



June 2023

CORNERSTONE

Faith and Service

My Journey in Faith

My name is Kelly Boxwell. I began as the receptionist at St. Timothy's Church in September 2022. But my connection to the parish is much older!

You will be surprised how my connection with St. Timothy's started over 50 years ago and has come full circle.

My father, Douglas Boxwell Sr., came from a strong Catholic family and they were parishioners of St. Timothy's. As a young boy he went to school at St. Tim's from second grade through eighth grade. He began his studies at the school in 1955 and graduated from eighth grade in 1962. After that he

attended public school in Coon Rapids where he met my mom. His sister and two brothers all attended school at St. Timothy's. Going to Catholic school included attending daily Mass before school. My father served as an altar boy. This was before Vatican II, so Mass was in Latin. My father also attended religious instruction on Wednesdays, as did his siblings. My mother hadn't converted to Catholicism at that time, but she would attend occasionally to gain more information.

My paternal grandmother, Evelyn Boxwell was busy with the family but found time to be involved with the church through the Altar and Rosary Society. Also, each neighborhood had a small group and she

faithfully attended those weekly church circle meetings. My paternal grandfather was in the Knights of Columbus. I love them for the good examples they set for the family, to teach all their children religious faith and practice.

I was brought up Catholic; my mother was sincere in her efforts to raise us in the faith. When I was older, there was a time when I really struggled with my relationship to the Catholic Church. When the news broke about abuse of children carried out by priests and covered up by so many in power, I felt so disappointed and hurt. It drew me away from the church and practicing my faith.

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Last year when I was hired as the receptionist in the Church of St. Timothy parish office, it was a highlight in my life. The position has given me a chance to give back and a chance to belong. Being here has brought about a renewal of faith. I have so much to be thankful for. I am so grateful to Father Joe and every person here at St. Timothy's for the opportunity to be of service every day.

I am able to offer a kind word and friendly smile to those who walk through the door of the parish office—whether it is a delivery person, someone seeking assistance through our outreach program, a long-time parishioner, or a visitor. I have had the opportunity to help coordinate the volunteer appreciation

dinner, assist with parish mailings, and more. Sometimes I have the chance to offer an empathetic listening ear to those who need it. In small and large ways, I am blessed to contribute to the parish mission each day.

I love every minute working and helping those in need. It gives me a purpose in life again. Thank you, Church of St. Timothy, for allowing me to be a part of your family. My family was a part of you so many years ago, and now through God's grace and goodness, I have come full circle and found my home here.

- Kelly Boxwell, Church of St. Timothy Receptionist



A word From the Editor

“Will you let me be your servant, let me be as Christ to you? Pray that I may have the grace to let you be my servant, too.”

These words from the hymn *The Servant Song* by Richard Gillard and Betty Pulkingham have been significant to me throughout my years of ministry and community life. It was a song we sang often in my Jesuit Volunteer community in Nicaragua. It was a favorite among the Dominican Sisters with whom I shared life, and it was sung often at Masses at the first parish where I served in Virginia. With a simple melody, the hymn gently invites us to walk the road with one another, sharing both tears and laughter. It challenges us both to serve others with love and be served by others with humility, trusting that both experiences are part of discipleship.

The words in these pages invite readers into honest reflection on faith and service. As I edited the reflections, I was struck by how so many of the writers describe the impact of witnessing or receiving faith-filled service, inspiring them to follow that example and serve others. And in offering service and pouring themselves out for others, they find that their own cup is filled—an endless, dynamic, freely-given, mutual experience of community, care, connection, and compassion.

As you spend time with the reflections in this *Cornerstone*, may you be led by the Spirit into reflection on the mystery of faith and service in your own life. May you be attentive to where you may be invited by Christ to offer service to others with love, and to receive service from others with humility.

- Rhonda Miska

Parishioners in the Spotlight: Kevin and Rachel Knopik

The Knopik family's story began right here at the Church of St. Timothy.

"Kevin and I met at a wedding at St. Tim's in 2008— the wedding of Gerald and Carol Arel's daughter Natalie. I was a bridesmaid, and Kevin was a groomsman," Rachel recalled.

"Then we started dating, and as we were dating, we would go to Mass together at St. Tim's," she added.

Kevin and Rachel got married in the parish in 2010. They now have three children: Joshua, a fourth grader; Andrew, a first grader; and Abby, a kindergartner.

All three of their children were baptized at St. Timothy's. Joshua received first communion at the parish, and Andrew will begin first communion preparation next fall.

Rachel's parents, Bill and Ann Palzer, joined the parish in 2008 when Rachel began to attend Mass at St. Timothy's.

Kevin is originally from Little Falls, Minnesota, and was living in Mankato when they met. He joined parish when he moved to the area to get married. Rachel is a native of Mounds View who works as a special education teacher at Turtle Lake School in Shoreview.

Since joining the parish and beginning their family, both Rachel and Kevin have participated in parish life in various ways.

Kevin, who works as an accountant, has served on the finance committee for several years. He also assists with counting money during the annual parish carnival.



Rachel teaches faith formation on Tuesday evenings and is active in children's programming including Vacation Bible School (VBS) and the annual Christmas pageant. Rachel has also been involved in the parish Guardian Angel prayer ministry program in the past.

When the children were younger, the family also participated in Early Catholic Family Life (ECFL) and in the Mustard Seed Sunday preschool program. Rachel and Kevin spoke of how beneficial the participation in faith formation has been for their three children.

"It's important for kids to get to know other kids and feel part of the community. They learn a lot and have a lot of fun," Kevin and Rachel said.

They also spoke of how they have enjoyed connecting with other families through their involvement.

"It's good for us to get to know more families, just to have another connection point," said Rachel.

Both Kevin and Rachel encourage other parish families with young children to participate in St. Timothy's faith formation and community-building opportunities.

Courage, Service, and Purpose

When I first came to St. Timothy's I was young, newly married, and had a strong conviction that I needed to return to my Catholic faith. Introvert that I am, I was slow to meet people at first, but I longed so much to feel a connection in this place. It was the annual Time and Talent sign-up that opened the door for me to act on my conviction.

I pondered what kind of talent I had that could possibly help anyone. What did I have to offer? My mother taught me to crochet as a child - I could do that! So, I used something small that I knew how to do and I joined the prayer shawl group. I crocheted with a group of wonderful women who made me feel instantly welcome, and a part of something bigger than myself. My silent prayer had been answered.

I had children and they grew, as children do. They started school, and their activities took over some of my evenings. At that point, I could no longer meet up with others for the prayer shawl group. But that small step gave me courage. It has served as the model by which I have lived my life in

so many ways since that experience. I learned this lesson: be not afraid and just take one step at a time. God is with you and He knows what you need. Just show up and let Him work through you.



2022 youth mission trip participants, including Jennifer and her son Sam, created a "Christmas in July" store display at the Habitat for Humanity ReStore in Nashville, Tennessee.

One small call to action at a time, I have simply shown up, hoping my two hands would be useful to someone.

When my kids were old enough to participate, I brought them with their little hands along, too. I tried to show them the value of putting others' needs before our own in small ways. My children have gone on to serve here according to their individual strengths.

As a family, my husband and two children and I have been deeply blessed by so many people in the Church of St. Timothy community. Those connections, and my desire to love and serve the friends I have made, have given me purpose. That purpose has kept me grounded during some of the deeper valleys of my life, as well.

Of course, the real miracle is how the smallest effort – perhaps just the willingness to lend a hand in food sorting, helping with young ones in the nursery, or saying 'yes' to taking a carnival shift – can be used by the Holy Spirit. These small efforts can grow into something we can look back on with awe and the deepest gratitude. Thanks be to God for always knowing just what we need!

- Jennifer Walker



Service at the Church of St. Timothy



Our Mission of Service

My first career was as an x-ray technician, where I encountered people with broken bones and serious health issues. Heartbreakingly, I also learned about the reality of those who are abused by people who should offer care and protection. I remember so clearly doing x-rays on the bruised body of a young child who had been beaten by a drunken parent. As the child cried in pain, I struggled to compose myself and take the needed x-rays. I recall going into the x-ray darkroom and shedding tears of anger at such trauma caused by parents who should love, not harm, their children. In those moments, I asked God where He was for something like this to happen to children. Sometimes our experiences of service draw us deeply into the mystery of human suffering.

After parenting our three children, my next career was a paraprofessional in a middle school, working with children with learning disabilities. It required a lot of patience and determination since many of the children hated school and struggled with learning. Some had little parent support at home, so I listened to them and learned about their interests and hopes. When I worked with a resistant child, I would say a silent prayer asking God for guidance.

There was a particular time in my life when I needed a lot of service from others. I had five surgeries in one year and spent more time in hospitals than I had ever imagined. Three surgeries were classified as life-threatening: open heart bypass surgery, carotid artery surgery, and emergency surgery for a surgically-caused hernia. I was comforted by the blessings and anointings of Fr Joe. I felt the prayerful support from the CCW and the STARS prayer groups. I also received care from my husband Greg, our children, and

other family members.

I recall a very early morning in the hospital last September after my fifth surgery—unable to sleep, restless, and wondering why so much had happened in one year. A nursing assistant came into my room when I rang for help. She was tired, and stressed about another patient request. She offered to go for a walk with me in the hospital hallway. As we walked, we talked about our difficulties – her working a night shift with young kids at home, little rest when her shift was done, her tired feet and body, so many people needing her help. She listened as I spoke of wanting to go home and feel normal and healthy, and my reluctance to use the call light because I didn't want to be a bother. We hugged, then I asked her if we could pray together. She said she had never had a patient ask to pray with her. We prayed, thankful for the moment and the time to understand each other, and asked for God's help. Then we walked back to my hospital room. Though our lives never touched again, we shared a message of God's love with each other.

Later, I talked with Fr Joe and shared how I wondered why so many serious surgeries in such a short time. He said, "Apparently God had more work for me to do." I look back and think about the people who touched me, and the lives that I may have touched. I look at that year now as a *year of blessings*. I felt the healing power of God and experienced the love and service of others. Though it is hard to be on the receiving end of care, God gave me angels to serve, help and pray for me. I believe all of us have a mission to be loving and caring each day of our lives.

- Kathy Piche



Reflections on Fifty Years of Service at St. Tim's

My parents, grandparents, and people in the community where I grew up were my first role models of service. I grew up on a dairy farm in central Wisconsin, one of 12 children. When I was 13, a tornado came through our area. Our family was safe, but our barn was torn down at 8:30 on an early June evening. Electricity was out. By 4:30 the next morning, neighbors had come with tractors to remove debris from the base of the barn so we could milk our cows. Some stayed and helped milk the cows by hand; others went on to help other farmers.

Within 13 days, the barn was totally rebuilt and shingled, everything done with volunteer labor. Hay was ready to be harvested and now put in the rebuilt barn. Some people brought food for us and the workers. Thorp Finance Corporation brought tables and chairs, so the workers had a place to sit, rest and eat. Some took our dirty clothes to their home in town so they could wash them for us. So many people helped in whatever way they could.

The first thing I volunteered for at our parish was the Council of Women, a phenomenal group of service-oriented women who do so much within and beyond parish, from serving funeral lunches to raising funds for charity. Beyond the many service projects of the CCW is the sharing of faith, creativity, fun, fellowship and friendship.

When the parish provided hospitality through Family Promise for families experiencing homelessness, I brought dinner and often volunteered for an overnight shift. While my sleep was rarely restful for that one night, it reminded me that I had a warm and safe place to live and sleep. In contrast, those who were

homeless and staying at our facility had often wondered where and if they would have food, a place to sleep, and access to transportation and employment.

For several years I helped lead the retreat teams for St. Tim's confirmation students. While it was a lot of work, I really enjoyed being with the teens and I know that it helped me grow immensely in my own faith.

As a greeter at Mass, I get to say hello and receive your warm smiles in return. As a Lector I get to share God's Word with you, and as a Eucharistic Minister, I get to share Christ with you.

My most recent journey of service is as a Befriender. Being able to bring Jesus to someone who is homebound and listen to their stories is a precious gift.

After a few major surgeries in my life, family and friends ministered God's love to me day by day as I recovered. I feel very good when serving others. I learned when you are unable to do things for yourself, it is humbling to have others serve you.

My involvement with all these ministries have made me a better person and helped me to grow deeper in my faith. I have been abundantly blessed in my life, and it is a gift to serve others through the many ministries here at St. Timothy's and in my community. Serving has given me the opportunity to meet incredible and wonderful people, and to make many lifelong friends. Many St. Tim's parishioners have inspired me through the years. We are loved by God and called to serve one another!

- Teena Badzinski



Love One Another As I Have Loved You

This year our family is gathering in Butte, Montana to celebrate what would have been the 73rd wedding anniversary of our parents, Gert and Tim Downey. They were and are models of faithful service for our family.

I remember riding in the truck with Dad one evening to get milk from the rancher we visited twice a week. I asked him who he loved most, and he said, “Your mom.” I was floored, as I had always thought it was me! Dad also talked about how he felt it was his duty to help her get to heaven. Dad passed away over three decades ago, and he immediately went to the top of the list of my Communion of Saints.

Members of my Communion of Saints are relatives, friends, teachers, coaches, neighbors, people who gave me jobs, mentors, bishops, priests, deacons, and religious sisters and brothers. They come from Butte, Bozeman, St. Cloud, Minneapolis, and Blaine. Most of my saints who model love and service for me are deceased, but some are living. I have memorial cards from many of their funerals in my prayer book, Prayers for a Planetary Pilgrim by Fr. Edward Hayes.

In meditation I name each person, and usually picture them in my mind as I am falling asleep. This practice is very calming and relaxing. You don’t need to go through the traditional process of canonization to be in *my* Communion of Saints and no pedestals are required. As a matter of fact, you can start your own personal Communion of Saints—the people in your life who show you what it means to live a

life of faithful service as a follower of Jesus.

When Mom turned 75, we all gathered for the celebration. She had a request that her family and friends help finance and build a Habitat for Humanity home. She knew of a local single mom who had died of cancer, whose dying wish was that her three children would not be separated and put into foster care, but live with their grandmother. We gifted that family with a new Habitat House that our family built. Through her heart for service, Mom left a legacy of care for that family.



Gert and Tim Downey at Blarney Castle in Ireland

Now I have a pair of special saints, as Mom died this spring just a few days before her 92nd birthday which would have been St. Patrick’s Day. My youngest brother Pat (also born on St. Patrick’s Day) and I gave her eulogy. It was a remarkable experience and we shared her great faith, goodness and compassion for others – especially those who are homeless and hungry. Much of her professional life was spent working at, and later leading, programs to help our brothers and sisters in need.

Many of her family gathered at her bedside as Fr. Patrick Baretta gave her the final blessing. I believe Dad was waiting to take her home to heaven, as he promised he would for all of us, and that they pray for us here on earth as we seek to live lives of faithful service.

- Tim Downey



Serving and Being Served

In 2007, my family and I just moved from San Diego, I was a new mom, a new parishioner, and about to experience my first Minnesota winter. I was a long way from home, and a long way from my family. I grew up serving at church; it's second nature to me. I had helped in my previous church with the nursery, CCD classes, youth programs, and as a Eucharistic minister. So, wanting to feel a sense of home, I went to the office to ask about volunteering as a teacher. Jill Hanson said, "I'll have you talk to Margaret." And so began my years of service at St. Timothy's.

I learned the classes weren't called CCD anymore but instead were Faith Formation. I had a great deal of fun teaching and learning about the Old Testament with seventh graders. Then in early April that year, I got an invitation in the mail for the volunteer appreciation dinner. I lined up outside with others and waited for the doors to open. The theme was something like "night at the movies" - the staff were dressed in costumes, there were amazing decorations

everywhere. It felt so warm and welcoming, like home. I continued to teach, joined the social justice committee, and began to serve as a Eucharistic minister. Each April that invitation arrived and my family and I would be excited to attend the event, each year with a new fun, creative theme. One year I offered to help - it looked like so much work! - but was informed it was a dinner to thank those in the parish who served in so many ways.



Former staff member Margaret Kelly at a volunteer appreciation dinner with Kate's daughter Carmela.

But when the invitation arrived in April 2015, I was not excited: my husband had just passed away and I was at a loss. Nothing felt like home. Robbie Raaen, the staff member who coordinated the dinners for years, asked me to help

that year. She knew serving was in my DNA. More importantly, she knew it was something I needed. The dinner that year had a Caribbean theme and featured tropical colors, waterfalls made of paper, palm trees, and little umbrellas for our drinks. Robbie had me taping decorations to the wall and putting out centerpieces. Amid my grief, it felt good to be useful. The next night I waited in that line outside with the other parishioners. It was nice being part of the evening and being served, even though that year I had the sneak peak. Serving truly served me.

This year marks 16 years since I first walked through the parish office door to ask about volunteering as a teacher. Now, as a parish trustee, I was able to serve at the dinner to thank all the parishioners who serve and who make St. Timothy's feel like home.

- Kate Shea



For Your Reflection

Kelly Boxwell described the sense of purpose and happiness she finds in her daily work of offering hospitality to those who walk through the door. Where do you find purpose and happiness in the small tasks of daily life?

Kevin and Rachel Knopik have found ways to serve while having a young family. How might you overcome challenges to serving?

Jennifer Walker wrote of how she wondered what talent she had that could be of service, which led her to the prayer shawl ministry. What are the gifts and talents God has given to you that you can share with others?

Kathy Piche wrote about how she came to see a year filled with surgeries and hospitalization as a “year of blessings” after prayer and reflection. Is there a past season of life where you experienced loss, pain, or struggle that you now can look back on and see God’s presence?

Teena Badzinski described how the neighborly care her family received after a tornado taught her about the power of community care. What are the childhood experiences you had of witnessing community care and neighborly support?

Tim Downey reflected on his personal Communion of Saints—those who have modeled faithful service and inspire him. Who are the friends, family, and leaders that are in *your* personal Communion of Saints?

In Kate Shea’s essay, she recalled how helping with the volunteer appreciation dinner helped her feel connected in a time of grief. What role has service played in your life, especially in connecting you to community?

"Love and charity, are service, helping others, serving others. There are many people who spend their lives in this way, in the service of others...And with the washing of the feet the Lord teaches us to be servants, and above all, servants as He was a servant to us, for every one of us."

- Pope Francis

CORNERSTONE

Editor: Rhonda Miska

Editor Emeritus: Tim Downey

Church of St. Timothy mission: We are a progressive, welcoming Catholic community that values full participation in worship and community service. We commit to being a peace-loving, Eucharistic community providing integrated faith formation and applying gospel values to daily living.

"You are built upon the foundations of the apostles and prophets, and Christ Jesus himself is the cornerstone." (Ephesians 2:20)



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