

# Annual Report

## July 2015 - June 2016

**Stewardship:** is the grateful response of an intentional disciple who recognizes and receives God's gifts and shares these gifts in love of God and neighbor.



## A NOTE FROM THE PASTOR

Dear Brothers & Sisters in Christ,

God continues to do great things here at Our Lady of Grace Catholic Church and School. Your magnanimity and generous spirit expressed in worship and service of others amazes me. Our worship moves us to love and our love impels us to serve one another and so many others in a myriad of ways (cf. 2 Corinthians 5:14).

**HOSPITALITY**—At the heart of our faith lays the hospitality of Christ who welcomes us as he welcomed sinners, strangers, and the lost. Though examples abound of this, I see it weekly at parish funerals. Folks come in early, set up, then serve a “home-cooked” meal and then stay and do the dishes! They often serve families they don’t even know. But hospitality they offer.

**FORMATION**—By taking advantage of faith formation opportunities, we, as adults, grow in our knowledge of the faith, and more importantly, we grow in our love of God and neighbor. Recently, Sposi Noveli – an Our Lady of Grace ministry to newly married couples – run completely by volunteers – had a great gathering with a speaker on Theology of the Body, discussing the virtue of sexuality in their marriage.

**SERVICE**—Christ calls us to be servants to one another and to everyone. Just recently I watched as our middle school Youth Formation youth made tied Fleece Blankets for people in need. Generous love.

**PRAYER**—In my first homily here at Our Lady of Grace, I shared the essential place that prayer has in our lives. Catholics pray. As we take ten minutes to connect daily with Christ, we grow in awareness of His personal love for us. We pray in our adoration chapel, as families and small groups. The heart

of our prayer lies in the Eucharist shared every Sunday. Gathered as a community of sisters and brothers, we ponder the Scriptures shared, feed on the Body and Blood of Christ broken and poured out for us, and go forth into the world loving and serving as Christ.

Finally know that your financial generosity makes a difference. Thank you for sharing a portion of your hard earned income with this community. It blesses us. It honors God. It serves the needy, youth, elderly, families, the whole community and more. Thank you again for your tithe, your prayer, and for sharing your talents here at Our Lady of Grace.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

*Father Kevin Finnegan*

Pastor





## FAMILY PRAYER - HOW TO START

**By Sean Lavell**

*Pastoral Associate for Discipleship and Mission*

There has been a lot of encouragement to the families of our parish to pray; to develop a life of prayer. One of Fr. Kevin's first homily's was about "Taking 10+2+Family". Take 10 minutes a day for personal prayer, take 2 hours each week for longer prayer (e.g. Mass and an Adoration hour), and to pray as a family. As our son Seamus is getting older, Barbara and I have been talking about what we want our family prayer time to look like. Since Seamus is 3½, I thought we should start really simply. Ultimately, we want to teach Seamus how to be comfortable talking with Jesus as his friend. We realize in order to do this, we need to show him how to talk with Jesus as his friend. Below is one way I thought of to do that. I hope it helps in your family's prayer time...

At the dinner table on Sunday nights ask your children to share one thing they are thankful for this past week. Then at the end of dinner, you offer those thanks to Jesus. All you do

is repeat what was said. For example: "Lord Jesus, we thank you for Johnny's hockey game that his team won, Susie's book report that went really well, Mom's good time with her friend Jane, and my fixing what was wrong with the Subaru". Do that for a couple of months and then ask everyone to offer their own thanks to Jesus at the end of dinner. Then do that for a couple of months. Once you have that down, add in one intention you want to ask Jesus for in the coming week. Same format: they all say what it is and then you encapsulate it into a prayer. After a couple of months, have everyone offer their own petitions to Jesus.

In six months, you have transformed your Sunday dinners to a time where everyone thanks Jesus for a blessing and asks Jesus for something they need. In six months' time you have shown your children a really simple way to talk with Jesus.



**1400 meals** were served at the Fish Fry

**1641 Trees** were sold at the Tree lot

**330 People** attended the Men's Club Gala

It takes approximately **15 individuals** to help at a funeral lunch.

We donated over **6000 pounds of food** with the Thanksgiving basket drive.

About **\$50,000** was gifted for scholarships in Ghana and Honduras.

Stephen Ministers offered **2704 hours of service** to the Our Lady of Grace community

**Toys and household goods** were collected and shared with families at Sharing and Caring Hands, the Tubman Center, VEAP, STEP, and the Crisis Nursery.

OLG was instrumental in furnishing an entire preschool and new lunch room tables at **John Paul II School** in NE Minneapolis.

The Adoration Program has been revamped and Adoration is now offered Monday through Friday from **5 AM to 11 PM**.

**5582 homily podcasts** were downloaded during the year.

Holy Eucharist was served to our homebound more than **800 times**.

# PRAYER

A stewardship parish strives to nourish families through prayer. "Prayer is as necessary to our souls as food is to our bodies." (Characteristics of a Christian Steward). Prayer and the sacraments dispose a soul to receive God's abundant graces, which are necessary to grow in holiness. It is through prayer that we nurture our personal relationship with Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Prayer increases our yearning to receive the source and summit of our Catholic faith, the Eucharist. As a parish family, we gather together to worship and praise God in Mass. Nourished by the Word of God and the Eucharist, we are strengthened as a parish family to go and to serve the Lord. Stewardship is a lived response of the disciple to follow this mandate: to go and serve.



## Prayer Shawls

By **Beryl Schewe**  
*Director of Pastoral Care*



Gert wasn't a fancy knitter, but then neither am I. She had her own prayer shawl, one I brought her as she battled the reoccurrence of her cancer. Sometime in the midst of her final illness, she decided to knit a prayer shawl for someone else. Nothing fancy, a simple rectangle in a nubby brown yarn. Knit and pray. Pray and knit.

The design of the prayer shawl is intentionally stone cold simple. You knit, knit, knit, till you get to the end of the row. Then you turn, and knit your way back. It's the meditative knitting with no variation of stitches that allows your mind to pray. Pray for the person who will wear the prayer shawl. Pray for all who are sick. Pray for whatever and whoever bubbles up in your mind.

Gert died before that nubby brown prayer shawl was completed. But one of her friends finished it and brought it to me. I treasured the prayer shawl, not because it was exquisitely knit. It was not. I treasured it because Gert had laced her prayers in every stitch. Her prayer shawl draped casually over the couch in my office, my gentle reminder of the tangible gift of prayer. Then one of Gert's friends got sick. I took her the prayer shawl and wrapped her in Gert's prayers, reminding us both that our prayer is from everlasting to everlasting.

## Men's Choir Ministry

By **Eric Nelson**  
*Member of the Our Lady of Grace Men's Choir*

I came into Our Lady of Grace church as a convert. Whenever you ask converts what drew them to Catholicism, "beauty" is always high on the list of reasons. As Catholics we celebrate that we are corporeal beings who experience God through our senses. For that reason, liturgical music is crucial to helping the congregation perceive the Divine presence at Mass. I joined the Men's Choir because I have sung in various groups in my life, and was eager to use this charisma for the first time as a form of worship. Also, as a practical matter, it was a minimal commitment that I could make without detracting from my parental duties. Personally I have found such a close connection to God through choir. I liken it to those near-death experiences you read about, where a person flatlines and then sees a light and meets Jesus, only to be sent back to continue life on earth. I have felt that way many times after singing in choir, which definitely beats going into a coma or cardiac arrest!





## HOSPITALITY

“When I was a stranger, you welcomed me.” (Mt. 25:35) Jesus Christ teaches that whenever we welcome one of the least of our sisters and brothers, we welcome Jesus Himself. In a way, we are all prodigal children longing to be welcomed home. When parishioners experience a warm and sincere welcome, they in turn become open to giving themselves to others. This desire to welcome others is yet another gift of God. The most vibrant stewardship parishes are those in which parishioners know they are welcomed, which fosters a sense of ownership and personal involvement in lived stewardship to the parish family.

## Widows of Grace

By Cheryl Broich

*Member of Widows of Grace*

Widows of Grace began with the hope that widows would get to know the other widows in the parish. The second Friday of the month we meet for coffee in the dining room following 9 am Mass. Now that we know who one another is, we can sit together at mass, go to church functions (like the fish fry) together, or just talk after Mass. It has expanded to having a widows book club every month as well. Widows of Grace has made me feel less alone and brought some wonderful women into my life.



## Moms of Grace

By Amy Selby

*Member of Moms of Grace*



When I moved to the area and joined Our Lady of Grace, I wanted to meet other women in our parish—both from the school and the greater church community. I wanted to get to know more about raising my children in the Catholic faith. I wanted to support strong families. I wanted to have fun and “take a break” from busy family life every once in awhile. So I became involved with Moms of Grace and I am doing all of those things! I learn so much from our monthly speakers and their diverse presentations—from parenting tips to apologetics, marriage advice to current events. The evening and morning book clubs are a great way to read new books, get to know other interesting women, and have a good, deep discussion. Improving lives and connecting to others make the service projects deeply satisfying for me. The play groups allow me to slow down and enjoy time with my young children and other moms just playing in the park or nursery. Relaxing and laughing with other moms at our social events is the best way to unwind from work and family life as well as get to know a whole new group of friends. As the group grows and changes, we strive to meet the social, emotional, and spiritual needs of more mothers at Our Lady of Grace. We invite you to join us!

## SERVICE



Members of a stewardship parish are ready to minister to varied needs of their own parish family as well as the needs of the wider community and the Church. Just as the members of a family come together to help one of their own, a stewardship parish family serves those who are hurting or in need, doubting or seeking salvation. The parish family also comes together to celebrate, thank and to return God's gifts.

### Loaves and Fishes

**By Mary Jo Franske**

*Participant in the Loaves and Fishes Program*

On the second Wednesday of every month, I wake up and think to myself, "I'm going to see Jerry today." And not only that, I am going to meet a group of Confirmation kids or summer volunteers who are giving up their Wednesday evening to serve Jerry and about 150 other people who drop in at the Church of St. Stephens for their evening meal.

There is something so satisfying and rewarding about being a part of a team of people who want to give and a group of people who understand that receiving is also important. And somewhere in the chaos of the dinner hour, the tables are turned and we become the receivers. Our Lady of Grace has been serving meals at Loaves and Fishes from its very inception. For 34 years, faithful Our Lady of Grace members have been purchasing food, tossing, scooping, slicing, stirring, serving, scrubbing and straightening in order to provide nutritious meals to people who are hungry in an atmosphere of hospitality where the need is greatest.

Jerry always seeks me out, gives me a kiss on the cheek and a thank you for the meal we've provided. And then he tells me a little joke. It's a simple thing, but a powerful testament to Christ in our midst.



### High School Youth Ministry

**By Grace Zdechlik**

*Participant in High School Youth Ministry*



As a 9th grader, I was assigned a service project through a government class and chose to "adopt" a senior who was in need of assistance for a period of time. My responsibility was to assist the senior in a way that suited both sides, whether it be helping with household chores, or sitting down for a meal with her. My senior companion was the former sacristan at Our Lady of Grace, June Reagan. She was having knee surgery and would need assistance during her recovery. My friend, Katie Mendel, and I helped June by completing household chores including walking her dog, making and bringing meals, filling bird feeders, taking out her garbage, helping with physical therapy, and engaging in conversation. Personally, this experience helped me grow deeper in my faith from the influence of June. From spending time with her, she taught me the importance of optimism, hard work, counting blessings, and prayer. June made such an impact in my life! Actually, we all benefitted. This experience helped bridge the gap between generations in the parish, created lasting relationships, and provided an opportunity to deepen one's faith through others.

# FORMATION

The formation of each individual becomes part of the formation of the parish community. Inherent within each individual is the need to give – to move from selfishness to selflessness. This formation is a life-long journey of conversion. The stewardship parish journeys constantly in this formation of conversion. As one grows more deeply in this formation to a life of stewardship, the more deeply one loves as God loves us.



## Confirmation Discipleship Groups

By **Tanner Stevens**

*Discipleship Small Group Leader*



The Church today, more than ever, needs to spread its message of love, forgiveness, and peace to others. Helping to form that relationship as early as possible in our lives can make a significant impact on the world! Imagine if we could get more youth to know and live in the Lord's guidance... what a wonderful future we would have in store! This is our mission as Discipleship Group Leaders for the Confirmation Program at Our Lady of Grace. I chose to be a part of this mission because of the great need for our young members of the parish to experience and encounter the love of Jesus EVERY DAY. As a high school teacher, I notice such a difference when I am conscious of God's presence in my students, in me, and in our school environment. Keeping our eyes fixed on God's message of love, forgiveness, and peace to others is crucial to forming loving, thriving relationships with others. Most days I am not perfect and I work hard to keep that focus throughout the day. I think it's important to share with our youth that following God's plan for us is most often difficult, but will lead to true happiness over time. Through our small group discussions, evening seminars with family, volunteer and service opportunities, and retreats, my goal is to help all of my students see the value and the joy in God's plan for each of us. Jesus continually guides me to become the best version of myself, and I hope to instill the same mentality in my students.

## Encounter: Middle School Formation

By **Savannah Willard**

*Discipleship Small Group Leader*

The fall of 10th grade was a busy one for me. Playing volleyball and having a job did not leave much space in my life for God or letting Him lead me. But the Father does not back down in any situation, and He put one of the Pro Ecclesia Sancta sisters in my path. Through her, He invited me into a deeper act of serving with Him by helping out with the Middle School Encounter Program on Wednesday evenings. I had never done such a thing before, and I remember how nervous I was the first day I came. But I was warmly welcomed into the 6th grade girls' group, St. Clare of Assisi (my confirmation saint!). Throughout the year, I really grew to love each and every one of those girls! Leading a small group was out of my comfort zone, but God was giving me confidence. He helped me to grow in leadership and faith: to lead them to Him, as well as trust He would give me the words to say and the questions to ask them. I've had so much fun, too! I don't think the games we play are just for middle schoolers– I enjoy them too much as an 11th grader! It's amazing how a person can receive so much when they give even a little bit; I never would have dreamed the gifts Jesus had in store for me, when He invited me to give just one evening a week to those girls!





## PARISH STEWARDSHIP IN ACTION!

### Parish Population

- 2407 Registered Households
- 165 New Households
- 400 School Family Households
- 232 Faith Formation Households

### Sunday, Sunday, Sunday!

- 91 Extraordinary Ministers of the Eucharist
- 30 Altar Servers
- 43 Lectors
- 75 Ushers
- 12 Sacristans
- 50 Choirs
- 15 Sunday Nursery (avg. # kids)
- 4 Alter Linen Care Ministry
- 4 Cantors
- 30 Greeters

### Parish Outreach & Service

- 30 Stephen Ministers
- 16 Eucharistic Ministers to Homebound
- 2-20 Loaves and Fishes Servers (per month)
- 6-8 Our Lady Quilters
- 12 Prayer Shawl Knitters
- 180 Pen Pal Program
- 44 Meals on Wheels Stewards
- 15 Thanksgiving Food Drive Coordination
- 10 Delivery for VEAP, STEP and SW Options
- 6 Pounds of Love Coordination
- 36 Red Cross Blood Drive Stewards
- 40 Funeral Ministry
- 8 New Parishioner Committee
- 40 Ghana/San Max Committee
- 30 Parish Directory
- 16 Habitat for Humanity
- 6 Weeders and Feeders (Gardeners)

### Clubs & Organizations

- 250+ Men's Club Service
- 41 Knights of Columbus Marian Council members
- 119 Boy Scout & Cub Scouts (Adult & youth)
- 30 Moms of Grace
- 58 Parent School Organization leaders/members

### Catechists & Helpers

- 562 School
- 15 FF Core Team Members
- 2 RCIA Facilitators
- 3 Early Childhood Family Life Facilitators
- 6 Children's Liturgy of the Word
- 24 Sunday School
- 24 Wednesday FF
- 9 EDGE
- 28 Confirmation
- 10 Child Faith Formation Advisory Committee
- 5 Baptism Ministry
- 23 Marriage Mentor Couples
- 30 John Paul II Tutors

### Faith Formation

- 50 Adult Bible Studies
- 668 School enrollment (K-8)
- 6 Early Childhood Family Life families
- 25 Children's Liturgy of the Word
- 67 Sunday school (age 3-5)
- 141 Wednesday FF (grades 1-5)
- 53 Wednesday EDGE (grades 6-8)
- 30 Tuesdays on the EDGE
- 96 High School Life Night/Confirmation
- 75 Come and See Bible Study

### Youth Activities

- 47 Mission Home
- 80 8th grade and HS Peer Ministers
- 20 Steubenville Conference
- 46 Middle School Service Club
- 138 Sports Programs
- 18 Extreme Faith Camp

### Sacramental Celebrations

- 125 Baptisms (Infant)
- 16 RCIA Candidates
- 117 First Reconciliation
- 117 First Communion
- 70 Confirmation
- 28 Weddings
- 60 Funerals





# FINANCIAL OVERVIEW

Dear Friends,

Fiscal year 2016 was another solid year for Our Lady of Grace as the steady growth that we experienced in 2015 continued. While we are in the final stages of completing our audit at the time of this report, the following results reflect what should be confirmed through the audit.

The beautiful mission statement of Our Lady of Grace is: "To Make Jesus Christ Known and Loved" and this mission cannot be lived out without first understanding at a deep and personal level, that everything we have is a gift from God, and as such we should try to express our gratitude to God for those gifts. We are so grateful to the parishioners of Our Lady of Grace who demonstrate a consistent commitment to God and Our Lady of Grace through gifts of their prayer, service, and tithe.

From a financial results perspective, we were able to end fiscal year 2016 with a "Net Ordinary Income Surplus." The "Ordinary" income results are a reflection of how we manage our "day-to-day" operations. At a summary level, the revenues collected from all ministries were slightly better than our projected budget. We experienced an 8.8% increase in "collection revenue" over the budget. It is this "collection" revenue that funds many of our ministries and pays for the day-to-day operating expenses of the parish. We are very thankful for your continued financial support and we are hopeful that we can continue this positive trend. On the expense side of the ledger we were able to control "manageable" costs which allowed us to show total operating expenses for the year under what we had budgeted. This combination of operating revenues greater than budget and operating expenses less than budget enabled us to perform some maintenance projects over the summer that improved the efficiency of the campus, improving accessibility for all parishioners, as well as increasing and improving campus security.

In addition to a surplus in the day-to-day financial performance of the parish and school, we are also able to report a surplus in "Net Income" after "Other" income and expenses. Included in the "Other" income and expenses are items like gains and losses on our parish investment

accounts held at Catholic Community Foundation (CCF) and any special gifts we received over the course of the fiscal year as well.

Over the last several years we have spent considerable time and energy growing our endowments. The endowments are very important to the long term financial future of our parish and school. We were blessed to receive gifts to the endowments that went directly into the endowment funds at Catholic Community Foundation (CCF). As far as market performance, fiscal year 2016 remained a volatile year in the markets and our funds experienced a modest decline in market valuation as a result of this volatility.

In closing we remain committed to operating the finances of our parish in a "balanced" way so as to maintain your trust. We ask you to recommit yourselves to this beautiful community as well. Please prayerfully consider making a new financial commitment or to increasing your financial commitment to allow us to continue to build a bright, Christ-filled future for Our Lady of Grace and for all those we serve. Please help us continue to live our parish mission: "To Make Jesus Christ Known and Loved." We depend on your committed financial support.

Your brother in Christ,

*Jeff Hansen*

Finance Council Chair



In Christ's Love,

*Dcn. Bob Durham*

Business Administrator





# WEEKLY HOUSEHOLD TITHING

The following chart illustrates the average weekly tithe by percentage of households whose giving is trackable through envelope collection, check or automatic payment (EFT and credit card). During our last fiscal year, trackable donations were made by approximately 66% of parishioners.

