



ST. CHRISTOPHER PARISH

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# The Belltower Beacon

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

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## UKRAINIAN FAMILY SEEKING SPONSORSHIP

*Exciting News from our Ukrainian Welcome Circle*



It is exciting to report that our St. Christopher Ukrainian Welcome Circle (UWC) has completed the initial phase authorizing us to sponsor a family seeking relocation

due to war. We were required to complete a Welcome Plan ensuring that our parish is prepared to meet the family's needs from overseas travel to living arrangements upon arrival. Our UWC team is in constant communication with the Diocesan Office of Migration and Refugee Services whose personnel provide oversight and valuable assistance. We have reached the point where candidates eligible to enter the United States can be interviewed by our team. Understandably, a multitude of requirements had to be met in order for the family's transition to be smooth, comfortable, successful and safe. Under the leadership of Fr. Timothy Daw, Mary Joan Papajcik and Daniel J. Gauntner, the team has met these requirements. Team members continue to meet and communicate frequently to address the many aspects of a family moving into a country where the language, customs, traditions and social norms are foreign. The team is committed to keeping the parish community current as we progress toward finding an eligible family.

As we come closer to meeting our sponsor family, we must see that the family's needs are met in advance of their arrival, upon their arrival and during the first few months here. Once we know necessary details, we can tailor our responses to meet those needs. For example, a young family presently being considered has two adults, a small

child and an infant. Individualized planning would have to address the needs of all four members of the family as well as adherence to our local and state laws. This particular family requires an infant car seat and a child booster seat. They will also require childcare and an age-appropriate school in a setting that addresses language and cultural differences. We are told that the parents have steady employment backgrounds and are anxious to support their family. They will seek employment as soon as they learn to use public transportation and acquire adequate language skills (interpreters and translators will be made available).

In our quest to provide a stable, healthy environment, we are blessed to have a well established Ukrainian community in nearby Parma. Since the late 1800s Cleveland's near west side (starting in Tremont) and the City of Parma have welcomed newcomers in times of war and peace. This past year alone, hundreds of immigrants fleeing the war have arrived from Ukraine and temporary holding areas like Poland. Members of their community are willing to help us communicate with our assigned family, guide them along the way and share information vital to their assimilation. In the past 200 years, generations of Ukrainian citizens have settled in Northeast Ohio, raised families here, and contributed to the overall community. Parma is proud to be one of the largest Ukrainian communities in the U.S. and the largest in Ohio. In 2009, the municipality recognized its long-standing settlement of Ukrainians by naming a two-mile stretch along State Road the Ukrainian Village, where they proudly fly their national flag and other public signage. Since the 1940s it had been the dream of Ukrainian Americans

*continued ...*

*We are the people of St. Christopher Catholic Church, a Eucharistic community of faith dedicated to ... Welcome, Celebrate, Care, & Grow ... in the image and likeness of Jesus.*

in Parma to have a “village” to call their own. Though not all Ukrainians live in Parma, they all appreciate that stretch of State Route 94 as home to cultural parades, celebrations and gatherings of all kinds.



Ukraine Welcome Circle Offering Bowls will be available at the entrances to the church during Lent. The St. Christopher School students and the PSR students will be participating in the Ukraine Welcome Circle Offering Bowl program as part of their Lenten almsgiving.

The Village is a cohesive community that has institutions of learning and worship to serve their residents. They have their own bilingual (Ukrainian) speaking doctors and attorneys; financial institutions; sports, arts and social programs; eateries, a museum and cultural center. Most importantly, they continue to celebrate their vibrant traditions and holidays together; they welcome newcomers with open arms; they uplift and support one another while contributing to the welfare of the community at large.

Both the American and Ukrainian governments require that families seeking relocation undergo thorough background checks before they are approved. In addition, family members must pass a medical examination and be vaccinated before entering the United States. As you will see below, it takes a considerable financial commitment to ensure that our assigned family is served well during their initial adjustment. *Please note that our ultimate goal is to coach the family into becoming self-sufficient and self-supporting within a reasonable amount of time. This is key to their success and ours!* The UWC is coordinating the following required arrangements that could use your financial and personal assistance:

**Welcoming and Local Orientation:** meeting at the airport and transporting; aligning community resources, teaching them to use public transportation; learning to adhere to local laws, personal and public safety; arranging ethnic/cultural connections.

**Housing and Basic Necessities:** suitable, furnished, affordable housing (with our assistance); initially pay utilities to include internet services; provide initial food and staples, seasonally appropriate clothing; and secure infant and child needs (car seats, toys, etc.). The goal is to find a rental home in Parma, so the family is near schools and resources within Ukrainian Village. Any leads in this search are greatly appreciated and can be shared at [uwc@stchrisparish.com](mailto:uwc@stchrisparish.com).

**Benefits and Healthcare:** connect family to available government benefits as well as to community-based non-profits; connect members to medical and mental health services as needed.

**Finance and Employment:** initially provide primary support, oversee fund disbursements and budget, facilitate fundraising; help newcomers develop family budgets, locate local workforce services and contacts.

**Education and Language:** enroll children in school programs, preferably in Ukrainian speaking and culturally sensitive settings (we provide primary support); explore higher education options for older students; provide interpreter and translation services/language resources; connect parents/family to school personnel and liaisons that encourage involvement in their children's education.

As a community of faith, we are dedicated to receiving a family trying to flee war-torn Ukraine. In so doing, we obey Jesus' command to love and care for our neighbors everywhere, especially the homeless, hungry, thirsty, naked, those victimized by violence and lacking life's basic needs. Our parish response has been reassuring and greatly appreciated. The demands are many and there are countless ways to help well into the foreseeable future. Please keep in mind that this is just the beginning of a journey to bring peace and better living conditions to a needy family. Please prayerfully consider your involvement and continue praying for all the families affected by war. Meanwhile, thank you for your continued support and stay tuned for frequent updates. Make inquiries and donations at [UWC@stchrisparish.com](mailto:UWC@stchrisparish.com).

*Carmen Everett DeHaan*



## KEEPING THE FAITH

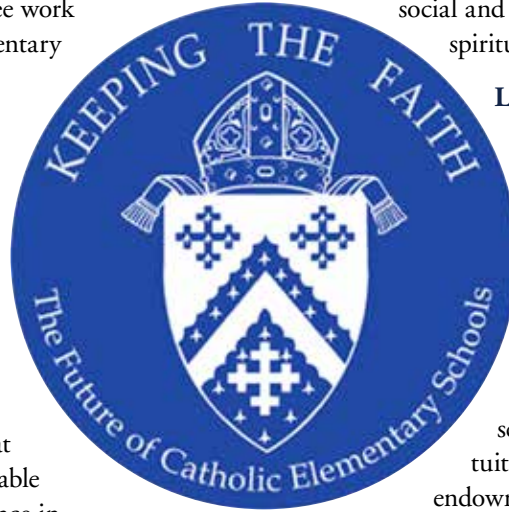
### *A Strategic Plan for Elementary Education in the Diocese of Cleveland*

Late in 2021, the Diocese of Cleveland began an extensive study of Catholic Schools in the diocese called, Keeping the Faith. Pastors, principals, and business managers met with the bishop and a committee that he had assembled to learn about the process. During January of 2022, virtual listening sessions were held to inform teachers, parents, and parishioners. Committee work continued in 2022 to develop a plan for elementary education in the diocese.

The purpose of the strategic plan is to strengthen the system of elementary Catholic education to keep irresistibly Catholic, academically excellent, operationally sound, and geographically accessible schools where demand exists. It aims to build on the strong history and success of Catholic education by ensuring an approach of excellence and continuous improvement. It endeavors to create pathways to the future that encourage communities to collaborate and enable schools to innovate in order to sustain excellence in mission. The plan consists of 27 strategic goals in 6 critical areas of focus. See the areas below with a summary of the strategic goals. Detailed information is available at [dioceseofcleveland.org](http://dioceseofcleveland.org). Look on the home page for Keeping the Faith to find the detailed report, a video, and other information.

**Catholic Identity:** Articulate common vision, language, and approach that communicates our identity as Catholic schools. This would help ensure fidelity to the standards for Catholic identity, mission, culture, and faith formation within each school.

**Academic Excellence:** Articulate a common vision, language, and approach that communicates high expectations for curriculum, instruction, assessment, and school culture. Adopt standards-based curriculum in all schools and empower schools to explore innovative models to meet the needs of their communities. Focus on the social and emotional needs of each student to foster their spiritual, academic, and personal growth.



**Leadership and Talent:** Develop a centralized recruitment strategy designed to attract qualified, talented, diverse candidates committed to the Catholic faith. This would include a principal pipeline to recruit, support, evaluate, and promote principals in Catholic schools.

**Finance:** Develop a global funding strategy for all diocesan elementary schools that defines best practices for setting tuition, financial aid, available public funding, endowments, and fundraising. Help parishes in balancing operating costs and provide compensation tables for salary ranges to attract high-quality educators and leaders.

**Governance:** Articulate a way for all parishes to support Catholic education. Explore local needs and assess potential changes through reorganization, partnerships, mergers, or closures. Establish a Diocesan Advisory Board for Elementary Education to be consultative to the bishop.

**Marketing:** Establish a diocesan-level marketing position to assist all schools in the diocese, especially elementary schools.

*Fr. John Chlebo*

## MYERS HONORED WITH MAGNIFICAT TRUE BLUE AWARD



Magnificat High School alumna and St. Christopher parishioner Mara Myers was recently named Magnificat True Blue Volunteer of the Year. The honor is well earned: Myers notably established a Named Endowed Scholarship over eight years ago, has led multiple fundraising efforts and is an active member of the Advancement Committee. The endowed scholarship is one scholarship, given annually, and the second grantee is now in her senior year. Next year a new recipient will receive a 4-year scholarship. When asked why she felt compelled to establish a scholarship endowment, Myers said, “I wanted to see Magnificat stay in reach for all who want a Magnificat education. My belief is that Magnificat is stronger with a student body made up of economically diverse students.”

Myers sees herself tasked with rallying Magnificat alumnae for a common cause. “Once women are connected back to Magnificat and reminded of the opportunities gained from our education, they feel the pull to give back,” said Myers. “The best sort of testimonial I know is personal action, and I knew I needed to be an advocate for Magnificat.”

*Beth Van Horn*

## SISTERS HAVEN

Headlines tell us that Cleveland has one of the highest rates of childhood poverty and infant mortality in the nation. How can any of us really and truly make a difference?

Longtime St. Christopher parishioners Julie Mallett and Amy McMaken are going to try. Last March they joined forces with Barbara Jacobus (Rocky River, Ohio), Shena Maddox (Berea, Ohio), and Yvonne Murchison (Cleveland, Ohio) to create Sisters Haven. Sisters Haven is a new faith-based 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization that will provide safe housing and a loving community to pregnant women and their children without judgment. They will serve adult women who are experiencing homelessness, poverty and lack a support system. This group of women, who place Christ at the center of all they do, aim to break the cycle of poverty from the very beginning of a child's life.



Yvonne Murchinson, Julie Mallett, Barbara Jacobus, Shena Maddox and Amy McMaken

Unbelievably, there is not a supportive housing community on the west side of Cleveland specifically focused on pregnant women experiencing homelessness.

The mission of Sisters Haven is “Supporting Mothers, Building Families, Developing Community and Upholding Love.” They will accomplish this through recognizing each woman’s individuality and developing goals focused on her unique physical, emotional, mental, faith and family needs. They will further develop community goals to enable a woman and her child to experience a home filled with love, support and respect. Additional guidance and wrap-around support will be given to help women with employment, childcare, education and further housing needs.

Their vision is that every mother is well equipped to reach her God-given potential for herself and her family by having the resources, skills and support to love her children and herself well.

With the generous donation of a house from Rocky River United Methodist Church and the help of two well known architects Mark Reinhold and August Fluker, the location is set and the plans for a

renovation and an addition have been drawn. Additional support from partners like Inspection Tech have provided Sisters Haven with an inspection of the home that really put them on course to get their project underway. The house will include seven bedrooms, three full baths, staff bedroom, large kitchen, office space, family space, computer room and laundry room.

The house is located on the west side of Cleveland in the Cudell neighborhood. It is adjacent to a recreation center and elementary school, close proximity to an RTA station, a church, Twice Blessed Free Store and numerous possibilities for employment.

During 2022, Sisters Haven focused on fundraising the amount required to equip the existing house for its mission. The initial phase of fundraising was a success thanks to two events held in late 2022. In October, Kurt and Amy McMaken hosted an evening to “Build This House.” The team shared their mission and plans for Sisters Haven with many friends and family. It was a beautiful fall night in Rocky River with cool jazz music from Hubbs Groove playing in the background.

In December 2022, Sisters Haven’s Christmas Music Celebration held up to its name. “Love Came Down” in Cleveland as the founding team gathered with Christian friends and family to pray for women and children. The prayers from local ministers and the beautiful songs of praise filled the landmark True Holiness Temple on Euclid Ave. A wonderful arrangement of Christmas songs surrounded everyone with God’s love. It was a beautiful way to step into the holiday season. Look for this event again in 2023.

In 2023 Sisters Haven is focused on fundraising for the costs of operating the home to accept pregnant women. While the home is being renovated, Sisters Haven is finalizing strategic partnerships with like-minded nonprofits and organizations throughout Cleveland. The partnerships and resources will allow them to provide empowering programming aimed at conquering the leading causes of maternal vulnerability in Cuyahoga County (socioeconomic determinants, physical environment, physical and mental health). They are happy to report being on track to open their doors in the last quarter of 2023.

An important partnership to Sisters Haven is “Walking with Moms in Need,” the initiative currently being launched in the Catholic Diocese of Cleveland, and specifically here at St. Christopher Parish with our new pastoral minister, Melissa DiFini. This will be an important link between our parish and pregnant women in crisis.

Sisters Haven will not be able to do their important work without the support of volunteers. In fact, two St. Christopher parishioners Wendy Pietrangelo and Alison Leszcz have already rolled up their sleeves and joined the team. Wendy is focusing on legal advice and grant writing. Alison is helping to coordinate communications and website maintenance. Sisters Haven is looking for more people who would like to help. Please accept this call to action to positively impact the women and children in our own community.



Alison Leszcz and Cara Daily



Laura Avdey and Molly Schroeder



Leaders of the performance

**Currently Sisters Haven is looking for the following help:**

- House clean-up or demo day availability. Date TBD
- Carpentry, painting, or building skills
- Access or connections for building supplies (e.g., windows, doors, etc.)
- Fundraising/event planning committee

Please contact [info@sisters-haven.org](mailto:info@sisters-haven.org) to volunteer or for more information. To make a donation, scan the QR code.



*Julie Mallett*

“SADLY, THERE ARE TOO FEW HOUSING OPTIONS FOR PREGNANT WOMEN EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS IN OUR COMMUNITY. THE ARRIVAL OF SISTERS HAVEN WILL BE A LIFE-SAVING OPTION FOR PREGNANT WOMEN WHO ARE SLEEPING ON THE STREETS OF CLEVELAND. HAVING A THERAPEUTIC CARING SPACE ON THE WEST SIDE OF CLEVELAND TO OFFER WOMEN WILL MAKE US ONE STEP CLOSER TO ENDING HOMELESSNESS AND MORE IMPORTANTLY, IT WILL MAKE ALL OF US BETTER AT LOVING THE PEOPLE WE ENCOUNTER ON THE STREET.”

– *Chris Knestrick, Executive Director of the Northeast Ohio Coalition for the Homeless*

## WALKING WITH MOMS IN NEED

Walking with Moms in Need is a nationwide—yet parish-based—initiative to increase outreach and support to pregnant and parenting mothers in need that is greatly supported by our diocese! As Pope Francis has shared, “Our parishes NEED to be islands of mercy in the midst of a sea of indifference.” WWMIN is a deliberate process and whole-church response whose purpose is to help facilitate the accompaniment of mothers in need at the parish level. The goal of Walking with Moms is not to reinvent the wheel or turn parishes into pregnancy centers; rather, it is about building relationships with and enhancing referrals to these helping agencies. This initiative is unique in that it asks every Catholic parish to prayerfully place themselves in the shoes of a mother in need and walk with her throughout the difficulties and challenges she faces. Walking with Moms in Need seeks to answer St. John Paul II’s call to evaluate how the Church serves mothers facing difficulties: “With great openness and courage, we need to question how widespread is the culture of life today among individual Christians, families, groups and communities in our Dioceses. With equal clarity and determination we must identify the steps we are called to take in order to serve life in all its truth.” (EV 95)

We are in the process of building a core team of women and men who are interested in serving in this ministry by sharing their God-given gifts with mothers in need. I have connected with Sisters Haven, a safe and supportive home for pregnant women and children in need. It provides safe housing and a loving community. The adult women they serve are homeless. Sisters Haven has the capacity for six pregnant women to stay until the child is 9 months old. My hope is to link St. Christopher parish with Sisters Haven by walking with the moms. For more information please contact me at [mdifini@stchrisparish.com](mailto:mdifini@stchrisparish.com).

*Melissa DiFini*

## YOUR PARISH PASTORAL COUNCIL

### What does your Parish Council do?

We are a group of 14 St. Christopher parishioners who meet monthly to turn our hearts and minds to the spiritual welfare of our parish. We focus our collective attention on the issues and concerns that confront our church, our pastor and our pastoral staff.

We consider the issues and challenges our church faces; we reflect and give voice to the array of parishioner perspectives and points-of-view; we provide a sounding board for our pastor; we interact to creatively solve problems to advance the goals and mission of our parish.

We meet from 7 to 8:30 p.m. the third Tuesday of each month in the Parish Center. We begin with faith sharing and prayer. We follow a structured agenda to engage with key leaders in the parish and to identify opportunities and obstacles to accomplishing parish goals. We exchange ideas, share opinions, study issues, formulate priorities, and create visions. Our Council meetings are open to parishioners who want to attend.

Parish Pastoral Councils exist in virtually every church throughout the Diocese of Cleveland and the United States.

### Who are we?

Your Parish Pastoral Council includes our pastor, Fr. John Chlebo; a staff representative, Gayle Cilimborg; and 12 active parishioners who volunteer to serve. We have a chair, vice chair and secretary. All of us are listed on the parish website – [stchrisparish.com/parish/councils](http://stchrisparish.com/parish/councils). If you have a look at the website, you will likely discover that you recognize us as greeters or lectors or eucharistic ministers –

or simply as familiar faces who sit with our families in the pew with you at weekly Mass. We are moms and dads; single and married; actively employed and actively retired. We strive to reflect the demographic diversity of our community.

### Why do we serve on Parish Council?

Our reasons for serving are as diverse as our membership. We want to be more actively involved in parish life. We want to pray with fellow parishioners. We want to know and interact with people who share our faith and our challenge to live out that faith. We want to contribute by sharing our ideas and open-mindedly hearing the ideas of others. We want to model our faith for our children and our families. We believe that as individuals and as a community of faith we are enriched when we share our gifts.

### What does it take to serve on Parish Council?

It takes commitment. Parish Council members faithfully attend monthly meetings. They willingly share their thoughts and ideas. They speak their minds – and they actively and respectfully listen to others. They are engaged in parish life and willing to focus time and attention on improving the experience for themselves and for our parish faith community.

### What does someone do to join Parish Council?

The next step is simple. Find out more. Talk to us. We are eager to engage new members. Contact our chair: Laura Hunter – [runhunter216@gmail.com](mailto:runhunter216@gmail.com) or our pastor: Fr. John Chlebo – [jchlebo@stchrisparish.com](mailto:jchlebo@stchrisparish.com)

*Mary D. Horvath*



Fr. John Chlebo,  
Pastor



Gayle Cilimborg,  
Staff Representative



Laura Hunter,  
Chairperson



Chris Rosatti,  
Vice Chairperson



Mary Horvath,  
Secretary



Bill Blough,  
Member



Jim Garrison,  
Member



Cheryl Selak,  
Member



Cindy McDonough,  
Member



Larry Murtaugh,  
Member



Marilu Norena,  
Member



Frank McGee,  
Member



Ken Szabo,  
Member



Bonnie Twitchell,  
Member

## WELCOME BACK TO ST. COLMAN CHURCH!



For many, the connection to St. Colman Church is through their heritage – their parents or grandparents worshipped there, celebrating all of life’s special moments – births, first communions, confirmations, weddings and yes, funerals.

For others, St. Colman is synonymous with St. Patrick’s Day – the colorful, exciting and meaningful West Side Irish American Club Mass as well as the Collins, Conway, McGoun, Patton afternoon party!

For those involved with Church in the City, deep connections were made through the shared social action programs and projects. The partnership with St. Christopher was, and in many ways still is, very rich and deep. Through the years, volunteers were an essential part of the GED/literacy program and to this day continue to faithfully assist with the Neighborhood Meals, providing nutritious meals and an opportunity for fellowship and sharing.

In fact, St. Christopher hosted several meals each year, and this service only ended with the pandemic. It was during this trying time that a donation from St. Christopher allowed St. Colman to continue with the ID program, which is critical to so many for cashing checks, obtaining jobs, housing, health care, training and other life essentials.

Each year, the St. Christopher GIFT program has added much needed winter clothing donated by parishioners.

But even being blessed with all of this, St. Colman is struggling to remain the vibrant, vital presence it has been since 1880. The effects of the pandemic, the retirement of Fr. Bob Begin, shrinking financial contributions and the shifting neighborhood demographics have had a major, negative impact on the Church. The average weekly collection is \$1,500; far below that needed to maintain the buildings and services.

And yet, despite the many challenges, St. Colman valiantly continues the traditions of serving the parishioners and community with numerous spiritual and outreach programs.

In addition to those already mentioned, programs include Neighbors in Need, providing emergency assistance for families and individuals, along with a Food Pantry, Refugee Resource Center providing essential supplies to recent immigrants, Carol’s Library, offering books of all types, for all ages, encouraging reading, education and entertainment.

Recently, a very successful campaign enabled the creation of the Fr. Bob Begin courtyard, an oasis in the inner city, providing a place for meditation, gatherings and communing with nature.

Hopefully, soon the GED/Adult Literacy classes will restart, along with the computer lab, providing formal classes, instruction and availability for both newcomers and those already familiar with computers.



The ongoing assistance of those with ties to St. Colman has allowed the Parish to continue its mission as an inner city parish serving a community with great needs, but minimal resources.

You can help by:

- Sponsoring a utility for a month – about \$500
- Lighting our towers for a month – \$250
- Donating any talents you may have in painting, electrical, sound system or cleaning
- Donating any time or talents to help spruce up our landscaping
- Volunteering at a meal or with any of the programs and events listed on our website
- Heading up a holiday meal during Easter, Thanksgiving or Christmas
- Volunteering at a Fish Fry (Fridays during Lent except for 3/17/23)
- Donating food to our food pantry (any non-perishables)
- Donating new or gently used items to our Refugee Resource Center (blankets, sheets, furniture, lamps, cooking pots/pans/utensils, clothing, household items)
- Joining the Friends of St. Colman ([FriendsOfStColman.org](http://FriendsOfStColman.org)), which provides support for Parish repairs, improvements and maintenance
- Following St. Colman on social media (Facebook – St. Colman Church) and promoting and supporting events
- Joining us as we celebrate Mass
- Remembering the Parish, parishioners and community in your prayers

For more information, please visit [StColmanChurch.org](http://StColmanChurch.org) or call Rita C. Gaertner, St. Colman Parish Council President at (216) 440-1412.

*Rita C. Gaertner*

## FINE DINING AT THE CATHEDRAL OF ST. JOHN THE EVANGELIST BY CHEFS SCHLEGEL AND CHLEBO



Starting the new year on a delicious note, a group of parishioners met on January 20 for a unique culinary experience at St. John Cathedral. The exquisite meal was prepared by none other than our Diocesan Secretary and Vicar for Clergy and Religious, Fr. Dan Schlegel, who was assisted by our Pastor Fr. John Chlebo (calling himself the sous chef). Knowing that Fr. Dan loves to cook, the guests were looking forward to tasting what he was serving. We were not at all disappointed. The dinner was an auction item at the 2022 Ladies Night Out, an event developed in 2017 by a group of parish pastoral council members and other volunteers under the guidance of council member Laura Hunter. The evening's proceeds were donated to Moriah House, a Cleveland non-profit established in honor of Moriah Lydon (granddaughter of parishioner Julie Bell), a 15-year-old student who died suddenly in 2001 while running cross country track for Rocky River High School.

Upon arrival, the group was escorted to a beautifully set table in the Rectory dining room and a printed menu was found at each meticulous place setting. Hor d'oeuvres, drinks and friendly chatter occurred in front of the fireplace. We were pleasantly surprised by an impromptu visit by Bishop Malesic. He joined us long enough to share some funny stories and a few laughs before retiring for the evening. According to guest Julie Bell, spending time with Bishop Malesic was one of the highlights of the evening. She was not aware of how "laid back" he is, like "one of the guys" and really appreciated that. The other guests agreed with her impression of the bishop. Following the appetizers, Fr. Dan guided us through a very interesting tour of the Cathedral where he revealed unique architectural details, historic statues, recent renovations, and the Resurrection Chapel (a crypt which holds the tombs of former Cleveland bishops). Dinner was prepared and formally plated by Fr. Dan and served by Fr. John. It was clear that they enjoyed planning and executing the delightful evening. A delicious arugula salad was followed by an entree of Beef Braciolo in tomato sauce on creamy polenta with a side of asparagus. Dessert was Fr. Dan's

lemon ricotta cake and homemade limoncello (not made by the priests). No one went away hungry, we were in no hurry to leave, and everyone enjoyed being together in such a holy, relaxing environment. We were reminded of how important it is for God's people to come together to pray and to share. Hebrews 10:24-25 states "And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another ..." Without fail the group members (many of whom had gone on a mission trip to El Salvador with Fr. John) agreed that it was one of the best evenings they had experienced. We left with a strong desire to make a difference in the world around us and to soon gather at table once again.

Ladies Night Out is one of several annual events planned to bring women of the parish together in a fun setting. These have become an excellent way to make new friends, renew former acquaintances and nurture current relationships. The highlight of the evening was the silent auction. The item titled "Dinner at the Cathedral" was described as "... a wonderful evening beginning with a tour of the Cathedral of St. John the Evangelist and a four-course dinner hosted by Fr. Dan Schlegel, served at the beautiful and historic Cathedral Rectory dining room." It was a popular item but only one name was drawn as the lucky winner. And the winner is ... yours truly, the author of this review. The basket contained a few other meaningful items (a gift card to Sweet Designs, artwork by Kate Ptak and books on local Sacred Art and Historic Cleveland Churches), making it a priceless gift. One never knows what the evening will bring and its long-term effect upon others; over \$3,000 donated to Moriah House. However, there is a guarantee that it will be fun and meaningful, so be sure to attend the next one.

The special guest at the Cathedral dinner was Mrs. Julie Bell, a parishioner of 64 years who raised her four children at St. Christopher then watched some of her children raise their children here (she is now the proud grandmother of 16 including Moriah and great-grandmother of 8). The Bell family is known for its strong faith, loyalty (three generations) and unwavering commitment to improve the lives of others locally and around the world. Mrs. Bell continues to attend Mass and social events often. She spoke at the 2022 Ladies Night Out about her granddaughter, Moriah, and shared how much the family still misses her. Mrs. Bell shared some tender moments with those in attendance, speaking fondly of an amazing young lady taken much too soon. Moriah's life was short but her impact upon the community has been long-term and life altering. The family is grateful that they can memorialize Moriah in such a worthy manner. Because of the family's dedication to helping others, Moriah House strives to alleviate the ravages of homelessness, chemical dependency, mental illness, unemployment, lack of education and poverty for female veterans and their families. Needy residents meet Ohio's guidelines for extremely low income





levels. They are provided transitional housing and connected to resources that aim to turn their lives around. Moriah House, which operates under the auspices of West Side Catholic Center, exists through generous donors and faithful volunteers. If you are interested in knowing more about supporting the residents of Moriah House, please go to [wsccenter.org](http://wsccenter.org).

Events like Ladies Night Out require months of planning and preparation. They are successful only because parishioners volunteer their time and talents to make it happen. At last year's gathering, there were a total of 21 auction items that had to be solicited, collected and wrapped. The evening featured wine tastings by Rozi's Wine House and extraordinary catering by Nomad Culinary LLC. The schedule included rounds of Church Trivia, lively conversation and the much anticipated raffle capping off the night. Throughout the year, there are many more fun occasions to attend. As word spreads, the well-attended events will continue to grow. By gathering as a community our faith continues to grow. In Romans 12:13, we are encouraged to "share with the Lord's people who are in need. Practice hospitality." So grab a friend and see you at the next gathering! Thanks to Laura Hunter and her committee who have made this fun evening a reality for the past six years (virtually in 2020, but cancelled in 2021). Laura has taken on the position of Parish Pastoral Council Chairperson this year and thus will turn the leadership of the event over to the Ladies Guild. We look forward to this successful evening in the future!

*Carmen Everett DeHaan*

## LADIES GUILD UPDATE

### Mark your calendars for these upcoming Ladies Guild Events:

March 20 at 7:00 p.m.: Spring social with a presentation by local designer Barrie Spang.

March 29 at 7:00 p.m.: Stations of the Cross Through Mary's Eyes.

The Ladies Guild began the Advent season with a Mass of remembrance and thanksgiving for all the members of the Guild, living and deceased. It was a wonderful way to honor the beautiful friendships, faith filled witness, and dedication that have marked the many years of the St. Christopher Ladies Guild. Father Anthony celebrated the Mass and gave a special blessing to members of the Guild. Afterwards, those in attendance met in the Gathering Area to enjoy Christmas cookies and fellowship. As Christmas drew near, the Guild held an evening Holy Hour with the Blessed Sacrament. It was a prayerful and peaceful way to step back from the busyness of the season and spend some quiet time with the Lord contemplating the mystery of the Incarnation.

On a January evening of wind and wintry mix, there was plenty of warmth in Mary's Room as 30 women gathered for the Ladies Guild social and wellness presentation to

kick off 2023. The room was filled with laughter and conversation, hugs and introductions, as everyone enjoyed the time to catch up with old friends and make some new ones. Delicious fruit infused water was served to compliment the evening's theme of health and well-being. The Guild's own president, Cindy McDonough, was the featured speaker. Cindy, a Behavior Change Facilitator, received her training under Dr. Judson Brewer who is a renowned expert and author in the field of habit change. Cindy gave a brief overview of habit formation and how the practice of mindfulness can be used as an important ally in both the creation of good habits and the cessation of problem habits. She then led everyone on a guided mindfulness meditation called RAIN (Recognize, Accept, Investigate, Note) that could be used for future habit change. It was a thought-provoking exercise in how being more present and less on autopilot can lead to healthier habits. The evening concluded with more socializing until it was time to head home in the snow, looking forward to the next Guild gathering. As so many wellness studies indicate, friendship and social connection is key to both physical and mental health. Throughout its many years, the St. Christopher Ladies Guild has always put nurturing the friendships of women at the heart of its mission. "A faithful friend is a sturdy shelter. She that has found one has found a treasure." Sirach 6:14



*Nancy Sullivan*

## GENEROUS HEARTS PUT THE "HAPPY" IN THE HOLIDAYS

A heartfelt thank you to everyone who made our annual Christmas G.I.F.T. drive a great success. The St. Christopher Giving In Faith Together program supports the efforts of over a dozen area agencies that serve the needy. And what a difference we can make!

Gift tags were available at all entrances to the church from November 19 through December 11. In response, parishioners chose over 600 tags, providing gifts, supplies, gift cards and donations tailored to the specific needs of each of the agencies.

In addition, families from the parish School of Religion, under the direction of Sharon Armstrong, filled the toy wishes of Twice Blessed, a ministry of Rocky River United Methodist Church that supports roughly 90 families in need.

On December 11, pick-up day for the agencies, the gathering area was filled with brightly-wrapped packages, gift bags and boxes of supplies. Thank you to our volunteers who helped carry, sort, and prepare for the agencies' arrivals.

A special thank you goes to 14 members of this year's Confirmation class. As each agency drove up, this group filled carts with the gifts, moved them to the pick-up area and loaded cars and vans. The agencies especially appreciate our efficient delivery system, and often compliment us on our teen helpers. They are great PR for St. Christopher!

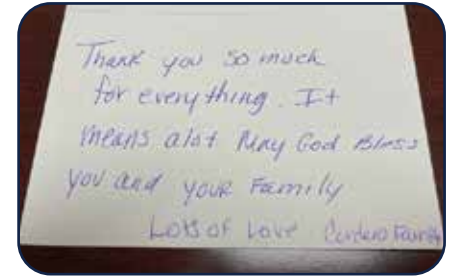
Many agencies sent their gratitude for our parishioners' generosity. Sr. Marilyn Nickol, from St. Colman Parish wrote, "We are so grateful for the generous gift of warm gloves and financial contributions for our Outreach Ministry. We provided your

gloves to our guests at the Neighborhood Meal – our first time gathering inside ... since the beginning of the pandemic. Your gifts made it a very festive occasion!"

Boxes loaded with household supplies and bedding went out to Fill This House. They wrote, "Wow! What an amazing collection done by St. Christopher. We couldn't be more thankful for the continued support. This will help so many young adults aging out of foster care."

House of Champions, an after-school program in a safe setting for children in grades two to four, sent a card with signatures (and an adorable photo) of the 24 students in this year's program. Sr. Mary Kay wrote, "With love and gratitude. Thank you so much for always including House of Champions with your Giving program."

The annual Christmas drive has been sponsored by the St. Christopher Social Concerns Committee (SCC) for over 20 years. If you would like to discover other opportunities to volunteer or learn about social justice issues, consider signing up for the SCC Monthly Volunteer Newsletter. Just email Jeanette Nappier at [jt.nappier@gmail.com](mailto:jt.nappier@gmail.com) to receive a free newsletter. Or check out our Facebook page. Thank you for your generous support!



We received 16 thank you notes in gratitude from Metro Catholic!

*Jane Berkeley*

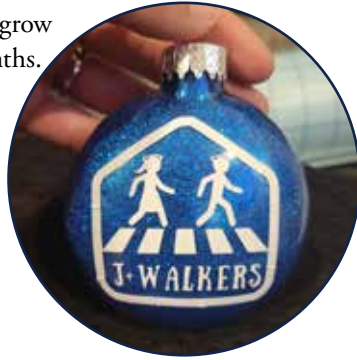


## J+WALKERS YOUTH MINISTRY

J+Walkers Youth Ministry has continued to grow and host many exciting events in recent months.

Our Christmas party was attended by over 40 students and featured cookie decorating, ornament making, and a white elephant gift exchange. We hosted a game night collaboration with St. Mark Youth Group and New Year's prayer service in January and celebrated Mardi Gras in February with traditional food and decorations.

These events have provided students with fun, engaging ways of exploring and practicing their faith with peers.



This winter also saw the beginning of our new scripture study group START. START (Study-Talk-Apply-Respond-Thank) is a sub-group of J+Walkers Youth Ministry that seeks to help students integrate scripture in their lives through reflection and sharing. High-quality journals and Bibles were purchased to provide students with the tools they need for reflection. Two passages are explored each night that feature a specific theme, including discernment, courage, and perseverance. Students are invited to share what speaks to them in the passage, discuss it with friends, and contemplate it in their

journals. These meetings average 12-15 students and often feature a hot chocolate bar as a sweet treat for those who come.

As we move forward into 2023, our hope is to develop another sub-group designed specifically for high school students, creating a well-rounded lineup of monthly offerings that can offer specific content for students of all ages. We are eager to continue our expansion and are grateful for the support of the parish as we continue to help our young Catholics grow in faith and relationship!

*Logan Feldkamp*

## TECHNOLOGY UPDATES

As you have probably noticed, we have worked hard to improve our technology and communication over the last few years. Livestreaming, Facebook, and social media are among the areas we have used to better communicate with parishioners and beyond. We are now in the process of purchasing several video message boards for use in the Gathering Area, School and Parish Center. These will be used to provide information and pictures to communicate current events and happenings in the parish.

Our Pastoral Minister, Logan Feldkamp, has been a big part of coordinating our earlier efforts in this area. Recently he has assumed the responsibilities of Youth Ministry in the parish and that has become a major focus of his ministry. As a result, we have hired a new part-time Pastoral Associate, Terri Pastura, to join our staff and to coordinate our social media and communication efforts. Terri comes to us with a wonderful history of ministry in our diocese as well as outside the diocese. We welcome Terri to our parish and look forward to her working to continue our efforts at improving our digital technology and communication.

*Fr. John Chlebo*



## CATHOLIC SCHOOLS WEEK

The 2023 Catholic Schools Week theme was Faith, Excellence and Service. These three words are very familiar to St. Christopher students. They are the foundation for the school's mission statement: Saint Christopher School where Catholic values, service, excellence and community are shared with all by loving God, studying hard, and being kind to each other. The school mission statement and the CSW theme allowed SCS to celebrate the many opportunities that Catholic education provides for its students.

On Sunday of Catholic Schools Week, the eighth grade students spoke at all Masses. We celebrated the parish by hosting an open house and student art show at the school. In the words of one of our eighth graders, "We wanted all to have the opportunity to see the goodness of our school, a place where students can exercise their faith and have God incorporated throughout their day." Visitors were able to view artwork created, matted and displayed by the students themselves. The primary and intermediate classrooms were adorned with messages of love and thanks for the numerous possibilities to learn, serve, lead, and succeed. Students were asked why they loved St. Christopher School (SCS). Some of their answers were: "We have church and the best teachers." "It is a place to make lots of friends and pray every day." "SCS is an outstanding school." "St. Christopher is an amazing school." Visitors who stopped by the middle school wing were given a lesson on identifying rocks and minerals. In the Makerspace, students, alumni and visitors built robots with Cubelets: robot blocks that help teach problem solving skills – such as collaboration, engineering, design, and computational thinking. In the preschool wing guests discovered an environment where little knights come to play, pray and learn.



*Thank you for your support and prayers as we learn and grow in our Catholic faith at SCS.*

On Monday SCS students had the opportunity to celebrate community. Working with their angels, students wrote letters of thanks to various community members and organizations. The Rocky River police and fire departments were thanked for protecting the city and our school by the primary students and their angels. The intermediate students wrote words of prayers to those in neighboring nursing homes. The St. Christopher Angel program pairs a sixth grader as a Guardian Angel to a kindergartener. The sixth-grade student helps the kindergarten student get accustomed

to SCS. These students get together throughout their years at St. Christopher completing service projects, sharing activities and religious celebrations, such as the Guardian Angel Mass.

*Thank you for being brave and keeping us safe.*

"Thus faith comes from what is heard, and what is heard comes through the word of Christ." Romans 10:17 Faith was celebrated on Tuesday with an all school Mass. School Masses provide the SCS students the opportunity to fully participate in the Mass by doing the readings, the prayers of the faithful, bringing up the gifts, and singing in the youth choir. Faith was heard in the afternoon during the St. Edward's Jazz Ensemble and Trash Talkers concert. It is a wonderful testament to faith and service to have young adults come into the school and enthusiastically share their love of God and music.

*Thank you for sharing your God given talents.*

Wednesday's celebration of academics started with a presentation from the Great Lake Science Center titled "Fire and Ice." Students were amazed at the demonstrations and experimentations with temperature when fire and liquid nitrogen exploded into lessons of physics and chemistry. This assembly was followed by a day of science sharing that empowered the minds of the students and teachers. The SCS Science Share is a favorite CSW event. Students in seventh and eighth grade present various science topics to the younger students. The science presentations are 20-minute lessons researched, developed and taught by middle school students. The lessons are creative, engaging, and informative.

*Thank you for sharing your enthusiasm for learning and encouraging others to love to learn.*

Thursday of Catholic Schools Week SCS celebrated the talents of many of its students with a school talent show. The first-grade cheerleaders summed it up best in one cheer – A W E S O M E! The show was awesome. The Spirit of God was felt throughout the Parish Center as students shared their talents and were praised with resounding cheers and claps of appreciation, gratitude and encouragement. The experience was truly inspiring and awesome.

*Thank you for magnifying the greatness of the Lord by being Christ bearers and sharing your talents.*

Friday marked the end of Catholic Schools Week, however, the message taken home from the Realm of the Reptile assembly was endless and timeless. God saw all that he had made, and it was very good (Genesis 1:31). This assembly was an excellent reminder to SCS students that God is loving, and everything he creates is good. Students were given the opportunity to learn how reptiles use their God given gifts to protect themselves and even help other animals survive. The tortoise digs holes that over 400 other species use as their homes. Like the tortoise, we are all here to spread God's love by loving God, studying hard, and being kind to each other.

**Thanks to all for being the best version of yourselves.**

*Molly Fuerst*



## LENTEN REFLECTION & EVENTS

On Wednesday, February 22, Lent began and we received ashes at Mass, being reminded to “Repent and Believe in the Gospel.” It was the beginning of a season of prayer, fasting and almsgiving.

Many of us picked up a Little Black Book the previous weekend to assist us in our efforts to develop plans as to how to spend Lent 2023. We were encouraged to write down those plans on the first page of the book.

It is now a week or so later and it might be a good idea to revisit those plans and see if it makes sense to make any adjustments or review how we are doing so far.

Our parish is providing some opportunities that can assist us as we journey through this holy season. We hope you will plan to take advantage of them and join with other parishioners as a community of faith. These various offerings are:

1. Eucharistic Adoration on Fridays after the 11 a.m. Mass in Church
2. Stations of the Cross on Fridays at 7 p.m. in Church
3. An evening of confession on Wednesday, March 8 from 5-8 p.m. in Church
4. Lament Stations of the Cross on Sunday, March 19 at 6:30 p.m. in Mary’s Room
5. Parish Mission Day 1 with Bishop Woost on Sunday, March 26 at 7 p.m. in Church
6. Parish Mission Day 2 with Bishop Woost on Monday, March 27 at 7 p.m. in Church
7. Parish Mission Day 3 with Bishop Woost on Tuesday, March 28 at 7 p.m. in Church
8. Mary’s Way of the Cross on Wednesday, March 29 at 7 p.m. in Church
9. Youth Group Living Stations Sunday, April 2 at 7 p.m. in Church



*Gayle Cilimburg*

## PATHS FUNDRAISER WENT BACK TO THE 80s

On February 11 the Parish Center was hopping with partygoers sporting big hair and neon colors as they went “Back to the 80s.” The St. Christopher School PATHS (Parents and Teachers Helping Students) organization put on the “blast from the past” fundraiser to benefit our day school and preschool students. PATHS’ support provides our students with needed school technology equipment and programming, teacher supplies, funding for extracurricular school-sponsored clubs and field trips, recess supplies and more.

Popular local band Cleveland’s Breakfast Club had the crowd grooving to 80s hits while they enjoyed raffles and bid on silent auction items ranging from Taylor Swift tickets to a trip to Pebble Beach. The totally gnarly event was made possible by many PATHS volunteers and led by co-chairs Molly Stefan and Cristine Torek. A special thank you goes to the event’s top-level sponsors: Wakefield Equipment, The Reef Family, The Caserio Family, CLE OMFS, The McManamon Family, and The Gallagher, Kempton and Elwood Families. The fun and successful event raised over \$80,000 to support our SCS students – totally rad!

*Beth Van Horn*



## CHURCH CHATTER

**HAPPY BIRTHDAY** Birthday wishes go out to REO Secretary **Marilu Norena** (March 9), Pastoral Minister **Melissa DiFini** (April 14), **Deacon Dennis Conrad** (April 18), **Sr. Jeanne Cmolik** (April 30), School Secretary **Judy Zell** (May 9), Pastoral Associate **Gayle Cilimburg** (May 14), and Pastor **Fr. John Chlebo** (May 17). They would appreciate your best wishes on their special day.

**CLEVELAND MOB HISTORY** Parishioner **Donna Fitzsimmons** will lead an informative talk regarding the federal takedown of Danny Green and the Cleveland Mob on March 16, at 7 p.m. Presented by the Cleveland History Center, this free event will take place at the Music Box Supper Club (visit its website for details). Donna was the lead prosecutor in the federal prosecution of Cleveland mob boss Angelo "Big Ange" Lonardo and several of his subordinates. Since 1994, she has served as Judge of the Rocky River Municipal Court. Among her numerous awards and accolades are "Gem of Cleveland" for her civic service in women's causes, advisory council of the Mob Museum in Las Vegas, and Community Leader Hero.

**HALL OF FAME** From intern to 31 years on the sports beat, parishioner **Mary Kay Cabot** certainly deserves her recent induction into the Cleveland Press Club Hall of Fame. After graduating from Lakewood High School and Kent State, Mary Kay began writing about high school and pro sports before becoming the go-to Cleveland Browns reporter. She was the first female major pro beat writer in the Cleveland market, becoming a pioneer in local sports journalism. She and husband, Bill Murman, are the proud parents of three adult children.

**BUDDING ACTRESS** Kudos to the hilarious acting of **Caroline Kysela**, in the fall production of *The Play That Goes Wrong* at Rocky River High School. Look for her in the lead role in the spring musical *Bright Star*. Caroline is active in the St. Christopher J+Walkers and is an altar server.

**I LOVE LILLO** Parishioners **Denio Leone** and **Dave Norris**, along with friend Charlie Manno, are business partners in the I Love Lillo brand. Have you sipped this Italian lemon liqueur? It is delightful! Try it, along with the coffee liqueur, at your next cocktail party. These hand-crafted artisanal liqueurs are sold throughout Ohio.

**TIME CAPSULE** Last year, the Centennial Committee agreed that a time capsule of the first 100 years of St. Christopher was warranted. **Kate Ptak** took the lead and, with the assistance of **Jenny Dieringer**, **Ginni Going**, **Rob Spademan** and **Roberta Trutko**, they began culling items to include in the time capsule. It was decided that the capsule should be on display (not buried and forgotten), as a sign of our Parish's ongoing Century of Service. It will be in the Parish Center, where it can be seen and appreciated for years to come. Parishioner **Dan Mazzola** stepped forward to construct the containers, shelving, and layout of the time capsule display. A dedication is planned for May.

**QUINCEANERA** **Angie Krncevic**, granddaughter of parishioner **Ana Santos**, celebrated her Quinceanera (15th birthday) with her family and friends. The Mass of Thanksgiving included Angie thanking God for life and committing to serve others in a life dedicated to Mary as a Christian woman.



Share your joyous events with us! Please forward submissions for Church Chatter to **Roberta Trutko** at (440) 263-7894 or [roberta32red@hotmail.com](mailto:roberta32red@hotmail.com).



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## UPCOMING EVENTS

March 3, 10, 17, 24, 31	EVENING STATIONS OF THE CROSS	March 31	PARISH FAMILY MOVIE NIGHT
March 3, 10, 17, 24, 31	EUCCHARISTIC ADORATION	April 2	LIVING STATIONS OF THE CROSS
March 4	CUB SCOUT PINEWOOD DERBY	April 6	ALL SCHOOL LIVING STATIONS
March 8	DIOCESAN EVENING OF CONFESSIONS	April 21	JESUS DAY FIRST COMMUNION SCHOOL STUDENTS
March 11	CONFIRMATION RETREAT	April 22	JESUS DAY FIRST COMMUNION PSR STUDENTS
March 19	PRE-CANA DAY	April 23	PRE-BAPTISM CLASS
March 19	LAMENT FOR CREATION STATIONS OF THE CROSS	April 23	QUIRE CLEVELAND CONCERT
March 20	LADIES GUILD EVENT	May 2	CONFIRMATION
March 26-28	PARISH MISSION	May 12	MAY CROWNING
March 29	MARY'S WAY OF THE CROSS		

## HOLY WEEK SCHEDULE

Palm Sunday, April 2	Regular Weekend Mass Schedule	Good Friday, April 7	Stations of the Cross Noon (outdoors, weather permitting) and 7 p.m.
Wednesday, April 5	Confessions 7-8 p.m.	Holy Saturday, April 8	Easter Vigil 8:45 p.m.*
Holy Thursday, April 6	Mass of the Lord's Supper 7 p.m.*	Easter Sunday, April 9	Masses at 8:30*, 10:00* & 11:30 a.m.*
Good Friday, April 7	The Passion of the Lord 3 p.m.*		

\* Also livestreamed