



St. Patrick Catholic Church

Social Concerns Newsletter

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PARTNERS IN FAITH MINISTRY

*Partnering
with our
Brothers
& Sisters
in Christ*

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Partners-in-Faith Emphasizes "Partnership"

When the **Partners in Faith (PIF)** ministry was initially formed in 2013, there was a great deal of discussion about what name to give the ministry. The group settled on "Partners in Faith" because they wanted to emphasize the interconnection with those served, rather than an "us-them" mentality. They wanted to emphasize a partnership to capture the reality that we must not only be Christ to those we serve but also see Christ in them.

PIF meets monthly to consider various needs in the community. Over the years they have formed partnerships with specific entities, including our sister parish, **Church of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary ("Assumption")**(p.4) in Southeast D.C., as well as several shelters, including **CHASE Partnership House** (for men); **Nativity Shelter** (for women); and, **Stepping Stones Shelter** (for families)(p.2). Primarily,



Back row: Mary Bennett, Joan Lane, and Chuck Cozad; Front row: PamDeFosse and Mary Cozad; Not pictured: Sandra Ames, Phil Chimento, Helen Domenici, Jamie Fillet, Bob Hill & Deacon Suley

PIF conducts year-round drives to help supply them with basic necessities, such as food, clothing, household supplies, and toiletries.

In addition, since its launch four years ago, PIF has "morphed" into several new ministries, some of which now run largely independently:

Birthday Celebrations

For example, in addition to providing work and interview clothing and other

supplies to **Chase Partnership House** on Gude Drive, one of our ministers launched monthly birthday celebrations (see below).

Cup 'o Joe

Cup o' Joe is a Catholic Charities-run ministry which provides nutritious breakfasts to shelter residents. (p.4).

Furnishings for Families

Jamie Fillet regularly brings collected furniture items to families transitioning from shelters to their new homes. (p.3).

Family Game Nights

Joan Lane and her family recruited volunteers to play games and interact with kids at Stepping Stones Shelter.

JustFaith

PIF is now exploring the launch of yet another effort, this time focusing on social justice under the *JustFaith* umbrella (www.justfaith.org)(p.4).

Recipe for Love: Let them eat cake!



Mary & Chuck Cozad

The **Partners in Faith** team is always looking for ways to do more and give more.

Chuck Cozad was particularly drawn to building up our relationship with one of our neighbors,

CHASE Partnership House, a shelter for men suffering with substance abuse and addiction. He jumped on the idea of celebrating the birthdays of the residents at Chase.

The idea for this program—now in its third year—began at a meeting with the Catholic Charities manager of

the shelter who suggested that a monthly birthday recognition could be part of the goal of "normalizing" life for the men of the shelter.

And, in his direct and plain-spoken way, Chuck said, "Birthdays mean cake!"

When he initially launched the program, he and his wife, **Mary**, purchased the cakes. Then, their daughter who has three children attending St. Patrick School suggested it would be a great project for kids who like to bake. Hence, their 7th grade granddaughter became the first young baker. Some school moms heard about the endeavor, and that led to a whole new slew of volunteers.



7th Grader Sarah Joseph, pictured with her mom and Charles, CHASE kitchen manager.

Given the popularity at the school, Chuck proposed offering this as a Faith-in-Action project for children needing service hours. Now, there is enough interest and volunteers that the treats are delivered twice a month. In addition to making a cake

continued p.4

Stepping Stones Shelter *by Helen Domenici*



Helen Domenici was a founding member of PIF. She started out as a volunteer at Stepping Stones and now serves on their Board of Directors.

Since **Partners in Faith (PIF)** was created in 2013, one of the recipients of its mission has been **Stepping Stones Shelter**.

Stepping Stones has served homeless families in Montgomery County since 1982. It is a 30-day emergency homeless shelter based in Rockville, which serves about six families at a time.

Stepping Stones provides shelter, food, clothing, case management services, employment counseling and a chance for families to get back on their feet.

Located in a historic home in Rockville that backs up to a park, it is a safe place for the children and their parents to work towards finding a new home.

In the past few years, PIF has helped Stepping Stones by:

→ **Holding drives** and donating clothing, toiletries, cleaning supplies, and school supplies and backpacks;

→ **Providing volunteers** to help fill

backpacks full of school supplies for current and former resident children;

→ **Volunteering at the annual picnic** (see inset); and

→ **Facilitating "game nights"** for residents.

St. Patrick's support of Stepping Stones lets these families in crisis know that



there are those in the community who care and want to help.



The **Stepping Stones Shelter** hosts an annual back-to-school picnic every August to celebrate the beginning of the new school year.

The shelter partners with different organizations to supply both students in-shelter and former resident families in the community with backpacks full of school supplies tailored for their particular grades. Besides partnering to collect school supplies, volunteers aid in stuffing backpacks with supplies; donating food for the picnic; & providing time and talent on the day of the picnic.

At the picnic, fun activities for the children include face-painting, a moon-bounce, field games, and arts and crafts. In addition, approximately 100 backpacks filled with school supplies are passed out to current and former school-age children. According to the Institute for Children, Poverty, and Homelessness, the lack of school supplies is one of the top challenges homeless children face while attending school. Because many of the shelter's families live below the poverty line, they can't afford basic school supplies.

Stepping Stones Shelter greatly appreciates St. Patrick's support which enables families start the school year off on the right foot.

Drives, Drives... & More Drives!



Furnishings for Families—Passion-Inspired Service *by Jamie Fillet*

About seven years ago, I realized that the daily demands of motherhood was starting to slow down. After 26 years, my children were beginning to leave home and live independently, and my role was changing.

I asked God to Shepherd Me

This led me to the ultimate question.... "What on earth am I here for?" Up until this point, I never really focused on my needs or desires. While facing this uncomfortable place of self-discovery, I decided to pray and spend some time soul searching and asking God to shepherd me to a new path.

I always had a passion for interior design. My friends and family would ask me to help them decorate their homes and I would jump at the opportunity. One day, a good friend asked me to help her decorate her new home, but this time—overcoming my protests—she insisted on paying me. Through prayer and surrendering to a greater plan, God shepherded me to start my own interior design company, **JD Designs**.

My passion became my job. For me it's never "work" because it provides me with an opportunity to use and develop the unique gifts and talents that God has given me.

This realization led me to further examine my reason for being put here on earth. I had an intense yearning to give back to show God how truly grateful I was for all His blessings, including an amazing family, dear and loyal friends, and the beautiful life I was given.

I asked God to Guide Me

I continued to pray, asking God for guidance to help me find a way to live a more purpose-driven life where I

could make a difference in my community. Through prayer, I experienced an "ah-ha moment".

As Catholics, we are called to serve one another in love. "For even the Son of Man did not come to be served but to serve to give his life as ransom for many." (Matt. 20:28) As a disciple of Jesus, it dawned on me that I needed to find a way to share my gifts.



Jamie (back row, 2nd from right) supported by regular helpers Vince Dunn, Kay Kay Joseph, Jackie Fillet, and Amy Burgoyne as well as Good Counsel High School students.

He Led Me to a Special Ministry

So, I started to collect unwanted furniture from people and deliver it to formerly homeless families in Montgomery County who were moving out of shelters and into new permanent homes.

My first project was with **Montgomery County Coalition for the Homeless**, and now also includes families transition out of **Stepping Stones Shelter**. Together with some friends (**Amy Burgoyne & family, Kay Kay Joseph & family, Brendan Dunn, Jack Stubbs** and my own family) we furnished and

decorated the coalition-owned apartments, and, for the past six years we have continued to help many well-deserving families transition out of homelessness.

Through furnishing and decorating these sometimes cold and empty spaces, we try to consider the family's likes and needs in order to make each a special haven where they can focus on rebuilding their lives rather than worry about

where they will eat, read to their children, or lay down to sleep at night. We bring them God's love, and give them a level of comfort and peace during their time of crisis.

We see first-hand the difference we are making in their lives. With each move, we experience a feeling of purpose and encounter with God's love, and, in return, we receive rewards far exceeding the sacrifice of time and effort.

This remarkable experience has enriched my life.

What's your passion? How is God calling you to serve?

Jesus came to serve and not be served. If we take the attention away from ourselves

and try to live lives centered on the Gospel, to spread His message of love and to live for others, then we will get what we give: we will receive God's love and peace; share love, you get love.... bring peace, you get peace...

Service fulfills our promise as Catholics and in turn fulfills us as individuals.

*Jamie has been a parishioner of St Patrick's for about 13 years. She's a Eucharistic Minister and has been a member of the **Partners in Faith** ministry since it was launched in 2013*

Cup o' Joe

For men and women staying in overnight emergency shelters and transitional shelters operated by Catholic Charities, mornings often begin on an empty stomach. To respond to this need, **Catholic Charities** launched the "**Cup o' Joe**" program which provides healthy "breakfast to-go" bags for shelter residents.

Cup o' Joe was so-named in remembrance of **Joe Roberts**, a local philanthropist committed to supporting his community, including Children's Hospital and Catholic Charities. After a three-year struggle with brain cancer, Joe passed away in 2011. But, his legacy of service lives on through this program.

Since 2013, St. Patrick's has recruited volunteers on a monthly basis to provide Cup o' Joe breakfasts to Nativity Woman's shelter, initially, and now CHASE Partnership House, a men's shelter for men recovering from addictions.

PIF ministers **Chuck Cozad** and **Bob Hill**



Girl Scouts assembled Cup o' Joe breakfasts in April

assumed the backbone of the project by picking up supplies each month from a Catholic Charities warehouse and making monthly deliveries to the very appreciative shelter residents.

In terms of assembling the breakfasts, we have had a whole host of volunteers each month, including **Partners in Faith** teams, **Boy Scouts**, **Girl Scouts**, **St. Patrick's School**, **Religion Education** and the **Summer Youth Program**. Even the **King's Men Ministry** kindly stepped in one month to fill an unexpected gap.



JustFaith Ministries (JFM) is a national effort established in 2001 to bring the healing message of the Gospel to the marginalized. Jack Jezreel, president and founder of JFM, challenges participants to extend their love beyond their immediate families and friends to their neighbors in need. He says "In many ways, JFM is an invitation to wrestle with Matthew 25 ('Whatever you do to the least, you do to me')."

Since its founding, more than 50,000 people have participated in a JustFaith Ministries program. Through study, prayer and immersion, participants are transformed and experience a deeper faith and purpose.

St. Patrick's previously hosted a JFM year-long series about five years ago, and, now St. Patrick's Partners in Faith Ministry has decided to offer an eight-week workshop focused on hunger. "**Hunger for Change: A Faithful Response to Food Insecurity**" addresses the sad reality of food insecurity which exists even in our own county.

For more information, please contact **Mary Bennett** at mmcben@verizon.net.

Assumption Outreach by Phil Chimento



From 1972 to 1979, **Msgr. Thomas Kane** served as pastor of Assumption Parish in Ward 8 in Southeast DC. He then came here to St. Patrick's where he served as our pastor for 20 years. But, he would not forget the great need at his former parish.

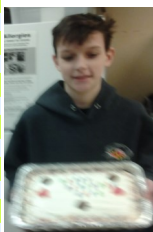
Msgr. Kane established the **Thanksgiving Food Drive for Assumption Parish** to replenish their food pantry for the winter months. Typically, this annual drive would yield about 40-50 large moving boxes of food. However, after the 2008 recession, the amount of food collected dwindled substantially, down to less than 20 boxes by 2012. In 2013, **Deacon Jim Nalls** introduced us to the **Greg Gannon Canned Food Drive (GGCFD)**, a vast food program that has been operating at Blessed Sacrament Parish in DC for almost 30 years. The GGCFD was seen as

an opportunity to support St. Patrick's Holiday Giving program as well as increase our lagging collections for Assumption. So, our Thanksgiving Food Drive was folded into the GGCFD effort. Each year, our GGCFD collections range between 15,000 to 18,000 cans, which enable us to support not only Assumption Parish but also several other food banks in Rockville, Gaithersburg and Olney.

Meanwhile, the need continues to grow in the parish community surrounding Assumption. Currently, the poverty level among Ward 8 residents is 35%. Assumption's newly built **Pope Francis Outreach Center**, established in 2014, serves more than 300 families a month, ministering to their food, clothing and spiritual needs and provides holiday meals for over 3,000 families.

Since its founding, Partners in Faith has run additional drives for household goods, paper goods, clothing and school supplies, all of which have been shared with Assumption Parish. Currently we are working with Assumption Pastor **Fr. Greg Shaffer** and Outreach Director **Mildred Brown** to forge a closer relationship between our parishes, and to stand with them to help them fulfill their mission: Feeding the hungry, clothing those in need and nurturing the soul.

Let Them Eat Cake! (continued from p.1)



7th Grader Bobby Mascari

or cupcakes, the young bakers create a card with a Bible verse on it and pray for the men in the shelter.

The men of Chase House have expressed their appreciation for the program and particularly for the participation of the young people because it shows that the community cares about them. It has also touched the hearts of the young bakers.

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