it is a cry of recognition and of love, embracing both trial and joy.”

The Catechism of the Catholic Church (2559) tells us that prayer is the act of raising our hearts and minds to God or requesting good things from God. (2559) One very basic fact about prayer, that many people have had trouble with, is that in prayer, we cannot go to God from a lofty or arrogant position. We must approach God with the humility, trust and unconditional love of a child. After all, Jesus said: “Let the children come to me, and do not prevent them; for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these.” (Matthew 19:14) **Amen**

Robin Imbrigiotta



First Communion

Our former 2nd graders have been preparing for their First Communions for almost a year. Fall started like any other typical 2nd grade class. They celebrated Reconciliation in December. Then in March everything stood still. School and PSR were postponed and then cancelled. We even had to cancel the Jesus Day Retreat. First Communions were cancelled for the first two weeks of May for the first time in recent history.

Our 2nd grade team hoped that we could get together in person for Jesus Day! The Religious Education Office and 2nd grade team decided on a take-home retreat kit. Jesus Day kits were picked up the first week of August to prepare our First Communicants for their special day. Families enjoyed a fun Retreat day praying, baking bread, creating a name bracelet, and making their banner for Communion Mass.

First Communion Mass consisted of up to four students at a time at weekday Masses or any weekend Mass from July 27 through September 13. We celebrated 65 First Communions. Over 20 families chose to wait to make their communions until the pandemic settles down. We look forward to celebrating with them in the future.

Sharon Armstrong









Confirmation

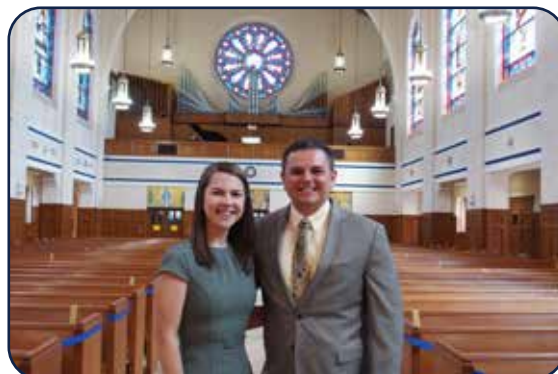
Our tenth graders started preparing for the sacrament of Confirmation in May of 2019. It was planned that they would have ten classes one Sunday every month, complete a Service Day in December, attend a Retreat in February, attend Youth Group meetings, and help with gathering around the Parish. Then in March, the Confirmation Mass with the Bishop on May 12 was cancelled because the Church was not open for Mass. Since Bishop Perez was transferred in February, Fr. John was given permission to celebrate this Confirmation Mass with this class, most of which Fr. John and Fr. Tim had baptized. While many were disappointed that Confirmation was delayed, we offered Mass in small groups of no more than twenty. Families signed up for one of five Masses offered in mid August. Fr. John was the celebrant for each Mass for the 83 students who were Confirmed. Families had the choice to postpone Confirmation until October or next May depending on their comfort level. Although this was a very stressful time in the life of the Church, we celebrated Confirmation with spirit and grace.

Sharon Armstrong

RITE OF CHRISTIAN INITIATION OF ADULTS AND RITE OF CHRISTIAN INITIATION OF CHILDREN (RCIA AND RCIC)

Two adults and two children who prepared all year to be brought into the Catholic Church at the Easter Vigil had the joy of doing so postponed this year as a result of the pandemic. Their long wait ended on July 26 when they received the Sacraments of initiation at our regularly scheduled Masses. The four individuals were James Campbell, Jamie Mudrick, Colin Ferris and Quinn Ferris. Their sponsors and families, our St. Christopher team of staff and parishioners who prepared them and all who attended those weekend Masses were here to celebrate and rejoice with them.

Gayle Cilimburg



VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL

Our first ever virtual Vacation Bible School was a grand success! The last week of July was full of songs, stories, crafts and service. We partnered with Rocky River Presbyterian Church as we have over the past 23 years, only this year we were unable to be in person due to the pandemic. Our VBS Team decided in April that Bible School would need a different look this year. None of us on the team had ever put something like this together. With a little bit of research, a little luck and a lot of faith, we were able to create a week of at-home, faith-filled fun for our youngest friends. Each day we created a 25-35 minute video that was emailed daily to those families who signed up for VBS. The videos included a kindness scavenger hunt, a puppet skit story, crafts, and of course those catchy Bible School songs. We had fun filming and producing this amazing week, as you can see by all of the photos sent in. Hopefully we will be able to be together next June for our traditional in-person Vacation Bible School, but just in case we have the next best thing to being there. Thank you to the talented staff from St. Christopher and Rocky River Presbyterian churches who made VBS happen:

Pastors: Fr. John Chlebo and John Fancher (RR Pres) provided daily prayer

Directors: Lisa Watts, Bette Case, Abby Anderton, Sharon Armstrong

Crafts: Abby Anderton

Music: Eric & Hillary Watts (RR Pres.)

Puppet Story: Eric Perusek

Worship: Bette Case (Lakewood Pres.)

Mission: Sharon Armstrong

Photo Montage: Brian Watts (RR Pres.)

Sharon Armstrong



PRAYERS FOR PEACE

On Sunday, August 16, our youth group welcomed the teens from Rocky River United Methodist Church and their youth minister, Steven Young, for an ecumenical night of prayer. With all of the suffering in this country surrounding racism, the pandemic, and the political divide, our two faith communities decided that the best way we could respond was by coming together in prayer. Our night together was wonderful. After a soggy Sunday morning, God gave us a beautiful night with warmth and blue skies. Steven and I both spoke to the group, Bob McMurray coordinated and led music, and the teens were engaged and respectful for the duration of the evening. We ended our time relaxing around a fire pit.

The past six months have been a very challenging time, as we all know. Sometimes, it can be hard to see the bright skies through the dark and rainy days. Still, as this gathering reminded me, God is in control and he will get us through. My message to the teens was a simple one; the answer to all of our suffering and all of the world's problems is Jesus Christ. While we have a right and duty to participate in our society and to stand for what is right, we are never alone. I am thankful that we had the opportunity to come together to focus on Jesus and to build a relationship with another youth group in the process.

Eric Perusek



ROSARY FOR PEACE, JUSTICE AND HEALING



In the wake of events that challenged our nation's understanding and practice of civil rights, the community of St. Christopher Parish hosted a rosary for peace, justice, and healing on June 11. The event included the use of a special rosary script that calls attention to racism, violence, and oppression, and prays for the healing of these societal sins. The five sorrowful mysteries were utilized in solidarity with those who experience oppression. Specific intentions were prayed for our law enforcement officers, as well as those who are victims of COVID-19, systematic oppression, racism, and violence. The event helped direct our attention away from anger or hatred that might surround these issues and direct our energy towards building compassion and understanding.

Following the rosary, participants were encouraged to attend Mass at St. Christopher. June 11 was selected because it is the feast day of St. Barnabas, an apostle who is historically known for his peacemaking. Special prayers of the faithful were written to coordinate with the event, specifically for the many

physical and social issues our nation faces today. The rosary was attended by over twenty parishioners and helped to unite the parish community in respect and understanding. A special thank you to members of the Social Concerns Committee and the Tuesday morning rosary group who helped make the event possible. If you have questions about the Catholic response to racism, see the document *Open Wide Our Hearts* published by the USCCB in 2018.

Logan Feldkamp

CHURCH CHATTER

FMTM

For the past 40 years, the non-profit **From Mission to Mission (FMTM)** has supported missionaries returning from the mission fields. FMTM assists in the crucial preparation and processing of cross-cultural, ministerial and life transitions for missionaries returning home. St. Christopher Parish is fortunate to have experienced first-hand the Diocesan Mission in El Salvador through Fr. John Ostrowski and parishioner trips to visit the people he serves. These men and women provide extraordinary services to the needy in other regions while at the same time spreading the Gospel. From September 23-26, we have a chance to support the vital work of FMTM through a virtual online fundraiser, which includes the ever popular silent auction. Please save the dates! For more information, contact Sr. Rose Terrell, OSU at (216) 269-0034 or Carmen DeHaan at (216) 904-0728.

SIR YACHT

For **Joey Kinsley**, the pandemic has become a time of creativity on social media. He quickly amassed a following on TikTok, the trendy new platform. In four months, Joey (aka Sir Yacht) amassed more than 110,000 followers! Most of his postings and videos center on local sports teams and Midwest mannerisms. A RRHS and Ohio Wesleyan graduate with a degree in management economics, Joey has been a parishioner since he was five and was an altar server. His paying job is as a full-time digital marketing specialist at LorainCounty.com. Proud parents are Dr. John and Jackie Kinsley.

BLESSING HOUSE

On June 26, ground was broken for a new faith-based, nonprofit children's crisis center in Lorain. The building will rise on 2.85 acres purchased from St. Vincent de Paul Parish and is expected to be completed in spring 2021. It will triple Blessing House's current capacity to serve 28 children. Learn more about this much-needed facility at www.blessinghouse.org.

SILVER WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

Congratulations to **Joe and Carolyn Kovach**, who celebrated their 25th wedding anniversary on June 10. They were married at St. Patrick in West Park. Due to the pandemic, their week-long Caribbean cruise became a weekend getaway at Catawba Island.

BIRTHDAY WISHES

Remember to wish the following St. Christopher staff members a happy birthday: **Joe Williams** (Business Manager) on September 2, **Scott Raiff** (Principal) and **Bob McMurray** (Music Director) share an October 10 birthday. Belated wishes can be sent to **Bishop Edward C. Malesic**, who celebrated his 60th birthday on August 14.

HAPPY RETIREMENT

After 27 years, **Mark Biviano**, a long time lector at St. Christopher, is retiring as Senior VP of Rubber City Radio Group. Best wishes for a peaceful retirement!

TAIZÉ RETURNS

About 32 folks gathered at Centering Space outdoors with social distancing on Saturday, August 15 at 7:30 p.m. Our prayer, set in the beautiful backyard area at Centering Space, praised God for creation. Centering Space is located behind Lakewood Catholic Academy, at 14812 Lake Road. Call the Center at 216-228-7451 if you plan to pray with us. Taizé is sponsored by both Centering Space and River's Edge and donations will be split between both centers. We will also have an outdoor Taizé for peace at Centering Space on **Saturday, September 19 at 6 p.m.** and an outdoor Taizé honoring St. Francis of Assisi on **Saturday, October 3 at 6 p.m.** Bring your own chair and wear your mask before and after the service. These events are weather-dependent and will be cancelled due to inclement conditions. Hope to see you there!

Share your joyous events with us!

Please forward submissions for Church Chatter to

Roberta Trutko at (440) 263-7894 or roberta32red@hotmail.com.



St. Christopher Catholic Church

20141 Detroit Road
Rocky River, Ohio 44116
440.331.4255

NON-PROFIT ORG
US POSTAGE
PAID
CLEVELAND OH
PERMIT NO. 2907

www.stchrisparish.com

We welcome your ideas or comments.

E-mail: lmetro626@gmail.com Attn: Belltower

Newsletter Committee: Terry Martin (Chairman),
Lori Alexander (Editor and Producer), Amy Gressell (Publisher),
Carmen Everett DeHaan, Colleen McKenna, Annemarie Polito,
Roberta Trutko and Beth Van Horn

Contributors: Fr. John Chlebo, Gayle Cilimburg,
Sharon Armstrong, Logan Feldkamp, Robin Imbrigiotta,
Bob McMurray, Eric Perusek and Scott Raiff

UPCOMING EVENTS

September 5 & 12

FIRST COMMUNIONS

September 20

BLOODMOBILE

October 13, 14, 15, 20, 22

CONFIRMATIONS

October 18

BLOODMOBILE

September 14, 21, 28

October 5, 12, 19, 26

November 2, 9, 16, 23, 30

BIBLE TIMELINE

November 2

EVENING OF REMEMBRANCE

November 15

BLOODMOBILE