



The Belltower Beacon

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

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December 2023

CONGRATULATIONS TO FR. ANTHONY WITH OUR DEEPEST GRATITUDE!

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Not too long ago we welcomed Fr. Anthony to our parish community. At that time he was just returning from Rome where he had begun his doctorate in biblical studies (kicked out due to Covid as he would explain), and embarking on a new path to become a parish priest. His dream was to pastor a Catholic faith community at a parish level. Fr. John, Fr. Tim, the parish leadership team and the people of St. Christopher became his companions on this journey. As God's grace would have it, Fr. Anthony won the hearts of the community at many levels. It may have taken awhile for some parishioners to echo his insistent and resounding "Amen!" However, in more recent times, it appears that most have come to appreciate this passionate "Amen." We have learned to embrace it for the simple, yet powerful, praise that it is. Much to his credit, if the congregants did not respond loudly enough to reach the heavens, Fr. Anthony had us repeat the acclamation until it was more convincing. We are forever grateful for this gift!

It certainly did not take long for our community to fall in love with Fr. Anthony's healthy sense of humor. Weaving his own personal stories into homilies made his messages memorable and applicable to daily life. He is quick to give God credit for all things, including a sense of humor of His own. Fr. Anthony's ability to laugh at himself, make others laugh and make us feel comfortable will be missed. He made it a point to engage us in conversation, made himself available, attended parish activities and was a good team player. On

a larger scale, Fr. Anthony traveled to neighboring churches to assist with the Sacraments. With his beautiful singing voice (Spanish and English), he is quick to lead others in song. With a polished speaking voice, not only did he preach with conviction, but he was also a terrific emcee at our St. Christopher Parish Weekend. We are grateful for his presence, generosity and humility.

Fr. Anthony brought with him a passion for Holy Scripture, Catholicism and community. He stays true to our traditions and loves being a Catholic priest. During his assignment at St. Christopher, Fr. Anthony contributed to parish life in many ways. His dedication to evangelization helped bring others into the Church through RCIA, the Sacraments and initiatives like Wine (or coffee) and the Word. With 10 years of priestly experience before coming to St. Christopher, Fr. Anthony is no stranger to hard work and selfless giving. He has been an asset to our parish, and he will be an asset to his new home parish, Communion of Saints. Expressing his own gratitude, Fr. Anthony wrote us the following, ["I have come to know and love you with all of my heart. My colleagues on the parish staff have been a true blessing. Fr. John in particular has taught me a lot about what it takes to serve as a loving Pastor. So many of you have welcomed me to your homes for blessings, meals and faith sharing ..."]

On November 18th and 19th, the community of St. Christopher came together to thank and celebrate Fr. Anthony for all his contributions. We enthusiastically congratulate him on his new assignment and pray that God's blessings continue to flow in his direction. Fr. Anthony, remember that you are in our hearts, only a few miles away, and forever in our prayers.

Ciao, hasta luego, and dia duit (may God be with you).

Carmen Everett DeHaan

MEET DIACONATE CANDIDATE ZAK JESTER



In his second year of studying for the diaconate, candidate Zak Jester is assigned to our parish community for his field education placement. We welcome his passion for service to the Church and the assistance he will provide during this time. The future deacon is from North Ridgeville and is married to Sarah; they have two children, ages 4 (Elijah) and 1 (Benedict). While here, Zak is focused on Ministries of the Word: serving as Lector as well as teaching classes in RCIA, Baptism and Pre-Cana. His impression of our community thus far has been “awesome” – he feels “blessed

to be learning from St. Christopher staff and volunteers how to minister and how to share the love of Jesus.” Zak felt a pull toward the priesthood as early as fourth grade, but while in high school he discerned a different route to serving God’s people. He knew that God wanted him to work for the Church, and the desire to serve remained strong in his heart. When he secured an internship followed by a job at St. Bernadette in Westlake, his call to marriage and lay ministry became clear. While in the high school youth group, he met his future wife, Sarah. She inspired and uplifted him spiritually. According to Zak, Sarah became his “partner in service,” teaching him “how to be positive and humble, how to love and sacrifice.”

Zak admits that the demands of formation can be very challenging while balancing a full-time career and a young family. At the same time, he finds it incredibly rewarding, because not only is he growing his own faith, but he is also “helping to form good people.” For the past 14 years, Zak has been involved in religious education and youth ministry, most recently at St. Raphael in Bay Village, serving as Director of Youth Ministry and Confirmation. He earned his bachelor’s degree in Theology and Religious Studies from John Carroll University after graduating from St. Ignatius High School. Employing a good sense of humor, he loves leading teens closer to Christ by turning any topic into an opportunity for theological discussion and deeper reflection.

The initial call to the diaconate came in 2020, when St. Raphael Deacon Larry Gregg suggested that he consider this path. While discerning the invitation, Pastor Tim Gareau approached Zak to tell him that God had a message for him: become a deacon. This was a “shock” because Zak thought he was too young. He now sees clearly that we must answer God’s call when God calls us, because God will pursue us relentlessly. Candidate Zak reminds us of the words of Jesus: “put out into the deep and let down your nets.” In other words, be bold and trust in the Lord. As a community of faith, we are blessed to have Zak Jester with us. Let’s be sure to greet him, make him feel at home, and wish him and his family a truly blessed future.

Carmen Everett DeHaan

PREPARING FOR ADVENT

Advent is a time of silence, reflection, preparation, and penance. It’s a time to direct our hearts and minds to the second coming of Christ and a celebration of Christ’s birth at Christmas. The Catechism of the Catholic Church (paragraph 524) says, “When the Church celebrates the liturgy of Advent each year, she makes present this ancient expectancy of the Messiah, for by sharing in the long preparation for the Savior’s first coming, the faithful renew their ardent desire for his second coming.” How do you plan to “renew your ardent desire” during this grace-filled season? We want to offer you three opportunities to accompany you through Advent. On Friday, December 1, we will have Eucharistic Adoration in the Prayer Room from 11:30 a.m. until 7:30 p.m. Take this time to refresh your soul by spending time with Jesus, the source of our life and hope. During that time, I would invite you to think about how you can be a Eucharistic person and reflect on ways you cooperate with God’s grace. Do you recognize Christ where he is hidden?

Tuesday, December 12, on the Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe, we will discuss the apparition of our Blessed Mother to Juan Diego in 1531 and how the images from that story tie into ours. We will meet in the Atrium from 6:30 p.m. until 8:00 p.m., located at St. Christopher School. We hope to see you there.

On Sunday, December 17, a Christmas Tree of Remembrance will be in the Gathering Area. We will have ornaments by the tree for you to decorate by writing your deceased loved one’s name on them so that we can remember them during the Advent and Christmas seasons.

I hope you and your family have a blessed season of Advent.

Melissa DiFini



ANGEL SCHOLARSHIP FUND

Turning taxes into tuition

In September 1926, St. Christopher School opened in two classrooms attached to the church building. Staffed by the Sisters of the Humility of Mary, the school initially welcomed students in grades one through four. Fast forward to 2023. St. Christopher School now operates out of a beautiful building, dedicated to providing an environment where Catholic values, service, excellence, and community are shared with all by loving God, studying hard, and being kind to each other.

Over these 97 years, St. Christopher School has educated thousands of children in faith formation, sending them out into our community to excel academically, civically and spiritually. The school remains robust today, continuing in the tradition, which began back in September 1926.

In order to continue to provide our children with an opportunity to receive their faith formation and academic excellence through St. Christopher School, we have an opportunity to provide enhanced funding to the school in the form of scholarships.

DID YOU KNOW?

The State of Ohio legislature has enacted a Tax Credit Scholarship program, whereby individuals may receive a 100% tax credit against their Ohio income tax liability, with a maximum credit of \$750 for individual filers (\$1,500 for married couples filing jointly)! All of this is available at **NO COST TO YOU!**

You have the power to fund Catholic education here at St. Christopher School. All students at St. Christopher School are eligible to receive a scholarship from the Angel Scholarship Fund. This fund is being managed locally by the Diocesan Catholic Community Foundation.

WHAT DO YOU DO TO PARTICIPATE IN THE PROGRAM?

1. Review your tax liability from last year (2022 1040 UT, line 8C) to help estimate the amount of your tax liability. Remember, you can take a maximum credit amount of \$750 for individuals and \$1,500 for married filing jointly.
2. Contribute to the Angel Scholarship Fund in 2023 at catholiccommunity.org/angel, or by calling (216) 902-1312. Don't forget to designate St. Christopher School for your Ohio state tax deductible contribution. If your tax liability is less, then you can contribute less.
3. Claim your tax credit on your 2023 Ohio tax form with the tax credit receipt that will be mailed to you from the Diocesan Catholic Community Foundation.

We ask you to please help the St. Christopher School community to continue to thrive by maintaining our educational excellence, both academically and spiritually. Do not hesitate to follow the steps above as it only takes a few minutes and the benefits last a lifetime. You can direct any questions to Joe Williams, St. Christopher Business Manager, by calling (440) 331-4255 x101 or emailing me at jwilliams@stchrisparish.com. **Remember, this action directs your State of Ohio tax dollars directly to St. Christopher School.**

Joe Williams

THE LETTER: A MESSAGE FOR OUR EARTH



The Social Concerns Committee sponsored a viewing of Pope Francis' video, *The Letter: A Message for Our Earth* on October 3. In this video Pope Francis highlights the effects of climate change on the poor, youth, native people, and wildlife. The video features frontline leaders from each of these groups as they travel to Rome to share their stories on the environmental crisis and highlights their common bond.

Some of those who viewed the video found it overwhelming and alarming, but others found hope in the Pope's concern for those whose voice is often not heard.

The video is available on YouTube, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Rps9bs85BII>, for private viewing.

Jeanette Nappier

UNBOUND SPONSORSHIP

Where love knows no Bounds!

World Mission Sunday 2023 fell on October 22, and annually aims to join all Catholics of the world into one community of faith. It is an opportunity for Catholics to focus in a very special way upon the commandment Jesus gave us to love our neighbors as ourselves. St. Christopher is a community of believers dedicated to loving unconditionally and caring for those in greatest need, whether they live within a few miles of us or on other continents. There is never a shortage of need, and God never fails to support our efforts. With a powerful message from Rev. Mike Rieder of Long Island, NY, we heard about a sponsorship program called Unbound. Through Unbound, we are invited to join a worldwide network of Catholic sponsors that “help a child, encourage a youth and befriend an elder.” Without leaving our homes, we can provide valuable services in these areas by way of U.S. mail and/or online communication.



To speak about her personal experiences as an Unbound sponsor was Pastoral Associate Gayle Cilimburg. Reaching across the world to places like Guatemala and India, Gayle writes her message and receives a response in English thanks to translators at the other end. It is clear in reading letters from recipients that Gayle and sponsors like her are sharing much more than the \$40 monthly donation. Over time, they form friendships which result in lifelong positive changes on both sides of the relationship. Though the funds are used to provide greatly needed services like medicine, housing, food and educational assistance, the sponsored person and his/her family also receive priceless gifts that are spiritually and emotionally rewarding. They come to know that God and their Catholic friends care about them. Priceless rewards also come to the sponsor in hearing how their written and financial contributions help make life more manageable. For example, recipient Maria’s granddaughter thanks Gayle for improving her grandmother’s “quality of life.” She tells Gayle: “My grandmother’s health is not great, her Alzheimer’s is getting worse ... we use your contribution to purchase all her medications and personal items.” It is important to note that our minimal donation to Unbound goes a long way to providing for a family in other countries.

In Fr. Mike’s homily, he invited us to learn more about Unbound by going to their website at unbound.org. He encouraged us to consider new ideas, new ways and challenges to get involved with God’s people, our neighbors. He quoted a favorite phrase to emphasize his plea for assistance: “If you always do what you always did, you’ll always get what you always got.” This is a clever expression to ponder in discerning where and how God wants us to fulfill our mission here on earth. For Catholics, God’s command to love our neighbor becomes our mission to love without boundaries.

Carmen Everett DeHaan

BOOK GIFTS

As you know we have often given spiritual books to parishioners at Christmas. This year there will be two books, one at Christmas and one for Lent.

Currently our church is in the midst of attempting to focus on the importance of the Eucharist. Here at St. Christopher that is the reason we have returned to monthly Eucharistic Adoration.

Both the books you will be able to obtain were written to further talk about the “real presence” of Jesus in the Eucharist.

The book at Christmas is entitled *Beautiful Eucharist* and was written by Matthew Kelly, an author whose books we have given to you previously.

The second book that will be available in preparation for Lent is entitled *This Is My Body* by Bishop Robert Barron. We plan to offer an opportunity for group discussion on this book during Lent.

We hope that both books will be helpful toward appreciating the gift of the Eucharistic.

Gayle Cilimburg

EMPOWER THE MIND • NOURISH THE SPIRIT • SERVE OTHERS

ALL IN JESUS' NAME



OPEN HOUSE

Sunday, January 28, 2024

9:30 a.m. – 1 p.m.

Since 1926, St. Christopher School has been preparing students for success with an education rooted in Catholic values, service, and excellence. Our well-prepared, high-achieving graduates thrive intellectually and spiritually in high school, college and beyond. We invite you to take a tour, meet our faculty and experience our welcoming community.



Contact Principal Mary Meler at mmeler@scsrr.org or 440-331-3075 with questions

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION UPDATE

Exciting things are happening in the Religious Education Department this quarter. We started off the new school year with 356 PSR students in grades K-8. Our First Communion class has 83 students and the Confirmation class is a bit smaller with 50 students.

Our brand-new junior high program for grades 6-8, named "The Way" is off to a great start. Attendance has been excellent, which is a good indication that we may have a hit on our hands. The students meet twice a month on either Sunday mornings at 10 a.m. or Tuesday afternoons at 3:30 p.m. for a core lesson. To make the program more flexible for family schedules and more interesting to students, we have also added "workshops" for the students to choose what interests them and service opportunities to put what they have learned into action. The students have embraced the service component – every service opportunity has been filled with "The Way" students who are ready and eager to serve. We started with the pet blessing and helping sort food for the Rocky River Assistance Program, as well as picking up trash at the St. Colman Litter Pilgrimage and helping younger children at the Young Families Fall Fest and our first annual Parish Trunk or Treat. They have been busy and happy to help. We have also offered "Workshops" that the students can sign up for of their own liking. We have already offered a Church Tour, Praying with Art & the Word, and in December will offer the Jesse Tree. We are looking to offer workshops on a

variety of subjects and we hope you may be able to help us! If you are interested and have knowledge in any of the following topics, please contact the Religious Education Office: Angels, the Rosary, Popes, Catholic Meditation, Communicating with Grandparents. It is our hope to have our students experience a variety of speakers on various topics and allow our Parishioners to share their knowledge. We would love to hear from you!

Please pray for our 2nd graders as they go on their Reconciliation Retreats to prepare for First Reconciliation in mid-January!

Please pray for our Confirmation students as they go on Retreat February 24 as they prepare for Confirmation in May.

Our first Annual Parish Trunk or Treat was a grand success!! Thank you to our committee: Mary Meler, Colleen McKenna and Sharon Armstrong for organizing a great event. Thank you to D Production for the wonderful music. Thank you judges for the costume contest, dance contest, and car decorating contest. Thank you ALL for joining us! The weather was perfect. Join us next year for our second annual Parish Trunk or Treat!

Thank you to all the students and Parishioners who helped with the Thanksgiving Turkey Boxes that went to the St. Patrick and St. Colman neighborhoods. We appreciate your support!

Sharon Armstrong

YOUNG FAMILIES ENJOY A "SPOOKTACULAR" TIME AT FALL FEST!

Over 30 young families came together for the first ever Fall Fest! This Sunday morning was filled with harvest-themed snacks, crafts, and pumpkin decorating. Average pumpkins were transformed by our most creative minds into scary sharks and cuddly koalas. Thanksgiving crosses and adorable hedgehogs were carefully crafted, adorned with shades of red, orange, and yellow. All this fun was fueled by apple juice, pretzel rods, pumpkin bread, and cider donuts. Mom and Dad were even afforded a dose of caffeine thanks to Erie Island Coffee! Our ministry looks forward to offering more events in the coming months.

Logan Feldkamp



PATHS TRUNK OR TREAT

On Thursday, October 19, a little rain could not keep the spiders, ghosts and goblins, Taylor Swift, Barbie, the Browns players, the Mad Hatter, Medusa, and Superheroes away from the Annual PATHS Trunk or Treat event. The Parish Center was turned into a Halloween Wonderland with decorated spooky tables and bowls filled with candy for children to select from and place in their trick or treat bags. The DJ played fun music and hosted great contests! Halloween fun was had by ALL!

Mary Meler



FALLING INTO RHYTHM WITH J+WALKERS YOUTH MINISTRY!

J+Walkers Youth Ministry is in full swing for the 2023-2024 year! September featured a prayer service focused on “rest” and a talk about being unique and extraordinary people in today’s world. Father Anthony joined us for a “Bother the Father” night in October, answering our students’ toughest questions about faith and the life of a priest. Our annual Halloween party drew our biggest crowd of the year, filling Mary’s Room with exquisite costumes and colorful painted pumpkins (perhaps you noticed them around the parish property!) November ushered in our annual Youthgiving celebration and our #WeGiveCatholic campaign to raise funds for future retreats and service opportunities. We are grateful for our parishioners and families who support our awesome events!

Throughout the autumn our monthly Fireside Chat nights proved popular. Our high school students had the opportunity to gather for s’mores and conversation around topics that impact their lives. “Discernment” and “Rooted” were some of our topics in recent months. As the Ohio snow rolls in, we will move inside to enjoy hot chocolate and new topics of conversation. As part of our #WeGiveCatholic campaign, we hope to begin new initiatives to engage and evangelize high school students of our local public and Catholic high schools.

As we look forward to Christmas and a new year, we are excited to welcome a new generation of J+Walkers members and continue to grow our high school youth ministry!

Logan Feldkamp



FIRST ANNUAL RAISE YOUR SPIRITS



Imagine an elegant gathering set in beautifully decorated Mary's Room with warm, ambient lighting and high top tables. This describes the scene this past October 12 at the first annual "Raise Your Spirits," the St. Christopher Ladies Guild social with over 50 women in attendance. Stylish decor of clear vases filled with wine corks and string lights created a welcoming and relaxed atmosphere.

A table near the center of the room was adorned with a selection of fine wines. Bottles of red, white, and sparkling wines were on display, ready for guests to savor. To accompany the wine, a variety of beautifully arranged charcuterie boards by Lake Road Market

featured an assortment of premium cheeses, cured meats, and a plethora of accompaniments. Guests enjoyed delectable sweets from Kathy's Kolackes Pastry Shop in Rocky River. The women gathered around the charcuterie boards and dessert table, engaging in lively conversations. The event was designed to be a delightful evening of indulgence and conversation and did not disappoint those who attended to celebrate their friendship and being a part of the St. Christopher community. Thanks to Lori Alexander, Mary Mulach and Moe McCabe, who organized the event.

Lori Alexander



SPOTLIGHT ON TERRY MARTIN

“Whenever interacting with Terry, whether it be before or after Mass, at a Parish Council meeting, or over the phone, he always makes time for me and is never in a rush. He makes everyone who encounters him feel special, heard, and appreciated.” How many of us have acquaintances that can say that about us? These are the sentiments of several Belltower Beacon staff members and Parish staff associates who work and volunteer with Terry Martin. Recently the Belltower Beacon staff sat down with Terry Martin and his wife, Candy, to interview and pay tribute to him for the 20+ years Terry has volunteered at St. Christopher. Specifically, Terry’s devotion to the St. Christopher Parish Council led him to oversee the quarterly publication of the Belltower Beacon as a part of his responsibility.

Born and raised in Dayton, Ohio, Terry graduated with an engineering degree from the University of Dayton. Terry’s professional career spanned decades as a sales manager and afforded him the opportunity to travel the world. Terry’s job took him to places in Europe and Asia to name a few, all while making the time to volunteer at St. Christopher a priority in his life. Terry raised three children (two sons and a daughter) while Candy raised two children of her own. Together, the blended family includes 15 grandchildren.

Terry and Candy Martin joined St. Christopher parish in the mid-1990s, and in 2001 the first issue of the Belltower Beacon was published. Terry recalled the first issue only being four pages in one color, and he is proud of how far the publication has come over the past 22 years. Retired from work and in his “spare” time, Terry enjoys visiting his grandchildren, playing cards, and the occasional round of golf in the summertime.

Terry, thank you for generously volunteering your time at St. Christopher Parish. Your willingness to give your time and service over the years has been greatly appreciated. Your support of The Belltower Beacon has allowed us to continue to fulfill our mission and serve the parishioners in our community. Thank you!

Lori Alexander



Terry is seated surrounded by Gayle Cilimburg, Lori Alexander and Amy Gressell.



Terry and Candy Martin

LADIES GUILD BOOK CLUB

The St. Christopher Ladies Guild’s mission is to foster a Christ-like spirit of friendship and community among the women of the parish and beyond. What better way to do this than through a book club? As C. S. Lewis said, “We read to know we are not alone.” The Ladies Guild book club began this September with a discussion of Lauren Akins’ memoir, *Live in Love*, chronicling the challenges of living a faith-filled life while married to country music star, Thomas Rhett. In October, the club read *The Women of the Bible Speak: The Wisdom of 16 Women and Their Lessons for Today* by Shannon Bream. Drawing from both the Old and New Testaments, this book initiated a lively discussion of the many women in scripture, their lives and challenges, and their central roles in salvation history. November’s selection is *The Nightingale*, Kristin Hannah’s historical fiction novel set in World War II’s German occupation of France. To date, the club is small but mighty; holding spirited and illuminating discussions monthly on Wednesday mornings and evenings. Come join us. As the days get shorter, curl up with a book, broaden your reading horizons, share insights with women of the parish and make new friends. “A book too can be a star, a living fire to lighten the darkness.” (Madeleine L’Engle)

Nancy Sullivan



TECH TALK

The Digital Signage is finally coming together! The wall-mounted displays are in place and just waiting for some wiring tweaking to happen so that we won't see cords and cables. Initial feedback has ranged from "Finally!" to "What do we need that for?"

We are a Church in the 21st century and actively serving 6 to 7 generations of parishioners (depending on which age group divisions you recognize). We want to engage as many people as possible in the life of the parish. The bulletin has been the standard for years. We expanded that into the electronic weekly Constant Contact publications. Now we are trying to reach further ... you will be seeing more graphic design and fewer words. We will be actively branding our material and target marketing some of our efforts. We will be growing our presence on social media platforms. Our website will continue to be the go-to place for forms and Church how-to's, but there will be more news on the front page.

This will all network with our new app. The Connect app will bring info to your phone, tablet or computer. You have control over how much you see or don't see. But it will give us a better way to promote communication within our groups and among our people. We hope that it will ease some of the information overkill that you muddle through by putting all the news you need for your 6th grade student (for example) into one feed. Your updated data in our base will turn registrations into fast tasks. Yes, there will be QR codes and interactive kiosk possibilities. But we won't leave behind the folks who use pen and paper!

Procedures for the new signs will be reaching our group leaders shortly. In the meantime, if you have any questions or concerns, please contact me at x111 in the office or email tpastura@stchrisparish.com.

Terri Pastura



CONGRATULATIONS JUDGE BRENDAN SHEEHAN



This year the Lawyers Guild of the Catholic Diocese of Cleveland chose The Honorable Brendan J. Sheehan, Administrative and Presiding Judge of the Cuyahoga County Court of Common Pleas, as the 2023 recipient of the prestigious St. Thomas Award. Brendan, his wife, Michelle and their three children are members of St. Christopher Parish. This award was celebrated at a luncheon of the Lawyer's Guild and invited guests. The lunch was preceded by Mass at St. John Cathedral presided over by Bishop Michael Woost, Auxiliary Bishop of Cleveland.

As administrative judge, Brendan is responsible for overseeing all court operations, appointing committees, presiding over the court's docket, and speaking about court policy. Prior to being elected to the bench, he worked in the major trial unit of the Cuyahoga County Prosecutor's Office. He has also served as the director of the Internet Crimes against Children task force program.

We congratulate Brendan on this wonderful award and are grateful for the contribution he makes to our community and the example of faith and dedication he offers to his family, our parish, and the greater community.

Brendan is pictured with his wife, Michelle, and Fr. John.

Fr. John Chlebo

7TH AND 8TH GRADE FIELD TRIP TO ROCKY RIVER NATURE CENTER

To meet the Ohio Learning Standards for Science: hydrologic cycle (relating to the study of water on the earth), the St. Christopher 7th and 8th graders participated in the Rocky River Nature Center's Water Exploration program on September 25, 2023. The students learned how organisms perform a variety of roles in an ecosystem. They investigated aquatic animals, their unique habitat requirements and physical adaptations for survival through active collect-and-release in the river across from the Nature Center. After students learned about the Macroinvertebrate Groups: Group 1 – Very Intolerant of Pollution, Group 2 – Moderately Intolerant of Pollution – Group 3 – Fairly Tolerant of Pollution, and Group 4 – Very Tolerant of Pollution and the existence of different macroinvertebrates help determine water quality. The 7th and 8th graders pulled on rubber boots and waded into the river. The students netted fish, crayfish, mayfly nymphs, caddisfly nymphs, and aquatic worms. It was determined the river quality on September 25 was good. Lunch was eaten outside under a canopy of trees. From the nature center deck Mr. Thorne, the SCS Middle School Science teacher, reviewed igneous, metamorphic and sedimentary rock formation and the geological history of the area. Miss Dzurec, SCS Middle School Social Studies teacher, and Mrs. Fuerst, SCS Computer and STREAM teacher, guided the students through the nature trail identifying various trees and plants. Students learned that decomposing trees add nutrients such as carbon, nitrogen, potassium and phosphorus enrich the soil and help new plants grow and keep living ones healthy as the nutrients are reabsorbed. The water exploration field trip was a hands-on opportunity for the SCS middle school students to learn the importance of becoming environmental stewards to maintain a natural balance for a healthy ecosystem. This extraordinary experience for the students was made possible through a Directed Educational Science grant from the Margaret A. Cargill Foundation.

Molly Fuerst



GRANDPARENTS AND GRAND FRIENDS DAY 2023

The last Grandparents and Grand Friends Day at St. Christopher School was in the fall of 2019. It was surely time to bring it back. On Tuesday, October 24, over 400 grandparents and grand friends joined the school community for the 9 a.m. all-school Mass and the Living Rosary. The church was beautifully packed from front to back. The visitors received a blessing from Fr. Anthony at the conclusion of Mass. The friends stayed to join in the praying of the Rosary which was lead by our 4th-8th grade students. Once the activity in the church was complete, the grandparents and grand friends joined the students in the classroom to participate in academic activities for almost an hour. We will continue this tradition for years to come every October. Both the students and their grandparents and grand friends were so thrilled to participate in this fun day!

Mary Meler



ANNIE LEONE, CNM: A DEDICATION TO PREGNANT ASYLUM SEEKERS AT THE BORDER

A pregnant asylum seeker, recently released from detention, is due any day but has been separated from her partner, who was deported to Mexico to wait for his hearing while she was released to an immigration shelter on the US side.

Another pregnant woman, fleeing for her life from gangs in her community who threatened her family, is in her third trimester when she arrives at the border. She has gestational diabetes but has never received any prenatal care.

A newborn, just a few days old, was born on the trip to the US-Mexico border where her parents asked for asylum. Her parents lost everything in a hurricane last year and decided to flee the violence and instability in the wake of the climate-fueled disaster in their home country.

These are just some of the patients who are seen every day by Annie Leone, a Certified Nurse Midwife working at one of the largest immigration shelters in the nation at the US-Mexico border through an MCN collaboration with funding from Community for Children, Inc. and Every Mother Counts. When pregnant asylum seekers are released from detention after asking for asylum, they are often dropped off at the immigration shelter. They rarely receive care during their stay in detention nor during their migration to the border; Leone may be the first clinician these mothers have seen during their pregnancy.



Most of the mothers are grappling with trauma, shock, and grief.

“She’s very compassionate, she’s affectionate with everyone – she’s very good at what she does,” noted Nahiyel “Pinky” Garcia, a Health Network Associate with MCN who worked closely with Leone. “But also, she’s very detailed, which is important. We send medical records to the patients’ new provider [after the patient leaves the shelter], and she goes deep on the patient’s needs, that she has trauma, and will need a lot of support. Annie really does make a difference in many women’s lives.”

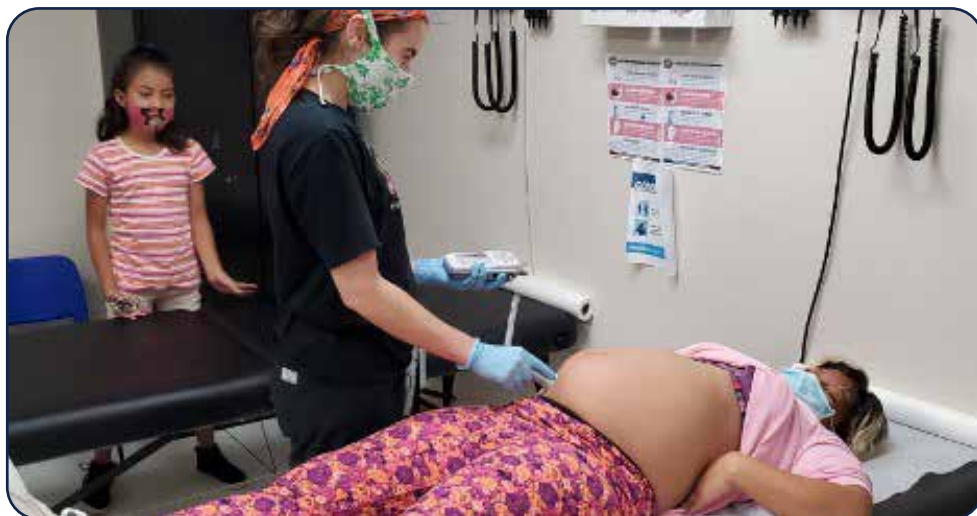
After Leone cares for the expecting mother and completes her notes, she passes her care to an MCN Health Network Associate, who enrolls the patient in Health Network, MCN’s virtual case management system. Usually, mothers leave within a day or two after she has evaluated them, traveling to new communities all around the US as they wait for the court hearing for their asylum request. A Health Network Associate helps the patient find prenatal care and a hospital for giving birth in her new location, and assists her with signing up for programs and services to get her the support she needs.

Leone sees women, often traumatized and after long, horrendous journeys, day in and day out, but the shelter never knows who they will care for on a given day, or what the circumstances will be. “Sometimes it’s really hot, sometimes cold, we might have six or seven patients, or maybe 20 or 25. Every day, it changes,” noted Enedelia Basurto, a Health Network Associate with MCN who works closely with Leone at the immigration shelter, who noted that, despite the circumstances, Leone treats every patient with humility, patience, and kindness. “I admire Annie. There’s no ‘no’ for Annie – with her, it can be possible. It can be done. She’s a very hardworking, smart, unique woman.”

Leone, originally from Ohio, studied public health, Spanish, and international studies, but didn’t discover her calling until her senior year in college, when she learned about midwives in a global women’s health course. While studying for her master’s degree in midwifery, she learned about a fellowship at a birth center on the border. After graduation, she worked in a hospital in the South Bronx for three years. Then, in 2018, she felt ready to head to the US-Mexico border.

“It sounded like an amazing place and it aligned with my values and interests,” Leone said in a 2020 interview. “I thought I was coming for a fellowship – most midwives stay six to nine months – but it quickly became clear that I didn’t want to leave.” Her initial work was at Holy Family, a birth center that served the entire community. She received a living stipend and free housing at the birth center.

But Leone wanted to do more. In November 2018, she sought out a volunteer role at a makeshift clinic within a nearby local immigration shelter that serves people newly released from detention after requesting asylum. The immigration shelter provides a warm meal, a hot shower, and a clean bed, as well as help coordinating their next leg of travel. There, she met Dr. Marsha Griffin, from MCN’s Board of Directors, who coordinated and oversaw the fledgling clinic. The clinic serves as a triage for asylum seekers, to ensure that they are healthy



enough to continue their journeys to their next destination within the United States. A midwife was much needed, to serve the pregnant women who arrived. Leone began volunteering there weekly, but she recognized that all her volunteer work at the border could not sustain her long-term; she needed a job. In September 2019, Dr. Griffin and MCN secured funding to support her position as a midwife serving pregnant asylum seekers at the tiny clinic within the larger immigration shelter, supported by Holy Family as the employer of the position. Over her time with MCN, Leone has served at least 1,990 asylum seekers.

In March 2022, Leone announced that she was going to move on from her position, although she assures her MCN team that if she stays on at the border she will stay involved with MCN. Her work at the border has supported pregnant asylum seekers at some of the most important moments in their lives – vulnerable, traumatic, and terrifying, and also beautiful, heartwarming, lifegiving, and life-affirming, thanks to Leone’s empathetic, loving care.

“Annie brings an approach that is unique to midwives. She is able to make a connection with these women in one encounter that just amazes me,” said Candace Kugel, FNP,

CNM, Migrant Clinicians Network’s Clinical Specialist says. “And she does it in a way that I can tell she’s making a personal connection, but she’s also a grounded clinician. She gives us information about the trauma they’ve experienced, the reasons they’ve made the journey, as well as really detailed clinical information. We’ve been blessed to have her.”

Reprinted with permission by Migrant Clinicians Network

Note from Fr. John: Annie Leone, daughter of parishioners Denio and Marie Leone, is a graduate of St. Christopher School.

LITTER PILGRIMAGE

Students and parents from St. Christopher PSR, Cleveland Associates of the Congregation of St. Joseph, and members of the Social Concerns Committee gathered under overcast skies and light rain for a litter pilgrimage on October 14. The group picked up about 10 garbage bags of litter from the St. Colman neighborhood. Much of the litter was single-use plastic, which does not biodegrade, but rather breaks up into smaller and smaller particles which contaminate our air and lake. The pilgrimage resulted in a significantly cleaner neighborhood and reduced environmental damage from the plastic. This event was sponsored by the Social Concerns Committee.

Jeanette Nappier



Pet Blessing



Parish Trunk or Treat



KICK BACK AND RELAX AT “A KNIGHT AT THE LODGE”



fundraiser held by PATHS (Parents and Teachers Helping Students).

The Parish Center will be transformed into a cozy refuge after a day of your favorite winter outdoor activities. Enjoy a signature drink at our chalet-themed open bar, featuring an ice luge! Heavy appetizers and dessert are available to enjoy at your leisure while listening to the acoustical stylings of Chris Donley.

Check out the event website to purchase event tickets, as well as learn more about family and corporate sponsorship opportunities at <https://e.givesmart.com/events/yyxA>. Premier silent and live auctions

Pull up a seat by the fire and join us with an *après ski* vibe on Saturday, February 3, 2024 from 6-11 p.m. The event is our annual parish-wide

and raffles are also available here to purchase in advance or at the event. All event proceeds provide direct support to our school and students. Funds raised will be used to:

- Update school technology (iPads, Chromebooks, STREAM coursework and robotics programming).
- Support Teachers (art and music supplies, requested items/wish lists from teachers).
- Support Students (extracurricular school-sponsored clubs, field trips and recess supplies).

Capacity will be capped at 300, so be sure to buy your tickets (\$75 each) today! There are also corporate sponsorships available for (\$800) and Family Sponsors (\$300) available, which provides great exposure within our vibrant community.

Please direct any questions regarding the event to our event co-chairs Kristy Bertke (kscloser1@yahoo.com) or Dixie Trunko (dixie.trunko@gmail.com).

Join us this February to support quality education at St. Christopher and enjoy a fireside chat amongst friends.

Kristy Bertke and Dixie Trunko

CONGRATULATIONS JERRY SKOCH



Each year the West Side Catholic Center presents The Sister Kathleen Kilbane, CSJ Walk in Faith Award to those who advance the mission of WSCC in exceptional ways. This year they recognized Jerry Skoch as the 2023 recipient. Jerry and his wife, Kathleen are long time members of St. Christopher Parish.

Jerry made a significant impact as Executive Director of WSCC from 2004-2010. During his tenure he implemented innovative strategies for caring for all those who needed their services. He oversaw the move of the shelter to Moriah House and established Zacchaeus Housing Solutions to provide a safe and supportive living environment for people transitioning out of homelessness.

His vision and leadership were instrumental in developing programs that emphasized caring for all and helping those in need find stability and security. Though his work, Jerry demonstrated that innovation and compassion can significantly change the lives of those we care for at the West Side Catholic Center.

Fr. John Chlebo



Jerry and Kathleen Skoch with Gayle Cilimborg, Fr. John and Fr. Anthony



Terry Brizz (top left), board member WSCC, who hosted members of the parish staff.

CHURCH CHATTER

PASTOR NEWS

Fr. John, our pastor, has been serving as administrator of St. Clement and St. James parishes, both in Lakewood. His assignment there concluded December 1. He welcomes our new parochial vicar, **Fr. Joselito M. Clemen**, from the Philippines who is joining our pastoral staff.

GRADUATE

Our Pastoral Minister, **Logan Feldkamp**, has been studying at Ursuline College for his master's degree in theological and pastoral studies, and will be graduating soon. This degree builds on his undergraduate education and has included coursework at the seminary. Logan has been at St. Christopher for over four years. It shows that he is putting his education into practice, as he is involved in a myriad of parish activities. In October, he was part of a panel concerning "co-responsibility," for the National Association of Lay Ministers (NALM). NALM is a nation-wide group of pastoral associates and other lay ministers who work for the church in various capacities. Logan says that it was a wonderful opportunity to represent both the Diocese of Cleveland, as well as St. Christopher Parish, and to speak about the amazing working relationship our parish has between clergy and laity. Well done, Logan!

UKRAINIAN WELCOME COMMITTEE

The

Kushnyrs attended a recent UWC Thanksgiving dinner for volunteers. They are overwhelmed by the support and welcoming from the parish. "A few months ago, you didn't even know us at all, but you decided to join forces and help! You didn't just help us, you gave us a sense of security and faith in a new life. We still cannot believe we're here."



CROSS COUNTRY

The St. Christopher School cross country team competed at Edgewater Park on a beautiful October day. Their coaches are Marissa Burke Lewis and Matt Tuskan. Go team!



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



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Logan Feldkamp, Molly Fuerst, Mary Meler, Jeanette Nappier,
Terri Pastura, Nancy Sullivan, Dixie Trunko and Joe Williams

UPCOMING EVENTS

December 1, January 5, February 2	EUCCHARISTIC ADORATION
December 2	CONFIRMATION SERVICE SATURDAY
December 2	ADVENT FAMILY NIGHT
December 5	SCHOOL RECONCILIATION RETREAT
December 5-6	SCHOOL CHRISTMAS SHOP
December 12, January 9, February 13	GRIEF SUPPORT GROUP
December 12	ADVENT PROGRAM
January 7	PSR RECONCILIATION RETREAT
January 20, 23	FIRST RECONCILIATION
January 24, February 28	LADIES GUILD BOOK CLUB
February 3	PATHS AUCTION

February 10	LENT FAMILY NIGHT
February 24	CONFIRMATION RETREAT
February 29	FIRST EUCHARIST PARENT MEETING

CHRISTMAS MASS SCHEDULE

Sunday, December 24	4 p.m. in Church & Parish Center 6 p.m. in Church* 10 p.m. in Church with Prelude of Carols at 9:30 p.m.*
Monday, December 25	10 a.m. and 11:30 a.m. in Church*

NEW YEAR'S MASS SCHEDULE

(Feast of Mary, Mother of God – not a Holy Day of Obligation this year)	
Monday, January 1	11 a.m.

* Also livestreamed.

*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.*