

Ascension

CATHOLIC CHURCH

Meet BriAnna Wanner and Family

Engaged Together in Faith, Service and Community

For BriAnna Wanner, attending Mass every Sunday has been a steadfast practice for life.

"It is the only thing that hasn't changed," she says.

Having moved from small-town life in northwest Minnesota to college life at the University of North Dakota, BriAnna's whole world changed. But her faith helped keep her feet on the ground, so to speak.

"The place that I felt at home was at the Newman Center on campus," BriAnna says. "This is where I met so many lifetime friends, including my husband, Kyle. The friends from the Newman Center not only were fun and amazing, but they also challenged me in my faith life and made me a better person. Many of these friends are now priests and religious, including Fr. Greg Luger, with whom I shared a holy hour for many weeks at the Newman Center."

BriAnna and Kyle were married at St. Michael's in Grand Forks in 2010. In 2011, Kyle began working with the North Dakota Aeronautics Commission, ultimately moving the couple to Bismarck.

"As a Registered Dietitian, I initially got a job with a nursing home, then the ND Department of Health, and now have started my own private practice, Blue Nutrition," BriAnna says. "We purchased our house in south Bismarck 10 years ago and now have five children — James, Andrew, Felicity, Jacinta, and Luke."

Growing up with her parents and four older brothers, the Catholic faith was a regular part of family life for BriAnna. Always attending Sunday Mass at 8 a.m., BriAnna and her brothers took turns picking where to sit at Mass. One Sunday, her brother picked the front pew and despite the busyness of five kids, the family sat in the front from that point forward.



BriAnna Wanner and her family are active members of our parish community.

continued on back cover

FEBRUARY 2023

Inside

- 2 Stewardship at Our Christmas Eve Dinner/
Upcoming Events
- 3 A Letter from our Pastor
- 4 Join Us for Lenten Fish Frys
A Favorite Community Tradition, Set to Begin this Month
- 5 Financial Report
- 6 Growing in Relationship with Christ By
JOE SCHON, Seminarian
- 7 Marriage Sponsor Couples:
Facilitating Lifelong Vocations in the Sacrament of Matrimony

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Stewardship at Our Christmas Eve Dinner

We extend our gratitude to all those who served and assisted at our Christmas Eve Dinner this past December.



Upcoming Events

Thursday, February 2 — Circle of Friends lunch at Lucky's 13, 11:30 a.m.

Friday, February 3 — First Friday Fellowship following 8 a.m. Mass in Community Room

Wednesday, February 8 — Ladies of Ascension Meeting at 8:30 a.m. in Community Room

Saturday, February 11 — St. Valentine's Day Party/ Dance from 5:30-7:30 p.m. in Community Room

Monday, February 13 — Knights of Columbus Dinner and Meeting at 6:30 p.m. in Community Room

Ash Wednesday, February 22 — Mass Times at 8 a.m., 5 p.m., 7 p.m.

Friday, February 24 — Stations of the Cross at 5:30 p.m.

Friday, February 24 — KC Fish Fry, 5-7 p.m. in Parish Center

Sign up for our Adult Lenten Program, *Presence: The Mystery of the Eucharist*. This is a five-week program on Thursday morning and evenings beginning on Thursday, March 2. More information at www.ascensionbismarck.org.

A Letter from our Pastor

The Word of God:

Hearing It and Responding to It

Dear Parishioners,

A few short weeks ago, we completed our Christmas season. We are now in what we call Ordinary Time – but as the month of February winds down, we will begin Lent with Ash Wednesday on Feb. 22.

The Gospel of John begins with the statement, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” We speak often of the Word in the Church. As most of you are aware, the first part of our Mass is called the Liturgy of the Word. What does that mean to us?

Basically, there are four parts of our celebration of Mass: Introductory Rites; Liturgy of the Word; Liturgy of the Eucharist; and Concluding Rites. My focus in this reflection is that second part – the Liturgy of the Word. The main parts of that are a First Reading, a Responsorial Psalm, a Second Reading, the Gospel, and a Homily.

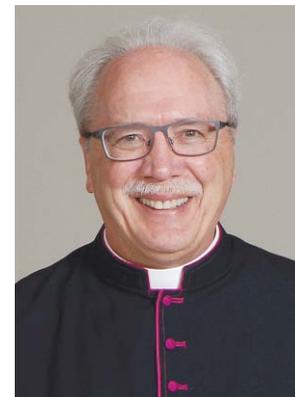
We draw on Holy Scripture from the Bible for the readings. As Catholics, we do not consider that these readings are about God, or about the Church, or about our faith, or a history lesson, or a nice story from long ago. We consider them to be God speaking directly to us. Thus, our attentiveness to what is being proclaimed is important. Are we listening? Do we hear? And then, do we respond in our lives? All of those should be facets of how we approach the Word of God.

For us, the Word of God is the living Word. God is speaking to us as a community, and He asks us to be faithful to His Word. If we pay attention and truly listen, God can nourish our spirit, and Christ can be more real and present to us. The Homily, the Responsorial Psalm, the Profession of Faith, and the Intercessions develop the Word further and complete it. The Profession of Faith is our acceptance of God’s Word.

However, the question for us is, how do we respond to the Word? Does it change our lives? Does it bring us to the conversion necessary to live lives of stewardship and service? It is not easy, I know. Being able to listen, to hear and then to act requires time, practice, commitment, and a desire to fulfill all of this. That is one of my prayers for us – that we can hear the Word, and that we can bring it to life in our own lives and in the lives of others.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Msgr. Jim Braaten
Pastor



Ascension

CATHOLIC CHURCH

JOIN US FOR LENTEN FISH FRY

A Favorite Community Tradition, Set to Begin this Month

Since last November, our Knights of Columbus Council 7602 has been preparing to offer once again the Friday Lenten Fish Frys, set to begin on February 24 in the church Community Room. Everyone is welcome to partake in a delicious fish dinner from 5-7 p.m. each Lenten Friday in what has been an Ascension Parish tradition for over 20 years.

Grand Knight Jeff Simek invites us to enjoy a dinner that offers baked breaded cod, a vegetable, salad, coffee and juice, and desserts homemade by the Ladies of Ascension. The dinner also will include soup that will rotate through each Friday with beer cheese soup, potato soup, and tomato soup. All the food is prepared by the Knights. Carryout meals are available.

"The fish is not a traditional baked fish because it's breaded," Jeff says. "It's nice in that it's not greasy. The desserts are all homemade, and are a variety, from cookies to bars, and cupcakes."

The proceeds from the dinners enable the Knights to provide financial help to our Faith Formation program, as well as to our seminarians and other church activities.

When the council meets on Feb. 14, the members will have an opportunity to sample all of the menu items. By this time, the Knights will be ready to begin their work.

Besides helping to raise funds for these activities, the fish frys offer a benefit to all those enjoying the meals.

"Here in North Dakota, Lent is normally in the winter, and we've all been closed up," Jeff says. "By our offering a meal on Fridays, we can get together outside of Mass and socialize. It also provides an opportunity for those attending the Stations of the Cross held at 5:30 p.m. in the church to come to dinner afterward."

Notices for the fish frys have been posted on the

parish website, as well as in the weekly bulletins.

"We're not the only Knights of Columbus Council offering fish frys," Jeff says. "Corpus Christi Parish does it, and the Spirit of Life in Mandan, as well as a couple others. So people can have a variety if they wish."

Parishioners are welcome to help and serve with the fish fry.

"We do have our Confirmation students helping, and students from St. Mary High School and the Shiloh Christian School," Jeff says. "The students help as part of their community service hours. They clear tables, as well as other tasks."

"I want to thank the parish and community for their support, and helping us over the years," he adds.



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For more information about the upcoming Fish Frys, or if you would like to help, contact Jeff Simek at 701-426-4766.

CHURCH OF THE ASCENSION SEMI-ANNUAL FINANCIAL REPORT

JULY 1, 2022-DECEMBER 31, 2022

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION

Assets

Cash in Bank	\$ 79,689.56
Savings-Expansion Fund	984,900.29
Investment-Catholic Foundation	21,158.44
Pre-paid Expense	239.69

Liabilities

Accounts Payable	\$ <u>3,332.93</u>
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TOTAL NET ASSETS **\$ 1,082,655.05**

For where your
Treasure is,
there will your
Heart
be also.
~Matthew 6:21

STATEMENT OF ACTIVITIES

Operating Income

Sunday Contributions	\$ 435,387.33
BACEF (Bis. Area Catholic Ed. Fnd)	12,907.00
Interest Income	12,413.64
Faith Formation Income	11,226.00
Special Donations	8,434.00
Parish Events	4,170.00
Diocese Stipend	3,000.00
Votive Candles	2,904.71
Mineral Rights Revenue	2,835.64
Flower/Environ. Donations	<u>1,513.00</u>

TOTAL OPERATING INCOME **\$ 494,791.32**

Operating Expense

Payroll & Benefits (3 FT/6 PT)	\$ 180,001.17
Light of Christ School Subsidy	120,462.00
Office Operations	24,448.37
Property Insurance	23,485.00
Building/Grounds Operations	23,206.22
Stewardship	20,487.19
Liturgy & Outreach	10,630.41
Faith Formation	9,777.51
Parish Events	6,714.27
St. Mary's Cemetery Support	<u>3,000.00</u>

TOTAL OPERATING EXPENSE **\$ 422,212.14**

OPERATING INCOME—EXPENSE = 72,579.18

REPAIR & MAINTENANCE FUND REPORT

Beginning Balance	\$ 112,478.74
Contributions	26,014.00
Expenses	
HVAC Maintenance	3,853.50
New Trees	3,042.25
Strip & Wax Comm. Rm	2,510.00
Total Expense	<u>9,405.75</u>

ENDING BALANCE **\$ 129,086.99**

POOR FUND REPORT

Contributions	\$ 28,285.62
Held in Reserve	3,725.62
Local Distributions	
Ministry on the Margins	6,140.00
Society of St. Vincent dePaul	6,140.00
AID, Inc.	4,605.00
Meals on Wheels	4,605.00
Women's Care Center	3,070.00

TOTAL DISTRIBUTIONS **\$ 24,560.00**

Ascension

CATHOLIC CHURCH

Growing in Relationship with Christ

By JOE SCHON, Seminarian

Dear Parishioners,

I am once again back in Washington, D.C. for another semester at St. John Paul II Seminary. I cannot believe that I am already finishing my third year of formation as a seminarian. Time has passed very quickly!

I had a refreshing Christmas break in Bismarck. I was able to spend a lot of time with my family and friends. I visited with my fellow seminarians who do not go to SJPII seminary with me, and the seminarians also had a small party with the bishop and others who may be discerning joining the seminary in the future. As the weather got warmer after Christmas, I went cross-country skiing and ice fishing. It was also great to help serve Mass at the parish.

After I flew back to Washington, the seminary went on a five-day silent retreat in Pennsylvania. The previous rector of the seminary, Msgr. Panke, gave us a series of conferences over the retreat. It was a fantastic retreat for me and a time to reorientate myself to God's work in me. After the retreat, the seminarians went on an overnight excursion to a parish in the Archdiocese of Baltimore. We were able to learn about the history of the Carroll family,

who were a key part of the Catholic faith in the United States. As some may know, Charles Carroll was the only Catholic signer of the Declaration of Independence, and his cousin, Archbishop John Carroll, was the first bishop of the United States. We also were able to spend some time together during the excursion before the busyness of the academics started.

During the retreat, the Lord gave me many graces. One grace was to know of His special work in me and His (and my) desire to be a close friend. The conferences were centered on Jesus' friendship with those He calls. I spent a lot of time in Scripture with St. Peter and his friendship with our Lord. The Lord had me see into the mystery of His friendship with me. He is not some distant friend who always seems far away, nor is He an abstract friend only in my mind. Rather, He is human — He is a friend who is real and living. He is always working in me to be in relationship with Him. Jesus has increased my longing to be intimately united with Him, and He gave me the hope and excitement that my life with him will bear fruit. Know that you are in my prayers during this semester. God Bless.





Marriage Sponsor Couples: Facilitating Lifelong Vocations in the Sacrament of Matrimony

A simple invitation was all it took to start Bob and Paulette Heringer on a long-term devotion to supporting the vocation of marriage at Ascension. Deacon Tony Finneman asked them if they would be interested in becoming a marriage sponsor couple because he thought they would be good at it. Before the invitation, becoming a part of this ministry hadn't even crossed their minds.

"We have been married for 38 years," Paulette says. "We have four children and our 10th grandchild is due in February. Both Bob and I had been married previously and we started our marriage with each of us practicing different faiths. I guess that with these experiences, he figured that we would have some perspective that might be helpful while working with these engaged couples."

In our diocese, engaged couples must fulfill certain requirements before the wedding, including a marriage preparation weekend, NFP classes, and meeting with the sponsor couple from the parish. Sponsor couples are married couples in the parish who have attended a training session at the diocese. Typically, sponsor couples and engaged couples meet two times — during the first meeting, the engaged couple takes the FOCCUS Pre-Marriage Inventory, a questionnaire that each person answers separately that helps couples identify areas of strength or weakness within their relationship. It also helps open up discussions for important areas such as finances, faith, and family of origin. The sponsor couple sends the inventory off to be scored. Once they have received the results, they schedule a second visit with the engaged couple to discuss them.

"I think it is so interesting to see the results and facilitate those conversations," Paulette says. "We



Bob and Paulette Heringer

often see that there are things brought up that the couple maybe hadn't given much thought to. Sometimes it is things like sorting out holiday plans with each of their families. Sometimes it is more serious, such as how they will handle parenting with two different faith beliefs."

"We do see quite a few couples of different faiths," Bob says. "Since we began our own marriage that way until I converted, we have a unique perspective

that we can share with them. We can help to begin those conversations and give them some ideas or things to think about. Marriage is about sacrifice and give-and-take."

After the two meetings, the sponsor couple sends a letter to the priest giving him a summary of the results.

"We have really enjoyed getting to see these couples and help them to prepare for the vocation of marriage," Paulette says. "There is so much focus on the preparation for the actual wedding day. But that day comes and goes quickly, so preparing for the lifelong marriage is a very important part of marriage preparation."

"It is so important to have a good relationship with God going into the marriage," Bob says. "Through the ups and downs of life, having that foundation of faith is so crucial."

In the seven years that Bob and Paulette have been a marriage sponsor couple, they have enjoyed getting to see some of the couples become involved in the parish and begin to have families. They have appreciated being a part of the parish this way, finding that it has facilitated conversations within their own marriage. That simple invitation from the deacon many years ago has become a source of blessing in their own lives.

To learn more about becoming a marriage sponsor couple,
please contact Msgr. Braaten at the parish office at 701-223-3606.



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CHURCH OF THE ASCENSION

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Meet BriAnna Wanner and Family continued from front cover

With there being very few children in the community, BriAnna was asked to be an altar server, prior to girls being “allowed.”

“My youngest brother and I served almost every Sunday for many years,” she says. “Serving in our church was part of our lives. My mother was a reader, my dad and brothers frequently brought up the gifts, and all of the siblings were servers. This was just for the Mass itself. Before Mass, we would come early and shovel the sidewalks and parking lot so that the elderly could safely come to Mass. After Mass, we rotated serving coffee and rolls. Before every liturgical season, we would clean and decorate the church accordingly.”

Getting involved here at Ascension was not a challenge for BriAnna and the rest of the Wanner family. Kyle is a lector and member of the Knights of Columbus, and their two older boys are altar servers. BriAnna is an active member of the Ladies of Ascension, provides food for funeral luncheons, and serves at different church events. In addition, BriAnna has been

a catechist and has led Bible studies at Ascension. The Wanner family also spends time in service together.

“Together, our family is involved with Families in Faith, we help clean the church in the spring and fall, have an adoration hour, and attend many of the social offerings throughout the year,” BriAnna says.

BriAnna appreciates the opportunity to attend daily Mass when possible, which she says transforms her life. She believes in the importance of service because it means becoming one with the universal Church. As a family, the Wanners use sacramentals such as blessed candles, holy water, medals, rosaries, and holy images in their home.

“The Church has given us these tools and we intentionally use them to continually obtain God’s grace and blessings,” BriAnna says. “When we pray a family Rosary, we light blessed candles. We sprinkle rooms with holy water and/or blessed salt from time to time. We have saint books, toys, and cards to remind us of our goal in life — to be great saints.”



LITURGY SCHEDULE

Saturday, 5:00 p.m. | **Sunday**, 8:00 a.m., 9:30 a.m., 11:00 a.m.
Monday-Friday, 8:00 a.m. | **Holy Days**: 8:00 a.m., 7:00 p.m.