

**“Yesterday is gone. Tomorrow is yet to come. We have only today.  
Let us begin.”**

Blessed Mother Theresa of Calcutta

~ Helping people in need has been an ongoing ministry at the four churches of our Parish of the Holy Eucharist. Over many years, this important ministry has been led by individuals at Holy Martyrs Church in Falmouth and St. Gregory Church in Gray. It has been the work of the Social Justice and Peace Commission at Sacred Heart of Yarmouth and St. Jude in Freeport. Now that our four churches have been joined into one Parish, our goal has become one of a coordinated and focused ministry for this important work.

~ In early 2012, the Social Justice and Peace Commission and the Stewardship Commission of the Parish compiled information about past outreach programs at the four churches. It was a useful exercise. There was an ulterior motive: to suggest a role for every parishioner somewhere in this Parish commitment. Therefore, please consider the possibility of what you can do as you review the history of our charitable efforts. We need your help as our “eyes and ears” to be aware of the needs in our worship community. We need your help to be “God’s hands” as we carry out this work.

***Helping friends and neighbors***

~ Food pantries - Community programs have been in operation for many years in Falmouth, Cumberland, Yarmouth, Freeport, and Gray. The four churches have provided money and food donations. Volunteers have helped in staffing the pantries and have assisted in fundraising events. They have worked in community gardens which supplied pantries with fresh food during the summer.

~ Other charitable services which receive donations: St. Vincent de Paul soup kitchen and its clothing tables, Preble Street Resource Center, Good Cause Store in Portland (Sisters of Mercy), Catholic Charities Thrift Store, Friendship House, Freeport Community Services.  
~ Assistance in emergency cases - The Parish has responded to specific requests from people faced with emergency situations. At times, these actions have begun with a phone call to the parish office. At other times, the Parish has taken action based on information from concerned parishioners about a critical problem. Through contacts with other churches and community services, the Parish has provided information to needy individuals. It has also offered financial help after the request was screened and the Pastor concluded that help was essential. In these cases, money has come primarily from donations made by parishioners for “needy” cases and fuel assistance.

~ In Gray, a lakeside camping experience - The church has provided an opportunity for camping at reduced cost or no cost to families. This site has made it possible for people to enjoy Crystal Lake during the summer. The facility, located on the grounds of St. Gregory Church, has been sustained and administered by the Parish.

~ Tithing - At times in the past, our churches have tithed a portion of the offertory to support charities. Donations were made to local, regional and national appeals. As the Parish of the Holy Eucharist, our goal will be to tithe two-percent of the offertory to support worthwhile causes and to respond to emergency needs.

~ Medical - Professional and trained members of our Parish have given their time, talent and resources to provide blood pressure screening and sharing medical advice with parishioners.

~ Thanksgiving -- The holiday has involved a special effort to create food baskets for individuals and families who might need them. It has restocked local food pantries. The churches have also offered gift cards for buying perishable food.

~ Interfaith and ecumenical cooperation - Our churches have maintained contact with other faith communities for mutual assistance. The results have been beneficial, such as maintaining five food pantries in different towns, appealing for classroom supplies for elementary schoolchildren, offering fuel assistance and responding jointly on special occasions. The interfaith community has joined together for prayer and fellowship: a July interfaith prayer service at Yarmouth’s Old Meeting House, Thanksgiving and Longest Night devotional services at different sites, and a joint choir festival.

***Reaching out to other Maine communities***

~ Support for three Native American churches in Maine - In the past, this effort has involved financial help for Religious Education, Faith Formation programs, and for repairs and heating at the St. Ann Churches of the Passamaquoddy and Penobscot communities.

~ Sponsoring a refugee family - This project took place when Sacred Heart Church sponsored resettlement of an African family to the Portland area. It was undertaken through Catholic Charities. The commitment involved financial help, donation of household items, personal counseling and emergency response to a family with two small children, Some family members have remained in the Portland area.

~ Gift-giving at Christmas - The Caring and Giving Trees placed at each church during the holiday period benefit both families and individuals. The project has involved hundreds of gifts each year. It has involved coordination with Catholic Charities of Portland (immigrant/refugee families), Long Creek Youth Development Center (at-risk youth), Freeport Community Services, local nursing homes, and food pantries. In addition, cash donations by parishioners have made it possible to offer gift certificates for fresh food purchases.

~ Mother’s Day flowers for Maine Right to Life - On this occasion, parishioners have had the chance to purchase a flower in honor of mothers, to acknowledge the sanctity of life and to support an organization which has been dedicated to this goal.

~ Habitat for Humanity - Parish support has involved different activities: planning and participating in the Yarmouth/Cumberland Good Friday Walk and the Falmouth Spring Walk fundraising efforts; volunteer work teams at Habitat building sites in Freeport, Cumberland and Yarmouth.

~ Blood donations for American Red Cross - This annual appeal has been a special project for St. Gregory Church as a site for donations.

~ Learning More - The Parish has sponsored guest speakers to discuss Church teachings on social justice and issues which challenge us in this modern society

***Finding our voice in national causes and helping other countries***

~ Contribution by Youth Ministry - Our young members have participated in World Youth Day events. They have worked at shelters locally and assisted at nursing homes. They have gone on summer mission trips to other US communities and were involved twice in “Safe Passage” which included travel to Latin America for work in poor communities.

~ Haiti - A sister parish relationship with a Haitian church was established 20 years ago by Sacred Heart Church in Yarmouth. St. Jude Church of Freeport subsequently joined in this effort. It has now linked our churches with Sacre-Coeur de Meyer. It evolved over a decade to include regular monthly subsidies, tuition for schoolchildren, and special donations. The January 2010 earthquake destroyed the church. It has been rebuilt with our financial support and was dedicated in June 2012.

***We conclude...***

~ The Future - As a Social Justice and Peace Commission for the Parish of the Holy Eucharist, we will cooperate with other Parish Commissions and the Pastoral Council to strengthen the Church and to fulfill our duty as Catholics.

~ Knowing what is needed - It will be important to be informed about special needs and appeals through all sources: Social Ministry and Missions Office of the Portland Diocese, Catholic Charities of Maine and the Maine Council of Churches - to mention but a few.

~ It is our belief that a strong commitment to social justice and peace will strengthen the Parish of the Holy Eucharist. It is a fire which has already been lit. It will burn bright and provide heat and light to anyone who may be discouraged and in need of help. It will show that somebody cares... we care.

Father Daniel Greenleaf

Social Justice and Peace Commission and  
Stewardship Commission