

The Belltower Beacon

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

Volume 26: Issue 100

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BELLTOWER BEACON CELEBRATES 100 ISSUES

FOR THE PAST SEVERAL MONTHS A GROUP OF PARISHIONERS HAVE BEEN WORKING HARD TOWARD THE GOAL OF PROVIDING OUR COMMUNITY WITH A PARISH NEWSLETTER. THEIR EFFORTS HAVE RESULTED IN THIS INAUGURAL ISSUE OF "THE BELLTOWER BEACON." THE PLAN IS TO PUBLISH THE NEWSLETTER FOUR TIMES A YEAR.

Those were the opening lines of the very first issue published in February 2001. Today, 25 years later, you are reading the 100th edition of The Belltower Beacon! It has been well received over the years and has grown from the original four-page newsletter to as many as 24 pages and is filled with articles, pictures, and highlights of parish groups and activities. I am grateful to all the volunteers who have helped in the writing, producing, and mailing of each issue. True to its original intent, it continues to be published four times a year. I hope that all of you have enjoyed reading this quarterly parish newsletter and will continue to do so. Volunteers are always welcome to help continue this effort into the future.

Fr. John Chlebo

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FROM OUR FIRST ISSUE

“*The Belltower Beacon* is the official title of our St. Christopher newsletter. Our bell tower is our parish logo. Through sight and sound and in print, it beacons parishioners to participate in the life of the parish.

It’s a combination of ideas from Danny Joyce, sixth grader at SCS, Ann Edwards and Tom Pope, volunteers at the rectory.

Thanks to all 150 title contest entries submitted from the church, school and PSR students.”



FROM OUR 50TH ISSUE

“Having had a newsletter previously, in February 2001, St. Christopher was introduced to the revitalized parish newsletter. Initially nameless, it came as a direct result of a survey wherein parishioners expressed an interest in knowing more about the events and accomplishments of those around us. Under the spiritual guidance of Bishop Anthony Pilla and his vision for a Vibrant Parish Life, our parish embarked on a journey of renewed faith in Christ. With full participation from our parish family, the newsletter came to be known as it is today. The name reminds us of the meaning of our beautiful church bells as they call us to worship.”



A WARM WELCOME TO JULIA RUTKOWSKI



Coming to us with a wealth of financial, business and leadership experience, Julia Rutkowski recently joined our parish staff as business manager. For several years, she has worked for churches within the Cleveland Catholic Diocese. Prior to joining the Diocese, her professional journey took her to various businesses within the greater Cleveland area. In addition to a strong background in wealth management, financial advising, and portfolio

oversight, she also has expertise in business and operations management. Her skills and strengths include effective communication, problem solving, analytical thinking, vendor management, budget preparation, implementing policy and procedure, and overseeing contract negotiations. In addition, she has experience in being a relationship manager wherein she advised clients on how to invest available resources and plan for the future. Needless to say, Julia is a tremendous asset to our parish and we are fortunate to have her on board. She is grateful for the opportunity and says she is happy to be here. She appreciates the welcome she has already received from her new coworkers and the parishioners.

Receiving a degree in business administration from Baldwin Wallace College, Julia has additional training and experience in information technology and software programs. Julia's work history includes holding a variety of positions at Key Bank National Association for 15 years. Some of her positions at Key Bank were in the areas of community development, small business banking and financial advising. She worked closely with clients in private banking, investments, and estate planning. She also monitored construction and rehabilitation projects. She is confident that she can apply her knowledge to organizing the financial matters of a church the size of St. Christopher. She looks forward to becoming acclimated, organized and familiar with our budgetary system, our school and the many programs that are offered here. Julia left Key Bank to explore other options and to take care of her mom (now deceased). Being a lifelong Catholic, she eventually felt called to leave the private sector for a Catholic church setting. In 2022, she became the Business and Operations Manager at Holy Spirit Parish in Avon Lake. She found that a church environment fit her professional, personal and spiritual needs. According to Fr. Strebler, pastor of Holy Spirit, Julia was "a clear choice, another fine addition" who fit in well with their "competent and fun staff. They work well together."

Julia's father, Joe Rutkowski, died when she was a child. She grew up in Lakewood and is a lifelong member of St. James Parish. She attended grade school at St. James and as an adult became actively involved in serving as Eucharistic Minister and lector. Julia comes from a small family and was particularly close to her mother, Martina (Marty). She is forever grateful that she had the privilege of taking care of her mom before she died. Her mom was always Julia's greatest fan and encourager. Although spoiling her nephews was her favorite pastime, Julia loves to design and create stained glass and fused glass art. She makes aprons for her own personal use. She also enjoys walking and gardening.

Julia has enjoyed visiting other church services in the area like St. Christopher, whose weekday Mass time was convenient for her. She always found our priests and parishioners to be friendly and the homilies to be uplifting. When she found the opportunity to join the parish staff here, she pursued it. After meeting Fr. John and the leadership team, she knew this was the right place for her. She appreciates Fr. John's patience in teaching, guiding and mentoring her. She states that he makes her transition more palpable by being approachable, available and flexible. Julia looks forward to meeting the people of St. Christopher. She hopes to be a valuable resource in supporting the efforts of parishioners, staff members, lay ministers and volunteers.

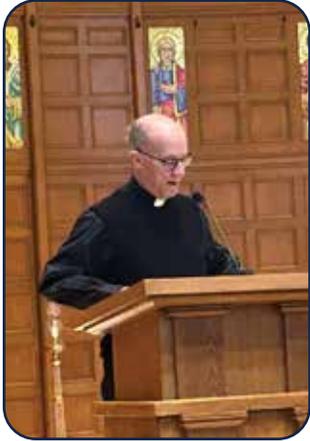
After a long, successful career in the financial industry, Julia states that she is "sincerely happy to be at St. Chris." In her own words, "happiness is worth more than money." The next time you visit St. Christopher, please make it a point to meet, greet and welcome Julia to our faith community.

Carmen Everett DeHaan

AETERNUM CHAMBER CHOIR

Aeternum Chamber Choir is a group of professional singers based in Northeast Ohio dedicated to sacred and religious choral music. Led by James Flood, the group will sing at the 5 p.m. Mass on Saturday, March 14. You can hear a sample of their performance on YouTube (<http://www.youtube.com/@AeternumChamberChoir>).

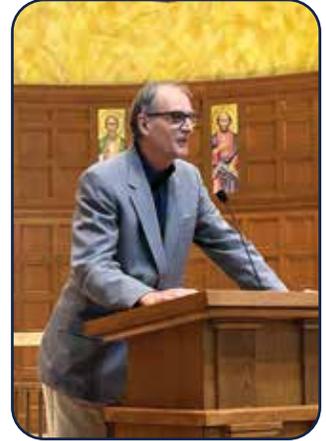
Mayumi Naramura



PIPE ORGAN REDEDICATION

The updated organ was rededicated on Friday, November 21 with prayers and music. The celebration coincided with the Feast Day of St. Cecilia, the patron saint of music (November 22). Fr. John opened with a prayer of thanksgiving over the successful completions of the project, followed by remarks from the organ builder, James Leek. The evening also featured organ and vocal music by Theresa Kloos (soprano), Mayumi Naramura (organ) and the Parish Choir.

Mayumi Naramura



CONFIRMATION

Please pray for our Confirmation candidates as we complete our preparation. Service Saturday is coming up February 21 for our 65 students. We will be heading out to various agencies on the westside of Cleveland. We will also be spending the day on Retreat on March 21, ending with the 5 p.m. Mass if you would like to join us to show support for our candidates. Thank you parents for your example and support.

Sharon Armstrong

VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL: SAVE THE DATE

VBS will be June 15-19 joining with Rocky River Presbyterian Church to bring our community a week of songs, crafts, and Bible stories.

We also need adults and teens to help with the 100+ campers who sign up for our wonderful program.

Registration will be available in March on our website.

Sharon Armstrong

FIRST EUCHARIST

Please pray for our First Communion class. The students are very excited to meet Jesus in the Eucharist. Their final preparation is Jesus Day on April 17 and 18. We will be celebrating communions on May 2, 9, 10, 16 and 17 during all the weekend Masses. Join us to at these special celebrations to rejoice with our young people.

Sharon Armstrong

DIOCESAN CAPITAL CAMPAIGN

Over the next few months, the Diocese of Cleveland will be conducting a Capital Campaign throughout the parishes of the diocese. Entitled *Called to Flourish, Our Church for the Future*, this effort is seeking a goal of \$200 million to support four strategic priorities: **Parishes – Worship – Evangelization – Service.**

St. Christopher Parish is one of 10 pilot parishes in the diocese who have begun the quiet phase of the campaign. Our parish goal is \$1,565,000. We will receive 50% of that total which equals \$782,500. If we surpass our goal, we will receive 80% of anything over our goal of \$1,565,000.

The money we receive will be used to replace roofs on our buildings as the need arises. Most of the roofs were new or replaced when we built the Parish Center 25 years ago. A current rough estimate is \$800,000. The 2026-2027 school year will be the 100th anniversary of our day school. There are some updates that we are considering making in the coming year as we continue to care for our school building and its changing needs. Another suggestion that I have received is to replace our church pews and kneelers with new ones. They are the original and were refurbished 18 years ago.

These are some of the needs I see or have had suggested to me. There will be more updates and information as the campaign moves forward in the next few months. I wanted to take this opportunity to let you know in advance. I appreciate your prayerful consideration and look forward to sharing more details in the weeks ahead.

Fr. John Chlebo

A MESSAGE FROM THE KUSHNYR FAMILY AND ST. CHRISTOPHER UKRAINE WELCOME CIRCLE



As Aniela excitedly awaits her 4th birthday this April, the Kushnyr family will also celebrate the start of their fourth year in the United States. In the past three years, all family members have made significant progress in their language skills and educational achievements. Our Ukraine Welcome Circle (UWC) continues to assist the family in making their adjustment to American life while encouraging them to become independent and self-sufficient. Dmytro and Valeriia have demonstrated

their ability to adjust to a drastically different lifestyle here. The children, Aniela and Dariush, have excelled in their respective schools (preschool and grade 4) and make friends easily. They have the great advantage of learning a new language at a young age. This affords them the opportunity to make friends and develop their social skills. Meanwhile, their parents continue to improve their English through tutoring and practice. They are both gainfully employed, exploring Northeast Ohio, and socializing.

Members of the Ukraine Welcome Circle maintain frequent contact with the family and visit often, especially on holidays. They continue to admire the family's courage, determination and resilience. At the same time, the Kushnyrs have explored and supported the Ukrainian businesses in their area. They appreciate that their favorite ethnic foods and bakery items are available in close proximity to their Parma home. They are also in regular contact with their Ukrainian family members, especially their parents. The children are able to video chat with their grandmothers (whom they call Granny or Babushka in Russian). Early on, some of the Kushnyrs' parents and siblings relocated to Poland and Norway. A few have remained in their hometown of Soviarsk, Ukraine, a city which is "shelled" daily. Some family members have died there while the Kushnyrs have been here. For Dmytro and Valeriia, the ramifications of being tragically uprooted will forever be on their minds and in their hearts.

Dmytro and Valeriia have been diligent and unwavering in their commitment to being financially responsible for their family. Dariush continues to play on soccer teams at every opportunity and is happy that he can play year-round. Aniela, now in preschool, is no longer the timid little girl she was at first. She has become a very verbal (English only), funny and interactive young lady. In previous issues, Dmytro and Valeriia have shared their journey, their joy at being here, and their gratitude. Kind individuals, especially Fr. Tim Daw's unconditional acceptance, have left a lasting impression. Now speaking on behalf of the family, Dmytro and Valeriia add the following:

“Our family is very grateful to God that the St. Chris community came into our lives. For our family, this was a gift sent by God. Every day in America has been filled with social and educational events. We took college classes in a very different learning environment (at CCC), experienced the diversity of staff and met students from many different countries. We are grateful for all the hours and energy that Cheryl Williams (who works at CCC and lives in Rocky River) put into helping us enroll in classes, make our schedules, and with literally everything related to completing the program. Thanks to Cheryl, I (Dmytro) saw the completion of a computer course which can help with employment in the future. The challenges of studying in an educational system that is completely new to us and in a different language (and alphabet), as well as seeing even minimal progress, have all been unforgettable. We now have the skills and confidence necessary to move forward, no matter where life takes us in the future.”



The Kushnyrs hope that Northeast Ohio will remain their home for many years to come. The Kushnyrs expressed profound gratitude to Lora and George Blaha for their overall support in getting them to the U.S. They also give credit to Ron and Mary Joan Papacjik, who helped them every step of the way and with every word they spoke before being approved for travel to Ohio. The Kushnyrs describe the Papacjik’s help

as “doing the impossible and then becoming our daughter’s Godparents, something that is very important to us.” They are forever grateful to Dan Gauntner for teaching them to drive, taking them for their driver’s licenses and accompanying them on many appointments. They value the tutoring and translation assistance they continue to receive from UWC member Robert Jamieson, who is a fluent Russian language partner. Not only does he tutor the adults, but he also helps the children with reading and homework. They remember how Mary Ellen Grady, a retired nurse, took charge of all their medical needs and appointments, including transporting and/or meeting them there. The Kushnyrs express gratitude for the weekly help that Kim Kelly, school teacher, gave to Dariush as he attempted to learn English. Among the small army of parishioners and friends who stepped up to help, the family is grateful that Mike and Carmen DeHaan took

such an interest in the children by enrolling them in school and daycare, finding soccer programs for Dariush, and introducing him to fun activities. Dmytro and Valeriia explained: “We are grateful for the time they spent with Dariush, for taking him to establishments for children, so he could feel like a child again after his childhood was taken away by war.”



The Kushnyrs want parishioners to know how much their help has meant and continues to mean to them. From the very start, people whom they had never met before spent hours driving them around, babysitting the children, taking them shopping and welcoming them into their homes (Vince Hvizda, John Gannon, Lisa Boettcher, Tiffany Barker, Cindy Becker, to name a few). They end their comments by

adding: “The unexpected but interesting path we’re on was made possible thanks to Fr. Tim Daw, members of the Welcome Circle, and St. Christopher parishioners. Being in America during this time, we have come to realize that nothing is permanent and changes will come. To St. Christopher parish and all the people who helped us and continue to do so, from the very bottom of our hearts, we are infinitely grateful for everything.”

Carmen Everett DeHaan



CATHOLIC SCHOOLS WEEK – UNITED IN FAITH AND COMMUNITY



On Sunday, January 25, St. Christopher School joyfully opened Catholic Schools Week with the Celebration of Parish, a day rooted in gratitude and faith. At each weekend Mass, our Student Ambassadors spoke from the heart, sharing how blessed they feel to learn in a Catholic school where Christ is at the center of their days. They reflected on how their faith has grown through the steady support of parents, teachers, and classmates—an unmistakable reminder that God works through the people He places in our lives. The Ambassadors also expressed deep appreciation for belonging to a parish family that strives to follow Jesus, Our True North, in all things.

Despite the cold weather, the warmth of the community filled the building during our annual Open House. Student Ambassadors welcomed visitors with guided tours, proudly showcasing the spaces where they learn, pray, and grow. Guests admired the beautiful student artwork featured in the CSW Art Show, tested their creativity by building skyscrapers in the Makerspace, and learned fascinating rock facts when stopping into the middle school science room. Fellowship continued over donuts as alumni shared stories of their years at SCS—moments that highlighted how faith, learning, and community have shaped generations. It was a day that beautifully reflected the mission of Catholic education: to Empower the Mind, Nourish the Spirit, Care for Others All in Jesus' Name.

The annual talent show warmed the souls of all those in attendance. Our students lit up the stage with joy, courage, and God-given gifts. From music and dance to comedy and everything in between, each performance was a reminder of the creativity and confidence that grow in our Christ-centered school. We are always so proud of our Knights for sharing their talents and cheering one another on. What a beautiful celebration of faith, friendship, and the unique gifts God places in every child.

The tradition of Science Share is a school favorite during Catholic Schools Week. This year Science Share encompassed two days of

our Catholic Schools Week celebration. Science Share is a joyful, student-led learning experience where 7th and 8th graders step into the role of teachers. Over several weeks, our middle school students research a science topic of their choice, create a polished slide presentation, and design a hands-on, age-appropriate activity to teach younger learners. The heart of the project is simple: students learn best when they teach, and they grow even more when they do so in service to others. At its core, Science Share reflects our belief that knowledge is a gift from God, meant not to be hoarded but shared generously. When our older students guide younger ones, they model the Gospel call to serve with humility and joy. They become living examples of 1 Peter 4:10: "As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another."

SCS concluded Catholic Schools Week with All School Bingo. All-School Bingo is one of those simple, joy-filled traditions that quietly does something profound: it knits our community together in faith. Older and younger students sit side by side, helping one another find numbers, celebrating wins, and laughing through the near-misses. In those shared moments, the age gaps fade and what remains is a sense of belonging rooted in Christ's call to love our neighbor. The game becomes more than a game—it becomes a living reminder that we are one body, many parts, learning to support, encourage, and delight in one another as a family of faith.



St. Christopher School truly embraced this year's Catholic Schools Week theme, "Catholic Schools: United in Faith and Community." Every moment—from student testimonies at Mass to the warmth shared during Open House—reflected a school family rooted in Christ and committed to one another. The joy of learning, the pride in our traditions, and the spirit of service woven throughout the week showed what it means to be united not only as a school, but as a community of faith. In celebrating together, we were reminded that our strength comes from walking side by side, guided by Jesus, and dedicated to forming hearts and minds for God's greater glory.

Mary Meler



PRAYER SHAWL MINISTRY

We are excited about launching our new Prayer Shawl Ministry this year! We had an amazing response of 24 attendees at our informational meetings held on January 14. At these meetings, we decided on the details for this ministry.

Meetings will be held on the first Wednesday of each month in the Prayer Room starting February 4 at 11:30 a.m. or 6:30 p.m. to create crocheted, knitted or fleece tied lap blankets/shawls for those who are homebound, experiencing illness or grief. Donated materials will be used to create these finished items and blessed at designated times throughout the year. These will be stored, tracked, and distributed to those in need of them. We also determined additional ways to support this ministry with donations including:

- Lap blankets or shawls created at home with recommended sizes (3' x 4' or 2' x 5').
- Full skeins of acrylic yarn including the label.
- Monetary donations to purchase additional materials including fleece material, yarn & cloth tags.

For questions or more information, contact Marianne Brooks (mbrooks@stchrisparish.com) or Sharon Armstrong (sarmstrong@stchrisparish.com).

Marianne Brooks

LITURGICAL MINISTERS RETREAT

Our Liturgical Ministers (EM's, Lectors, Hospitality/Ushers, Funeral Servers, Cantors, and Choir Members) participated in a one-day retreat on Saturday, February 7 to reflect on Bishop Malesic's Pastoral Letter, "A Flourishing Apostolic Church." The areas of focus from the letter included worship, evangelization, and service. The format started with an ice breaker to facilitate introductions followed by a presentation and small group discussion for each focus area. Pastoral Associate, Marianne Brooks along with Fr. Lito and Deacon Mike led the presentations and discussions. The day closed with Mass at 5 p.m. where the participants had the opportunity to renew their commitment to serving as Liturgical Ministers.

We had an amazing response with 43 total participants. The overall feedback was very positive as indicated both verbally and on the evaluation forms. There were 15 people who indicated that they would be interested in joining a small faith sharing group to continue discussing the Bishop's Letter. Here are a few testimonials to showcase the positive feedback:

"You provided a comfortable space, a lovely lunch, your timing was good – a good mix of presentation, reflection and small group discussion."

"Fr. Lito was concise and easy to follow. He made excellent points which stayed with me. Marianne was well prepared and easy to understand. Mike's reflection was moving, he illustrated our actions as the work of the face of God."

In addition to offering retreats like this, Bishop Malesic encourages opportunities for small group faith sharing. The participants were asked to join a follow-up small group to discuss more of this Pastoral Letter. We are also working to offer another retreat in the fall, details coming soon.

Marianne Brooks



THE WEEK OF PRAYER FOR CHRISTIAN UNITY

On January 22, during the *Week of Prayer for Christian Unity*, clergy from multiple Christian Denominations participated in an Ecumenical prayer service that was hosted here at St. Christopher. As many know I also serve the diocese as the Bishop’s Delegate for Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations. This is a new effort in our local community and I’m grateful to Fr. John, Colleen, and Mayumi for assisting me on short notice.

Other clergy representing included the Rev. Dr. Laura Barbins, the bishop of Northeastern Ohio Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America; Rev. Barry Chance, general presbyter and stated clerk, Eastminster Presbytery; Rev. Rosalind Hughes, canon for Beloved Community, Episcopal Diocese of Ohio; Dr. Stephen Knisely, pastor, United Methodist Church of Berea; Rev. Dr. Elena Larssen, Transitional Association general minister, Living Water Association of the United Church of Christ; and Ruling Elder Judy Mitchell, stated clerk and acting head of staff, Presbytery of the Western Reserve.

Mayumi Naramura, our St. Christopher music ministry director, along with Laura Avdey provided lovely music for the service.

I was invited to preach for the event. I invited those present to consider how little we all pray together as Christians and how isolation often breeds

fear, and fear breeds contempt and hatred and often leads to violence.

But I also noted that the Ecumenical spirit is alive and well in our area, not only in our attending to prayer together this night, but in our common work together in hospitals, prisons, refugee resettlement and standing up for justice for migrants and others. I also reached back into history to the story of the Four Chaplains from World War II who served on the *Dorchester*, a transport ship that was torpedoed and sunk. These chaplains, a Dutch reformed cleric, a Methodist minister, a Jewish rabbi and a Catholic priest offered their own life jackets when supply ran short, linked arms and prayed together, not for their own lives, but rather for the rescue of those floating in the waters on lifeboats and with life jackets on. They did not let their own religious differences get in the way of offering their own lives for the sake of others.

As a new effort among Christians, we have noted the need for more collaboration and each year in mid-January the *Week for Christian Unity* takes place and leadership is rotated among other Christians. The Episcopalian Church in Bay Village will host next year’s affair and we’ll be sure to give you early notice on attending.

Deacon Mike Hayes



LADIES GUILD UPDATE

Bishop Malesic says: “Small faith-related groups allow us to recognize what is universally true about our Catholic faith in our particular situations. They allow us to share our faith with others in more personal, often more meaningful ways. They allow us to share our stories with each other.” The Ladies Guild is gathering in prayer and fellowship this Lent to more deeply enter the central mystery of our faith. On February 26, the Guild hosted a Lenten Tai Chi led by parishioner Mary Holtz. The gentle movement and breath work of Tai Chi are conducive to calming the mind to listen for the quiet voice of God during our Lenten journey. On March 24 at 7 p.m. in the church, the Guild will pray “Mary’s Way of the Cross.” This powerful version of the stations of the cross by Richard Furey attempts to present Mary’s viewpoint as she witnessed that first Way of the Cross. All are welcome. Celebrating the Easter season and the joy of the resurrection, the Guild will gather April 19 at 11:30 for a Mass of thanksgiving for the living and deceased members of the Ladies Guild. Coffee and muffins will be served afterwards in the Gathering Area.

Nancy Sullivan

2025 G.I.F.T. PROGRAM: A SHARING OF CHRIST'S LOVE

Thanks to St. Christopher parishioners, the true spirit of Christmas came alive once again this December! The G.I.F.T. program (Giving in Faith Together) is one of our parish's most meaningful outreach efforts orchestrated by the Social Outreach Committee.

This year the program supported 15 Northeast Ohio agencies who provide social services and assistance in our neighborhoods. Parishioners generously donated more than 850 gifts plus \$6,800 in gift cards and cash to support families and individuals who needed extra care during the Christmas season.

The G.I.F.T. program began November 22, 2025 with 1,050 gift tags placed at all entrances to the church. Each tag resembled a "wish list" from the agency, requesting items to support their missions. These 15 social service agencies provide many different services, including safe places to live, support for families in crisis, pregnancy support, drug and alcohol recovery, education, clothing, transportation, household goods, meals, and toys at Christmas.

What makes the G.I.F.T. program so special is that it connects parishioners directly to the needs of local agencies. We received several thank-you notes, including the following kind words:

"Because of your donations, we are able to continue providing comprehensive, life changing care for women recovering from alcoholism and other addictions." – Edna House

"Thank you so much for your generous gifts for our babies and children." – Providence House

"You have given our families a wonderful Christmas filled with amazing holiday cheer." – Students and families from Metro Catholic

"Your kindness reflects Christ's love and brings joy and comfort to our House of Champions." – Sr. Mary Kay, House of Champions

Along with the committee, many staff members work behind the scenes to make this program a success, starting with planning in the spring and continuing through gift delivery. The pickup day, Sunday, December 14, was very cold but ran smoothly thanks to the helping hands of our adult volunteers and 15 teens from our Confirmation Program. All gifts were separated by agency in preparation for each agency's arrival in the early afternoon. Adults greeted representatives from 10 of the agencies and our energetic teens loaded their cars—a well-oiled machine! Between that Sunday and the following Tuesday, we delivered 18 carloads of gifts.

A special thanks to John Yakim, St. Chris's facilities supervisor, and the four social outreach volunteers who helped make deliveries and pickups happen on Monday and Tuesday.

St. Christopher Parish provided a wealth of happiness and good cheer this Christmas, and there are many outreach programs we offer throughout the year. Check them out and volunteer to keep the Spirit of Christmas alive all year long. Thank you for making the 2025 G.I.F.T. program an enormous success!

Mary Ann Jurak



COMMUNICATIONS COORDINATOR

St. Christopher Parish is a vibrant and active parish with many ministries, each doing meaningful work in our parish and community. One of the best ways to support that work is to make sure that parishioners know what's happening and how they can get involved. That's where Colleen McKenna, our Communications Coordinator, can help.

Colleen manages the parish, school, and religious education websites, keeping them up to date with accurate information about ongoing and upcoming events. When your ministry has something to share, she can help make sure it reaches the right audience in a clear and timely way.

In addition to the websites, Colleen develops and maintains content for electronic monitors in the Upper and Lower Gathering Areas and School Lobby as well as the digital sign that faces Detroit Road. These displays are an effective way to promote events, share reminders, and increase visibility for ministry efforts. She also handles posting relevant and timely information for parish social media platforms.

Colleen works along with other pastoral staff and parish ministries to support project and event planning, coordinating communication from the earliest planning stages through the event itself. Reaching out to Colleen early helps ensure clear, consistent messaging across all platforms, including the bulletin, email, social media, and electronic monitors.

Parish ministries are encouraged to connect with Colleen when planning events, launching new programs, or sharing important updates. By working together, we can make sure the good work happening at St. Christopher Parish is clearly communicated and well supported by our parish community.

Parishioners who need help with the parish website or the St. Christopher app can contact Colleen at cmckenna@stchrisparish.com. She can help with logging in, resetting passwords, and registering for events.

Colleen McKenna

G.I.F.T. Program



ST. COLMAN COMMUNITY MEALS

The support for the St. Colman community meals started strong in 2026! We had our first sponsored meal of the year take place on January 24. We purchased the main food items from GFS using your monetary donations. The menu for this meal included Salisbury steak, macaroni & cheese, mixed vegetables and fruit cups. They also enjoyed your donated cookies for dessert.

Thanks to all of our volunteers, especially our students: Olivia de Groh, Laney Hurtuk, Amelia Krems, Liam Monahan. They assisted to set tables, provide raffles tickets for the guests, plate cookies, and serve the meals.

Your continued support is greatly appreciated. We are sponsoring eight additional meals this year on the following dates: February 21, March 21, April 18, May 16, July 18, August 22, September 19, and November 14.

For questions or additional information, please contact Marianne Brooks (mbrooks@stchrisparish.com).

Marianne Brooks



IN MEMORIAM

We fondly remember beloved teacher Miss Millie Bobofchak who passed away on December 26, 2025. Millie devoted 27 years to teaching our second-grade students in Room 2A. Her life's work was shaping young minds and instilling Catholic values in our children every day in her classroom, especially as they prepared for the sacrament of First Holy Communion. For years after she retired from the classroom, Millie stayed involved in the parish by helping with the first Youth Group which had been formed in the early 1980s. Millie was one of the adult leaders, and she helped lead prayerful discussions at the Sunday night meetings, as well as chaperone on the retreat weekends. Millie kept in touch with former students, colleagues and friends via Facebook in her later years.

Her former students will always remember "Miss B" through unique, engaging lessons and for creating a warm, welcoming classroom atmosphere. Good behavior was rewarded by the thrill of selecting a prize from her classroom "treasure chest." Miss Bobofchak taught more than just reading and writing; she taught her students how to be kind, brave, and curious. Her patience made the classroom a safe harbor, and her laughter turned mistakes into lessons. Years later, we all still remember the joy she brought to learning. Millie was not just a teacher; she was a guiding light. Thank you, Millie, for always loving and believing in our second graders!

Lori Alexander

THANKSGIVING FOOD DRIVE

Once again this year the St. Christopher community was very generous in supporting the Thanksgiving Food Drive sponsored by the Social Outreach Committee. It was heartening to see all the food in the Gathering Area the weekend before Thanksgiving. Five carloads drove the food to Community Corners which serves the people in the St. Colman and St. Patrick area. The staff met us with big smiles and open arms. Thanks to all of you for making this happen.

Mary Haggard



Advent Family Night



“SNOWING DOWN BLESSINGS”

Our recent cold winter has failed to chill the spirit of the St. Christopher Youth Ministry! We hosted our Advent prayer service, a discussion on the themes of our parish Advent book, “Slowing Down to the Speed of Joy” and our Christmas parties in December. January was impacted by heavy snowfall but explored topics of “fairness” and multiple prayer nights with our high schoolers. February featured karaoke night with Fr. Lito (a massive hit!) and an 8th grade girls retreat in Wooster. This retreat, titled “I AM,” explores the beauty of God uniquely present within us and the dynamic relationship each believer has with God. Our young women enjoyed a private Mass with Fr. Lito, an escape

room experience, and a powerful letter-reading activity. Retreat experiences such as these are supported by the generous donations our youth ministry received during the 2023 #WeGiveCatholic campaign.

The abundance of cold weather has given Logan the opportunity to assemble many of the furnishings in the new St. Carlo Acutis Youth Room. A detailed look at this new space will be published in the next issue of the Belltower Beacon as the final touches are made to this new space. We look forward to sharing it with all of you!

Logan Feldkamp



SOUP SUPPER TO BENEFIT TYPHOON RECOVERY EFFORT

This year’s Soup Supper will feature Fr. Lito’s presentation on the need in his diocese following the very powerful typhoons last fall. The funds raised by this event and the accompanying basket raffle will benefit Balay sa Kabus (House of the Poor), a program in Fr. Lito’s diocese that is helping families recover from the long-term damage caused by these storms. The program’s special focus is housing for very low income families, especially those with elderly, pregnant or disabled members. The Soup Supper is March 8 at 5 p.m. in the Parish Center, with tickets for both the supper and the basket raffle sold at the event and after Masses on March 1, 7 and 8. Donations are accepted.

Jeanette Nappier

CHURCH CHATTER

BIRTHDAY WISHES

Birthday wishes go out to PSR secretary **Marilu Norena** (March 9), **Fr. Lito Clemen** (March 20), **Sr. Jeanne Cmolik** (April 30), school secretary **Judy Zell** (May 9), Pastoral Associate **Gayle Cilimburg** (May 14), **Fr. John Chlebo** (May 17), and facilities supervisor, **John Yakim** (May 22). Send them your best wishes on their special day!

VOLUNTEER OF THE MONTH

The Rocky River Senior Center honored **Ann McCauley** as February's Volunteer of the Month. She has volunteered at the Center for 12 years and worked there for 15 years prior! Ann is an avid reader, often finishing 10 books a month; historical fiction is a favorite genre. She and her husband, Lee, have been St. Christopher parishioners for 50+ years. Both of their children, as well as their two granddaughters are graduates of St. Christopher School.

ST. PATRICK'S DAY

We all know that St. Patrick's Day is widely celebrated in the Cleveland area, but did you know that the parade is celebrating its 184th anniversary this year? Or, that it is the fifth largest St. Patrick's Day parade in the U.S., attracting up to 500,000 people? Or, that this year will include 10,000 participants in 125 units? St. Christopher has a personal connection this year, as **John Togher** is the Executive Director of the parade, serving in his final three-year term. He has attended the parade for over 50 years! John has been a parishioner for 30+ years and has served as an usher for 25+ years. He and his wife, Karyn, are the proud parents of three St. Christopher School graduates; two of whom went to St. Ignatius High School and one to Magnificat High School.



Parishioner, **Tom Mackin**, is the Grand Marshal this year. This honorary title is given to a person who has significantly contributed to the advancement of Irish activities in Cleveland. As part of the West Side Irish American Club, he has walked in the parade since he was a child. Tom has served as the Executive Director of the United Irish Societies of Greater Cleveland, which organizes the parade; he is now Director Emeritus. Tom and his wife, Bridget (a lifelong parishioner), were married at St. Christopher in 1983, making Tom a parishioner for 40+ years. Tom serves as a Eucharistic Minister and has also helped as an usher when needed. He and his wife, Bridget, have seven children, all of whom graduated

from St. Christopher School. Congratulations, John and Tom, for your dedication in promoting our area's Irish heritage. See you at the St. Patrick's Day Parade on Tuesday, March 17, starting a 1 p.m. on East 18th Street and Superior Avenue. *Erin go Bragh!*

WHERE ARE THEY NOW

It was just a year ago that the St. Christopher community welcomed **Fr. Jim Sichko**, a Papal Missionary of Mercy based in Lexington, KY, to lead a parish mission. For those of you who attended, you recall his vitality and inspiration radiating in the standing room only church. Fr. Jim is still spreading the Good News. On New Year's Eve day, he donned an apron and a name tag and paid for people's groceries in flood-stricken Isom, KY, an unincorporated Appalachian village. That area of Kentucky is still picking up the pieces and recovering from a devastating flood three years ago. If you remember Fr. Jim's inspiring words, please put them into action by doing a random act of kindness. On March 7-9, 2027 we look forward to seeing him in person here at St. Christopher for another Lenten retreat!

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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UPCOMING EVENTS

March 1	PRE-CANA DAY	March 20	LAMENT STATIONS OF THE CROSS
March 4, April 1, May 6	PRAYER SHAWL MINISTRY	March 21	CONFIRMATION RETREAT
March 5	FIRST COMMUNION PARENT MEETING	March 24	MARY'S WAY OF THE CROSS
March 5, 12, 19, 26		April 1	SCHOOL LIVING STATIONS OF THE CROSS
April 2, 9, 16, 23, 30		April 17	SCHOOL JESUS DAY FIRST COMMUNION
May 7, 14	WALKING WITH PURPOSE	April 18	PSR JESUS DAY FIRST COMMUNION
March 6, May 1	EUCCHARISTIC ADORATION	April 25	FATHER-SON EVENT
March 6, 13, 27, April 3	FAMILY STATIONS OF THE CROSS	May 2, 9, 10, 16, 17	FIRST COMMUNIONS AT MASS
March 7	CUB SCOUT PINEWOOD DERBY	May 6	CONFIRMATION
March 8	LENTEN SOUP SUPPER	May 17	PRE-BAPTISM CLASS
March 11, 25		May 29	8TH GRADE GRADUATION
April 8, 22, May 13, 27	MORNINGS WITH THE WORD		
March 13	FATHER-DAUGHTER EVENT		

HOLY WEEK SCHEDULE

Palm Sunday, March 29	Regular Weekend Mass Schedule	Holy Saturday, April 4	Food Blessing 3 p.m.
Wednesday, April 1	Confessions 7-8 p.m.	Holy Saturday, April 4	Easter Vigil 8:30 p.m.*
Holy Thursday, April 2	Mass of the Lord's Supper 7 p.m.*	Easter Sunday, April 5	Masses at 8:30 a.m.* in Church, 10 a.m. in Church and Parish Center & 11:30 a.m. in Church
Good Friday, April 3	The Passion of the Lord 3 p.m.*		
Good Friday, April 3	Stations of the Cross Noon (outdoors, weather permitting) and 7 p.m. in Church		

* Also livestreamed