

Funeral Luncheons Ministry is a Wonderful Opportunity for Stewardship

If ever there was a sign of hospitality and love for all to see, it certainly is evident when grieving families and friends arrive for our funeral luncheons and see the array of foods prepared just for them.

Our Funeral Luncheons Ministry is actually made up of two groups – Calling for Food, and Serving. Rita Ritter, our Parish Secretary, coordinates the groups.

“Our parish provides the ham, turkey, and buns for sandwiches,” Rita says. “Then I have nine callers, and we have split the parish register into nine segments, and each has a list of about 110 people to call. When I know how many guests are expected, I call them and tell them to call their list to bring salads, chips, pickles, and bars.”

During the course of a year, all nine are called at least once to contact parishioners for food. There are, on average, two to three funerals per month. Some funeral luncheons have had 150 guests, meaning that there was a need for 15 salads and 12 pans of bars.



Members of our parish always respond when they receive the call for food for a funeral luncheon. Here is a selection from a recent event.



Our parish provides the ham and turkey for the sandwiches, and our Funeral Luncheon volunteers prepare the sandwiches the day of the luncheon.

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Funeral Luncheons Ministry Is a Wonderful Opportunity for Stewardship *continued from front cover*

During the luncheon itself, the serving portion of the ministry handles the actual serving of the food to the funeral guests.

As the process is put into motion for each funeral luncheon, our parishioners are able to express their stewardship through the hospitality that offers comfort to the grieving families.

"I think that, especially for the people who bring in food, this is a very important part of stewardship," Rita says. "They may not have the time to participate in a committee we have in stewardship, such as Finance Council, but they are all willing to bring in a salad, or get chips and bars. For a majority of the parish, it's a way to be good stewards. Everyone is so busy with children and work, this is something they can do that doesn't involve a lot of time. But they are still giving, still providing.

"People are so appreciative," she adds. "Many don't expect that we'll offer this. And some don't expect so many homemade things, but when they see the array of homemade salads and bars, they are amazed and appreciative. It's our parish we serve, and our parishioners can show their friends and relatives that this is what our parish does."

Although we have the opportunity to sign up for the Funeral Luncheons Ministry during our Stewardship Renewal period, anyone interested may contact Rita Ritter at the parish office at 701-223-3606.

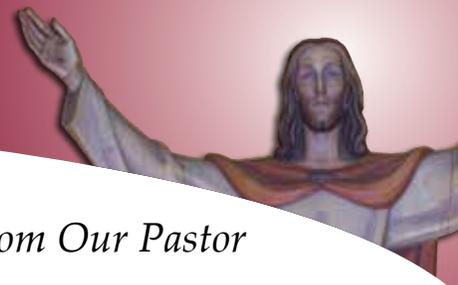


Julie Luger prepares a tray.



Cathy Hruby prepares for a recent funeral luncheon.

"People are so appreciative. Many don't expect that we'll offer this. And some don't expect so many homemade things, but when they see the array of homemade salads and bars, they are amazed and appreciative. It's our parish we serve, and our parishioners can show their friends and relatives that this is what our parish does." – Rita Ritter, Parish Secretary



A Letter from Our Pastor

A New Year, New Challenges, New Opportunities

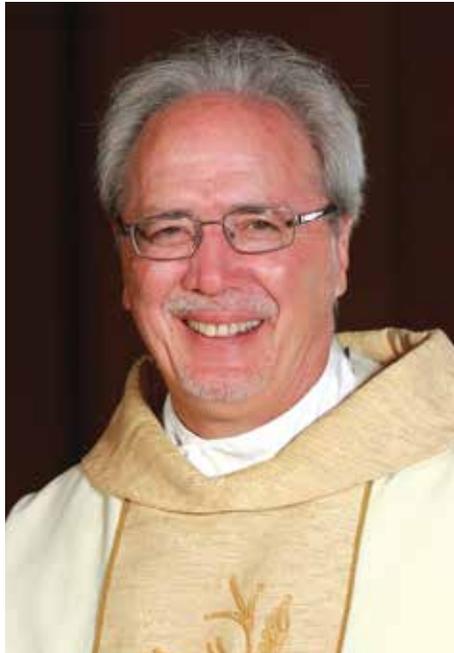
Dear Parishioners,

It is a new year, and it is my prayer for all of you – and for me, as well – that we can take new steps on our faith journeys, and seek new ways to live out discipleship and stewardship.

Pope Francis once commented on his perspective of our modern approach to life. He said, “Certainly, possessions, money and power can give a momentary thrill, the illusion of being happy, but they end up possessing us and making us always want more, never satisfied. I have learned that the most important thing is to put on Christ in your life, place your trust in Him, and you will never be disappointed.”

The pope has been called “the world’s parish priest.” As we pray for one another in this New Year, may we all ask the Lord to help us appreciate Pope Francis’ approach to life, his simple way of seeing things, and his very basic way of appreciating things. I would hope that we see this year as a time for opportunity, a time to deepen our relationship to Christ, and for that matter to one another.

If we really wish to change our lives and the lives of others, there are two easy ways to do it. We are blessed with many opportunities in this parish to pray, but as much as it is important for us to take advantage of those, we also need to develop a strong personal prayer life.



Recall the young Samuel, who was not quite sure what to do with his life, or what direction to go. When he finally settled on that one important prayer, “Speak, Lord, for I am listening,” Samuel gave us the hint as to what we need to do. Prayer is a two-way street, and part of that is taking the time to listen to God.

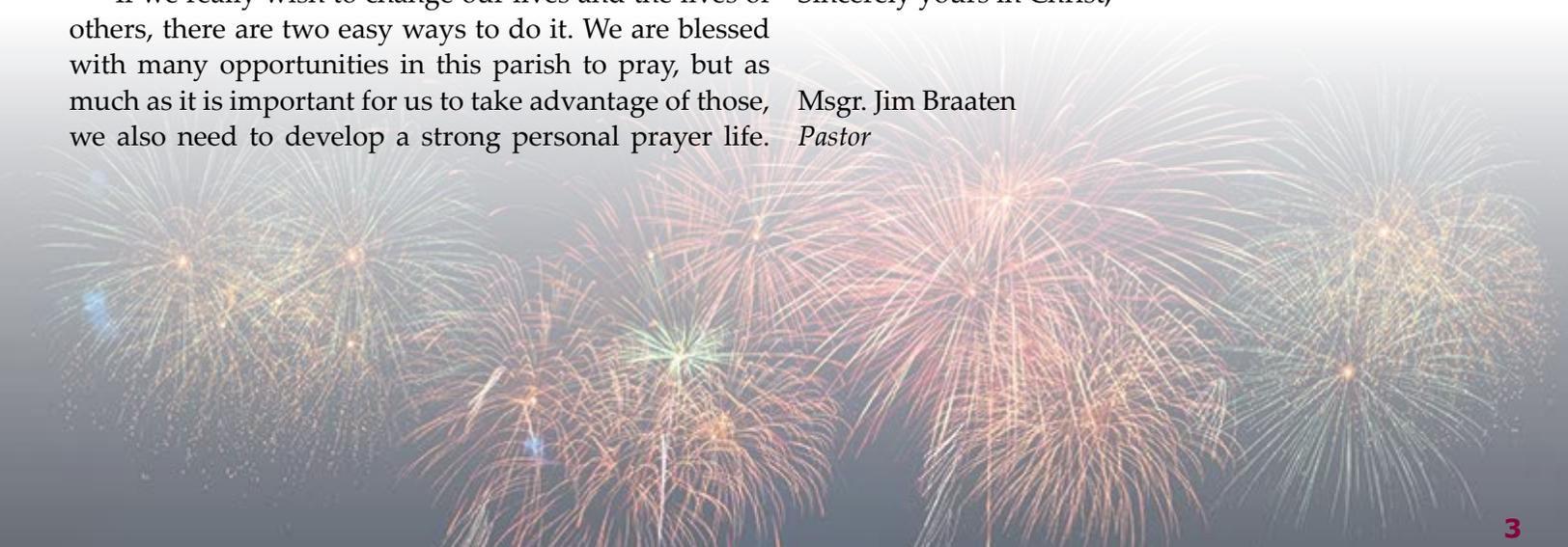
The second important way is to exude joy. Christ certainly called us to do that. Pope Francis has had much to say about joy, as well. The Holy Father says, “Joy cannot be held at heel; it must be let go. Joy is a pilgrim virtue. It is a gift that walks – walks on the path of life, that walks with Jesus... proclaiming joy, lengthens and widens that path.” We must seek

that joy and then we need to share it. That is truly our call. Joy translates quite easily into “love your neighbor.”

Yes, there may be challenges ahead in 2017, but we must focus on the opportunities, and then exert the effort to benefit from those opportunities. Happy New Year!

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Msgr. Jim Braaten
Pastor





Catholic Daughters *Shining With the*



Newly commissioned officers for Court Immaculate Conception #322 pictured with our ND State Regent June 2016.



Our Chaplain leads the Rosary to begin our monthly meetings.



After every meeting, we enjoy visiting and eating a light lunch together.

Last December, if you went to the Catholic Daughters of the Americas (CDA) bake sale, you may have been greeted warmly by young ladies who offered you coffee and gave you some food samples. It may have reminded you of the love of Christ – and that’s just what the CDA does in so many incredible, unique ways.

“Several mothers in the area wanted their daughters to be involved in something faith-based, so our CDA court just started up a group of Junior Catholic Daughters,” says Delores Friedt, who serves as Regent of the court. “We just held a welcoming ceremony for them in December. We sponsor them, give them support and guidance, and include them in our events.”

The Catholic Daughters of the Americas, established in 1903, is one of the largest organizations of Catholic women in the Americas. They donate to charities, administer scholarship programs and strive to be helping hands where there is pain, poverty, sorrow, or sickness. The CDA’s patroness is the Blessed Mother, and its motto is “Unity and Charity.” The CDA currently numbers about 66,000 dues-paying members in 1,150 courts – or local chapters – in 45 states across the country, and in Puerto Rico, Mexico, Guam, the Virgin Islands, Kenya, and Peru.

Our local CDA court, the Court of the Immaculate Conception #322, was established in 1917. It includes about 214 members and serves the five Catholic parishes in Bismarck, as well as St. Hildegard Parish in Menoken. Its meetings take place on the first Tuesday of each month at 7 p.m. at the Cathedral of the Holy Spirit in Bismarck, except during the months of June, July and August.

“The main principle we embrace is our faith and the promotion of justice, equality and the advancement of dignity for all. We serve in the areas of volunteer leadership, spiritual enhancement, quality of life, America, education, legislation and community service.”



s of the Americas: *the Love of Christ*

“The main principle we embrace is our faith, and we want to work with love for the promotion of justice, equality and the advancement of human rights and human dignity for all,” Delores says. “We serve in the areas of what we call the Circle of Love program – leadership, spiritual enhancement, quality of life, youth/junior Catholic Daughters of America, education, legislation and charitable projects.”

For example, the Court of the Immaculate Conception faithfully supports the work of Home on the Range, a therapeutic, working ranch located in western North Dakota that provides a Catholic atmosphere for youth in need by means of education, therapy, spiritual guidance, and recreational and work activities. Each year, the court invites a speaker from Home on the Range to talk about their programs and collect donations for items the home needs. Recently, the court also hosted a speaker from the Labour Society, an organization that helps those who want to join a religious community or seminary to pay off outstanding student loans. Furthermore, the court is sincerely dedicated to supporting our diocesan seminarians. Some of the court’s members volunteer to serve at Ruth Meier’s Hospitality House, as well.

“We try very hard to support religious and priestly vocations,” Delores says. “Many of our members have committed to praying for a certain seminarian and remembering them on their birthdays and special occasions.”

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The National CDA motto is Unity and Charity.

For more information about this beautiful ministry, please contact Delores Friedt at 701- 221-2818.

Those who would like to join or inquire about doing so are more than welcome to come to the court’s meetings.



2016 Faith Formation CHRISTMAS PARTY

With Decorating of Treat Bags for the Annual Christmas Dinner





“Be in God’s Word” *Ascension’s Bible Study*

For Dave and Bev Charles, a Bible study is opening the Word of God in a newly accessible and engaging way. Suddenly, the Bible has become a riveting narrative that speaks to our contemporary lives.

“What I found is that Jeff Cavins makes the Bible appear like a story, like a Tom Clancy novel,” Dave says. “You start to see some of the reasons for why the Church is structured the way it is. The more knowledge you gain, the more you appreciate Tradition.”

For many, reading the Bible may seem like a daunting task. Should we begin at the beginning? Should we read some of the Old Testament and the New Testament each day? How do the books of the Bible fit together into the story of salvation history?

The Bible Timeline: The Story of Salvation, a Bible study by Jeff Cavins, Tim Gray and Sarah Christmyer, uses a color-coded system and a detailed timeline chart to take participants through the Bible as a story, highlighting major events, periods and figures.

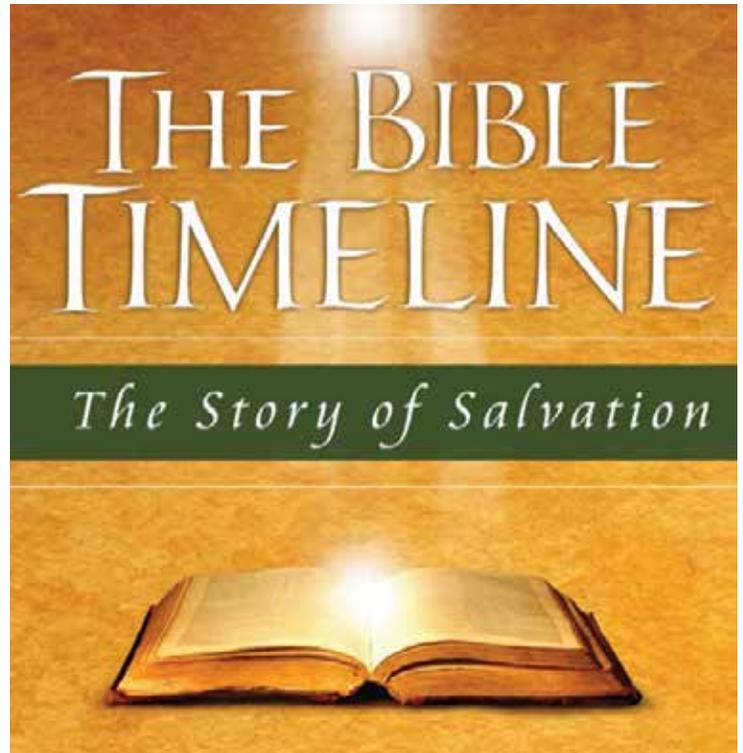
“It is an incredible Bible study,” Bev says. “It really gives you a very good overview of the Bible. When we go to Mass on Sunday and hear the readings, we now just have a better perspective of what they are all about.”

Last year, Dave and Bev participated in an eight-week version of the Bible Study at the parish. As they were eager to engage in the extended 24-week study, they offered to be the coordinators of it.

Today, the Bible Study meets every Wednesday from 7 p.m. until 8 p.m. at Ascension. Most participants arrive 15 minutes early and stay afterwards for conversation. They begin the accompanying video at 7 p.m.

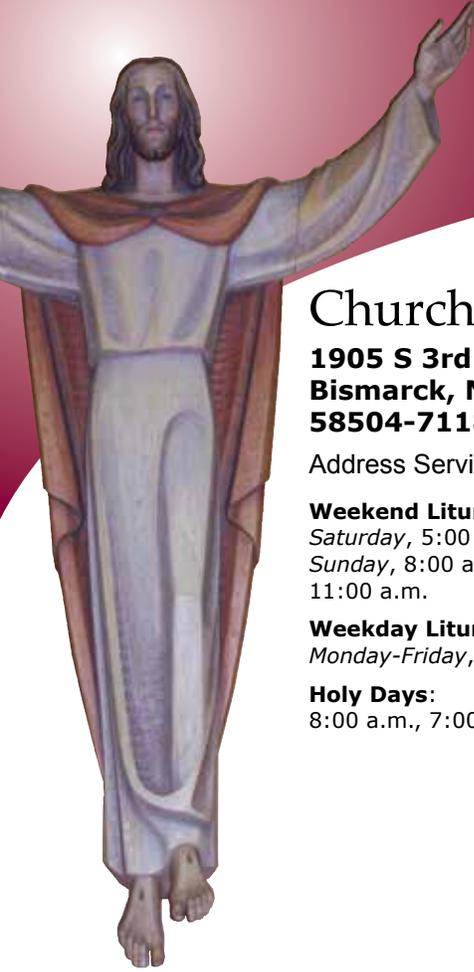
“In the video, Jeff Cavins speaks to a number of folks gathered in a church,” Dave says. “The study is divided into 12 sections and starts with the ‘early world’ and goes

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For more information about Ascension’s Bible Study, reach out to the parish office at 701-223-3606. Faith community members are also welcome to reach out to Dave Charles at 701-202-6426 or Bev Charles at 701-202-6427.

“I really believe that there is a part of us that can only be filled by God. We, as parents, need to teach our children. What better way to teach them than to be in God’s Word?” – Bev Charles



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Address Service Requested

Weekend Liturgy

Saturday, 5:00 p.m.

*Sunday, 8:00 a.m., 9:30 a.m.,
11:00 a.m.*

Weekday Liturgy:

Monday-Friday, 8:00 a.m.

Holy Days:

8:00 a.m., 7:00 p.m.

"Be in God's Word" *continued from page 7*

all the to 'the Church.' As he is talking, he'll interject with relatable personal or current issues."

Participants each have a workbook to use and the timeline chart to follow.

"He has a great way of telling a story and relating it to today," Bev says. "It is the whole story of how God is calling His people and that thread of God's love throughout the whole Bible."

Anyone in high school or older is welcome to join the Bible Study. It is accessible for lifelong Catholics, like Bev, and for those who converted to the faith, like Dave.

"It was eye-opening to see the Catholic perspective," Dave says. "I had also never really read the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, and the study draws on the Bible and the Catechism, showing how they correlate."

By taking adults on a dynamic excursion through the Bible, Ascension's Bible Study offers us the formation and the tools to teach our families about the Word of God and our faith traditions.

"I really believe that there is a part of us that can only be filled by God," Bev says. "We, as parents, need to teach our children. What better way to teach them than to be in God's Word?"



Ascension's Bev and Dave Charles

Stewardship is the grateful response of a Christian disciple who recognizes and receives God's gifts and shares these gifts in love of God and neighbor.