



St. Michael's Parish Newsletter

A welcoming Eucharistic community, sharing Faith and reaching out to all...

*"In that region there were shepherds living in the fields,
keeping watch over their flocks by night.
Then an angel of the Lord stood before them,
and the glory of the Lord shone around them.
'Do not be afraid, I am bringing you good news of great joy'."*

...Luke 2:8-10



Dear Brothers & Sisters,

When we think about Jesus' first coming, as a child on Christmas Day, we cannot help but be happy. Just thinking about the manger scene in Bethlehem reminds us of how much God loves us. We feel an impulse to celebrate, to gather with loved ones, and to think about God's desire to come and be with us. We are moved to celebrate that Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of God, became a human being so that he could redeem us.

The mystery of the Incarnation tells us that God, who is all powerful, made a sacrifice when he accepted all the limitations that come with having a human body. He tells us that God loves us so much that he was willing to give up the glory of heaven, and come to us as a helpless infant, all so that he could redeem us. This mystery is all about God's mercy.

Jesus submitted himself to death on a cross for our forgiveness and salvation. Christmas can never be separated from Easter. The more we understand the connection between Christmas and Easter the more clearly we will see that Jesus came to set us free, not to just tell us how much he loved us.

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Christmas Celebrations

Christmas Eve (Carols one half hour prior to each Mass):

Thursday, December 24th - 4:30pm, 7:00pm, 9:00pm & 12:00 midnight

Christmas Day:

Friday, December 25th - 10:30am & 12:30pm

Feast of Mary, Mother of God

(Holy Day of Obligation):

Thursday, December 31st - 5:00pm

Friday, January 1st -

10:30am & 12:30pm

Christmas Reconciliation Schedule:

Wednesday, December 9th -

(All Day Confessions): 8:30am-7:00pm

Monday, December 21st -

10:00-11:00am, 3:00-4:00pm,

7:00-8:00pm





Father Murray Continued...

When we celebrate Christmas, our hearts are drawn to thank God for our redemption. We are led to praise God for being faithful to his plan to rescue us from sin. Through his death, Jesus has restored us to God.



The Pastoral Team of St. Michael's invites you to come and celebrate God's love. We look forward to raising our voices in praise of God, to feast with you at the Altar where Jesus is made present under the form of bread and wine.

Please consider coming at midnight, the traditional hour for the Church to gather to remember the Light of the World who comes to break the darkness of sin.

Fr. Murray Sample
Pastor



Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults

by Yana Adkinson

The Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA) is a process in which participants undergo conversion of mind and heart as they study the Gospel, profess faith in Jesus and the Catholic Church, and receive the sacraments of Initiation (Baptism, Eucharist and Confirmation). RCIA is not just another class with a lot of information about Catholic faith as it is a process of formation, a spiritual journey of getting to know "Emmanuel", God with us.

This year we have 14 adults and seven children journeying towards becoming Catholic. Our RCIA program has individuals from many different religious backgrounds (Agnostic, Hindu, Anglican, Presbyterian, United, Russian Orthodox, Greek Orthodox, Coptic Orthodox) and different cultural backgrounds (Canadian, Chinese, Indian, Russian, Greek, Jamaican). We have two families that would like to join the Catholic Church as a family, along with their children, so parents come to RCIA sessions for adults on Wednesday evenings and bring their children to RCIA for children on Monday evenings.

Adults or older children who have not been baptized or introduced to Christianity at all are called Catechumens. This year we have four adult catechumens and two child catechumens who will receive all three Sacraments of Initiation at the Easter Vigil: Baptism, Eucharist and Confirmation. Adults or older children who have been baptized in a Christian tradition but are seeking initiation into the Catholic Church through Eucharist and

Confirmation are called Candidates. This year there are ten Candidates in the RCIA process preparing for the Sacraments of Confirmation and the Eucharist during their reception into the Catholic Church.

People journeying through the RCIA process need sponsors as well as support from our parish community to help them grow in faith. This year, we have a wonderful group of sponsors, various members of our parish who volunteered to help guide, support and mentor RCIA members in their faith journey. Sponsors come to the RCIA sessions, participate in discussions and pray for the person they are supporting.

Our RCIA team also has four catechists who lead table discussions and take turns to present various topics to RCIA candidates and catechumens. We also use a dynamic faith formation program called Symbolon to help form RCIA members by immersing them in the richness of the Catholic faith and exploring fundamental questions like, "Who was Jesus? Why did he start a Church? How can I get the most out of reading the Bible? Why do I need the Sacrament of Reconciliation? Why must Catholics care for the poor?" And much more!

As we enter this beautiful season of Advent and welcome Christ once again into our homes and our hearts, please, keep our RCIA catechumens and candidates in your prayers that they will welcome "God who became Man" into their homes and their hearts and discover His Joy and Peace!



Holy Year of Mercy: Dec. 8, 2015 - Nov. 20, 2016



A Jubilee Year is a special year called by the Church to receive blessing and pardon from God and remission of sins. The Catholic Church has called jubilee years every 25 or 50 years since the year 1300 and has called special jubilee years from time to time.

The last jubilee year was held in 2000 to mark the 2,000th year of the birth of Christ. Pope Francis has called a new jubilee to begin Dec. 8th, 2015 and end Nov. 20th, 2016. Pope Francis has titled this jubilee as a *Year of Mercy*, merciful like the Father. There is a tremendous need for mercy in our world today. Pope Francis sees every parish as "islands of mercy in a sea of indifference." (Lent 2015)

Pope Francis desires that this year will bring consolation to the poor and liberty to those bound by new forms of slavery." Pope Francis invites people to become more merciful in their own lives and bring God's mercy to others.

During the jubilee year there will be invitations to all of us to seek God's mercy:

- ✚ Contemplating the mercy of God
- ✚ Extending mercy to those who have sinned against us
- ✚ Refraining from judging or condemning others
- ✚ Listening to God's word
- ✚ Spending time in Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament
- ✚ Receiving the gift of the Sacrament of Reconciliation



Prayer of Pope Francis for the Holy Year of Mercy

Lord Jesus Christ, you have taught us to be merciful like the heavenly Father, and have told us that whoever sees you sees Him.

Show us your face and we will be saved.

Your loving gaze freed Zacchaeus and Matthew from being enslaved by money;
the adulteress and Magdalene from seeking happiness only in created things;
made Peter weep after his betrayal,
and assured Paradise to the repentant thief.

Let us hear, as if addressed to each one of us, the words that you spoke to the Samaritan woman:
"If you knew the gift of God!"

You are the invisible face of the invisible Father,

of God who manifests his power above all by forgiveness and mercy: let the Church be your visible face in the world, its Lord risen and glorified.

You willed that your ministers would also be clothed in weakness in order that they may feel compassion for those in ignorance and error:

let everyone who approaches them feel sought after, loved, and forgiven by God.
Send your Spirit and consecrate every one of us with its anointing,

so that the Jubilee of Mercy may be a year of grace from the Lord, and your church, with renewed enthusiasm, may bring good news to the poor, proclaim liberty to captives and the oppressed, and restore sight to the blind.

We ask this through the intercession of Mary, Mother of Mercy, you who live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit for ever and ever.

Amen.



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“Inside” the Parish Office

by Doug Manners

I am pleased to share with the parishioners of St. Michael's some views and reflections from 'inside' the office. As I reflect back on my first year as Business Administrator at the church, I first think of what a dynamic and fulfilling experience it has been.

I continue to be amazed at the diversity and vibrancy that is St. Michael's and the overwhelming sense of community and inclusion that pervades every aspect of pastoral life here. I have felt welcomed, encouraged and accepted since I arrived. With this role being completely new and many not knowing what to expect, to have received such strong support has been truly joyous. I thank Father Murray for the opportunity to serve the parish and thank the people for their acceptance.

Certainly we have been busy as an office and as a parish community in these 13 months. We have welcomed four new staff members, all of whom have brought real enthusiasm and energy to their roles in ministry and administration. It continues to be a pleasure to work with a very dedicated and faithful staff.

We as a parish family have also successfully undertaken a huge capital campaign. The Give to Grow – Foundations for Our Future effort was a true testament to the commitment that we all have to the future of St. Michael's. This has been a true investment in generations of Catholics for the next 100 years.

Thank you all again for your incredible generosity in making the campaign an overwhelming success! Because of this campaign we have completed two of the required projects with the replacement of the HVAC system and final roofing security to come this spring. Combined with this functionally integral project, we will be moving towards some of the other projects that will continue to improve the experiences here at St. Michael's. Keep an eye out for news and work in the near future!

There have also been some new initiatives undertaken and some restarted in this past year. One of the most comprehensive is the Health and Safety program. The purpose of this program was not only to ensure that we are compliant with governmental regulations but more so as a responsibility for the safety and wellbeing of the office staff and parishioners.

The Artificial External Defibrillator now on-site will provide an opportunity for responsiveness in a critical situation. I thank all parishioners who have taken the AED training that was offered by the church.

With dedicated volunteer help, we have also restarted the Bereavement Program and the Communications Committee, both of which we know will be doing vital work for the parish community. Working directly with the Finance, Building, and Communications Committees and reporting to Parish Council has given me a greater insight into the valuable roles of these groups and I am very encouraged by the dedication of the volunteers on these committees.

Another considerable focus has been on maintenance of the 'physical plant' of the church. Inspection and maintenance contracts on the major components of the church have been started to ensure that they function at their highest efficiency, and to maximize their life and avoid major failures. In the past, preventive maintenance of these systems was not a priority, causing a fair amount of repair expenses.

This practice is also an intelligent approach to ensure that we get the most out of these systems in the most economical way, especially as we add an entire new HVAC system to the church in 2016.

The spending and allocation of the offertory gifts from you, our parish family, are the primary focus of my role here at St. Michael's and I will continue to ensure that the treasure given to us is spent effectively.

In closing, I would like to reiterate what a pleasure this change in my career has been. To be able to meet so many wonderful people, to be able to serve Christ and this parish family in so many diverse ways continues to invigorate me and I hope to do so for years to come. Please know that I am always interested and happy to hear from you.

You may contact me at **519-433-6689 Ext. 205** or via e-mail at **dmanners@dol.ca**.



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Christmas Traditions

by Fr. Francis
Thekkumkattill C.S.T.



Father Francis is the Vicar of St. Mary's Syro-Malabar Catholic Church in London, Ontario

In Kerala, India, Christmas or Nativity is one of the most important feasts celebrated by the Syro-Malabar community. The four weeks of Advent are a time of cleansing, recollection and renewal to prepare for the celebration of the birth of Jesus. The Faithful abstain from meat, some even from anything non-vegetarian including fish and eggs, during this season; some people give up things dear to them like coffee, tea, alcohol, tobacco, etc. Many people attend daily Mass for the twenty four days leading up to Christmas. In the last week of Advent all prepare themselves spiritually by receiving the Sacrament of Penance; during those days priests are available throughout the whole day for hearing Confession.

The Star of David or Christmas Star is of very great importance among the Kerala Christians. In front of every house or shop and building illuminated stars are visible and many live trees will be decorated. By the 24th of December there will be a nativity crib in every house. In churches and institutions very elaborate cribs depicting the whole scene of Bethlehem are set up outside. After Christmas a group visits all the cribs in the houses and the best one in every ward is awarded a prize.

The Christmas celebration starts in the churches at midnight. It starts with the Nativity narration and scene in front of the crib prepared outside of the church. After the reading of the gospel and a short homily the statue of the Child Jesus is carried by the priest and goes around a bonfire three times, accompanied by all the people, then they go in procession into the church. The statue of the Child Jesus is placed in the manger prepared inside the church. After incensing, the Mass of the Midnight is

celebrated. After Mass Christmas cakes are cut by the Pastor and shared by all the people. In every church the Mass of the Dawn and the Mass of the Day also are celebrated. A sumptuous meal with meat and traditional ethnic food items, besides Christmas cakes and other confections are prepared and shared by all the family members.

Christmas is a time for relatives and neighbors to visit each other and to share peace and joy. On the evening of Christmas day different groups from the parish visit all the families in the parish, irrespective of caste and creed, with the statue of the Child Jesus, singing carols and wishing them Christmas greetings.

In Canada Keralites try to keep the same traditions as much as possible. Here also Advent is a time of spiritual cleansing, recollection and renewal. Many Kerala Christians observe abstinence from meat and fast on Fridays. They find time

to receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation either in their local parishes or in their own ethnic parish and prepare spiritually for the birth of Christ.

A few days before Christmas a group from the parish visits all the families with the statue of the Child Jesus, singing carols and wishing them the peace and joy of Christmas. Every family prepares a crib at home with the nativity scene just as they do it in Kerala. For Christmas a Solemn Mass is celebrated in the church depending on the availability of the church and priests, after which a traditional ethnic meal is shared by all with the cutting of Christmas cake.

So even in Canada, distanced by seven seas, the Keralites try to celebrate Christmas keeping all the ethnic traditions as far as possible.



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Meet our new Coordinator of Youth Ministry

Sylvain Patry is the new Coordinator of Youth Ministry at St. Michael's. He has recently moved to London with his wife Justine and their six children. They have been parishioners of St. Michael's for over a year. They have all become involved in children's liturgy and the youth group. Sylvain was born and raised in Ottawa and worked in carpentry, estimation and project management for a family business of construction and residential acquisitions. Eventually he started his own high-end remodeling business specializing in Church restoration, kitchen, bath and commercial projects serving the Ottawa area for over fifteen years.

Sylvain married his wife Justine in 1997 after re-embracing the Catholic faith after being away for nearly 10 years. He credits this return to his wife for living her faith and also his spiritual director, the late Fr. Bob Bedard of the Companions of the Cross, after hearing his first homily on "The Prodigal Son." Sylvain says "He (Fr. Bob Bedard) met me where I was in life, he answered every question I had, and there were hundreds. He welcomed me home in so many ways."

Sylvain quickly got involved with his wife in many ministries at St. Mary's parish; including Bible studies, Sunday school and Youth Ministry. They also attended St. Paul's University theology workshops, Catholic speaking

events and led other Christian events around Ottawa. After selling his business, Sylvain and his family moved to Sault Ste Marie, ON (where Justine is from) where he studied to be a financial advisor. With their pastor's support at Our Lady of Good Counsel Parish Sylvain and Justine organized a children's liturgy and youth group because there was simply nothing available for the children and teenagers in that area. Sylvain also completed a two year research study on youth groups, youth trends and local inter-denominational youth groups in the Diocese of Sault Ste Marie.

As St. Michael's new coordinator, he was impressed that the hiring committee was extremely diligently spiritual and professional in all aspects of the interview. What impressed him also was they had a very similar vision. Sylvain remembers that a vital theme in all meetings was accountability, integrity, passion and finding new ways of "meeting people, especially teens where they are in life."

He looks forward to working with a dedicated pastoral team. "I am extremely excited about this calling and the quality and experience of each individual on the team. I would like to reassure our parishioners that my commitment to my faith, family and our parish is of the most importance to me. My past business and leadership skills include listening, compassion, developing other people in relational ministry, youth trending and social media. I have always been hard working and believe in accountability. I'm ready to support Fr. Murray, Fr. Don and Yana Adkinson in ministry in any way; offering everyone in our parish and community an opportunity to grow in faith together. I am looking forward to serving our community with a new vision, allowing our leaders and youth groups to grow together, creating new and exciting opportunities for teens to experience an encounter with Christ."

And it all starts with: "we must be willing to meet people where they are in life."

Feel free to contact Sylvain at: Sylvain Patry, Coordinator of Youth Ministry, 519-433-6689 Ex. 206 or email: spatry@dol.ca.





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St. Michael's Parish: A Student Perspective

by Giacomo Barone



I would like to extend my salutations to all who do not know me. My name is Giacomo Barone and I am a student at Western University. I volunteer at St. Michael's Parish in the capacity of an Usher. Before I express any form of opinion I would like to communicate my utmost gratitude to the many individuals who have embraced my presence within St. Michael's Parish. I am grateful that I was eagerly welcomed within the Parish and feel as if I am part of their hospitable family.

I was born and raised as a Roman Catholic and received all three sacraments; Baptism, Communion and Confirmation. As we all know, two of the sacraments are initiated by our parents but it is the third sacrament where you must reconfirm your adherence and responsibility in your beliefs, as a young adult. It is a momentous occasion for youth because it is a time when their understanding of religion is heightened. I viewed it as an authentic affirmation of my faith and took pride in receiving this sacrament.



My perspective on youth in relation to St. Michaels, and in a broader focus, the Roman Catholic Church is similar to that of a Bible passage; "Don't let the excitement of youth cause you to forget your Creator." Ecclesiastes 12:1. As a student, I am aware of what it is like to be overwhelmed by academics, social events, peer pressure etc. and in turn, push your faith into the background to focus on what is "important."

It is much easier to set aside attending church, and rely on prayer to fortify your connection with God. However, it is right to show him our devotion and praise on a regular basis. My mother regularly demonstrated that praying was essential but entering God's house was a sign of respect, commitment and piety which furthered your relationship with God.

Young people are an intrinsic element within the Roman Catholic Church and it is evident that St. Michael's recognizes this notion. St. Michael's has implemented extensive programs, events and activities designed to attract and encourage the younger audience of the parish. By incorporating youth involvement, St. Michael's empowers

these adolescents, providing them with a voice within the Church. St. Michael's is able to educate these young people, in turn, enabling them to become true practitioners of the faith. A message I would like to deliver to my fellow youth parishioners would be "don't let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith and in purity." Timothy 4:12. Age is not a barrier to being virtuous, we should convey our love and appreciation for our faith through righteous actions on a daily basis.

St. Michael's provided me with a theological outlet and allowed me to immerse myself within my faith. I now act as a minister of hospitality, looking forward to seeing familiar faces and being enlightened by the words spoken by Father Don or Father Murray every Sunday. Our fellow parishioners of St. Michael's make this church exceedingly remarkable and inviting. The familial atmosphere that St. Michael's upholds is exceptional.

Once again, I would like to thank St. Michael's Parish as I have a genuine admiration for this house of worship. I view my position as usher with high regard and can only hope to continue serving my faith.

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St. Michael's Bereavement Ministry

by Angela Townend



The following is an interview with parishioner Peter Valiquet who is one of the facilitators of the bereavement ministry here at St. Michael's. We asked Peter some questions we felt

in awe of the truths shared as one listens and these words elicit humility and respect beyond measure. To the greatest extent possible the direction of our sharing will be determined by the needs of the participants. I will assume responsibility for the facilitation of the bereavement group with support from the Pastoral Team and will seek input from other sources as deemed appropriate and necessary. The building of a resource library related to the subjects of grief and bereavement is currently in the planning stage.

would best illustrate the purpose of the program and what participants could expect if they decide to attend.

How did you develop an interest in facilitating the bereavement ministry at St. Michael's?

Within the past few years, as a relatively new parishioner at St. Michael's, I became aware of a Bereavement Program offered within the parish. Approaching the facilitator, but careful not to intrude, I was permitted the opportunity to observe the interaction within this prescribed program. What impressed me was the limited opportunity for participant input. Experience has taught me that the bereaved have a profound need to share their stories with attentive listeners and process their content with the support of others in similar circumstances. Grief and bereavement have been an interest of mine for at least thirty years, both professionally as an educator and as a first responder in our Catholic school system. I have initiated grief support programs for children and adolescents and facilitated grief support for the parents of families who have witnessed the death of their child. The impact of any loss can have a profound impact on the lives of the survivors. Unfortunately with the passage of time and the expectation that we should have recovered by now, far too many of us are left with unresolved grief that we must face on our own.

Could you describe what a potential group participant could expect if they attended these sessions. Will there be planned topics, resources, speakers, open ended sharing?

Participants can expect to be greeted with warmth and a sense of gracious hospitality. The physical comfort of our participants is deemed of considerable importance. Trust, respect for confidentiality, the suspension of judgment and an expectation that no one need go outside their comfort zone in our conversations are prerequisites for the work of bereavement. The requirement for open ended discussion presumes personal vulnerability as the disclosures of which survivors speak come from the heart and are tinged with the pain and suffering that have accompanied their losses. As a facilitator one stands

What are your personal hopes in terms of how members could benefit?

When speaking of participant benefits it is important to realize that the phenomenon of loss is as individual as the number of persons in the group. We can safely presume that the effects of unresolved grief can last a lifetime and their impact can be cumulative. The immediacy of the most recent death and/or loss of a relationship is foremost in the mind of the survivor. However, the coping skills used to recover from previous losses are not insignificant. Herein lies fertile ground for further exploration and the growth of personal insight. The prospect that we can form a caring community of persons pursuing a common cause is a very powerful concept in which I place a good deal of hope for future healing. Already the question has been asked: Will I always feel the intensity of the pain I experience today or will it ever subside? For the bereaved person, having taken this first tentative step toward reaching out to our community is an act of faith and a sign of hope for one's future.

Many bereavement programs are not faith based. How will Scripture and one's personal relationship with God be woven into this ministry?

One's relationship with a caring God and the faith tradition to which we belong factor strongly in the approach that will inform this ministry. As we come to grips with the questions, the doubts, the fears, the unresolved issues of forgiveness and the lingering pain of our personal losses, it is impossible to separate these issues from thoughts regarding our own mortality. It is within the context of our prayer life, our reflecting and the reception of the sacraments that we find ultimate meaning in life. With a special fondness for the reflections and writing of Joyce Rupp, a Sister of the Service Community (Fresh Bread and Other Gifts of Spiritual Nourishment; Out of the Ordinary: Prayers, Poems, and Reflections for Every Season; The Open Door: A Journey to the True Self; Praying Our Goodbyes: A Spiritual Companion Through

St. Michael's Bereavement Ministry continued



Life's Losses and Sorrows; Your Sorrow Is My Sorrow: Hope and Strength in Times of Suffering), a decidedly Catholic and Christian flavor will spread through the content of this ministry.

Christmas can be a bittersweet time when grieving especially those first few years. What are your thoughts about how someone can still celebrate the birth of Christ amid their own pain?

Christmas, birthdays and anniversaries are especially difficult for the recently bereaved. This point was raised with considerable sensitivity during the first meeting of our group. The feelings of dread can be overwhelming and the best laid plans to sidestep the sadness can get derailed. Consider your participation in the joyful and prayerful celebrations of the season, including time with family and close friends. Bear in mind that all people (including family members) do not grieve their losses

in the same way and at the same time and expectations can vary widely. Emotional upset for a bereaved person can wash over us unexpectedly and without warning. Reaching out and looking for opportunities to be of service to others can provide respite from the preoccupation of one's loneliness. Anticipation and preplanning for these difficult occasions can help, but it is not foolproof. One helpful article I found in a previous Parish Newsletter written by Angela Townend (Christmas 2014) was "Coping With Grief at Christmas". Within it can be found many practical suggestions.

We thank Peter for contributing his thoughts about this much needed ministry at St. Michael's. For further information, including when the next session is scheduled, please call Peter at 519-672-5003 or email: pvaliquet5@sympatico.ca, or leave your name and number with the parish secretary, Mary Eagan at 519-433-6689.

The Bible Timeline: The Story of Salvation

by Keith
Rodrigues



All parishioners are invited to join Father Don and our Bible Study group. Since October, about twenty-five of us have been meeting on Thursday evenings, when we spend a couple of hours immersed in Holy Scripture and study of The Bible Timeline - The Story of Salvation, by Jeff Cavins.

The course is part of the Great Adventure Catholic Bible Study Program. It is a comprehensive program that consists of 24 sessions. Although that might seem somewhat overwhelming, registration is always open, and you are most welcome to join us whenever you like. The only prerequisites are that you have a Catholic Bible, the Catechism of the Catholic Church (which is freely accessible online), and, most importantly, a desire to understand the message of the scriptures. A study guide is also available during the classes.

This is a unique and exciting approach to learning about our Faith, using a combination of the teachings of the Church and a journey through the chronology of salvation history. The program covers 14 books of the Bible, beginning with Creation and leads us all the way through the long history of the people of Israel, and then through the powerfully evocative Gospel of Luke. It guides us through the fulfilment of the Messianic prophecies, and the establishment of Christ's eternal Church. This huge slice of history is divided into 12 distinct periods, which makes it easy to absorb and remember the many people and events of the "his-story" of our faith. The course is

designed so that even those who have never studied the Bible before will be able to learn to understand its mysteries, and develop a path to further devotion, reading and study.

Some pre-reading is required before each session, but the assignments are intended to encourage better participation in the group discussions. A typical session begins with a small group discussion, during which we attempt to answer questions presented in our study guide. The discussions are open, honest and there is no pressure to contribute. We have found the small group sessions very engaging; it is quite fascinating to hear how different people identify with and connect their personal life experiences to the Bible stories. Each session ends with a video presentation by Jeff Cavins. His lectures are full of insights, as he links various parts of biblical history together into a common thread that connects the salvation story.

Then the Spirit said to Philip, "Go over to this chariot and join it." So Philip ran up to it and heard him reading the prophet Isaiah. He asked, "Do you understand what you are reading?" He replied, "How can I, unless someone guides me?" – (Acts 8:29-31)

All of us in the Bible study group would like to express our thanks to Father Don for his leadership and commitment, and to Veronica Solis-Oba for her help with facilitating the program.



Northern Hospitality Update

by Howie Wright

We Gather Together:

Eighty five volunteers from the four churches (Trinity Lutheran, New St. James Presbyterian, Colborne United and St. Michael's Catholic) involved with Northern Hospitality gathered at St. Michael's for an ecumenical service and meal to celebrate the beginning of another year serving meals to those less fortunate than ourselves.

In order to gain a different perspective I asked the Pastors from each of the churches: How has hosting Northern Hospitality and the ecumenical meal impacted your congregation/parish? I received the following responses:

Trinity Lutheran Church - Pastor Steve Johnston

"Trinity's relationship to Northern Hospitality ministry has been quite intimate. The meal has been hosted here and many people tell the stories of having the building open for that. It is not just the noise and busyness of the night that you notice, it also leaves marks. Things get broken, things get worn out, and things get marked up. But that is okay. Ministry should leave marks. Baptism fonts should be splashed with water, communion rails and kneelers should have grooves and wear marks, and maybe even a crumb or two of bread after the Sunday School kids have been to the table, and pew information cards should be scattered and scribbled upon.

But the biggest marks that are left are on the hearts of those engaged in this beautiful, needed and collaborative Northern Hospitality ministry. Those are marks of compassion, of new insight, of loving care, and even from being a little bruised...it sometimes gets challenging

dealing with people who are struggling with complex issues themselves. A muscle works better the more it is used. So does the compassionate heart. This is what I see in those from Trinity that volunteer at the Northern Hospitality meals. Poverty, hunger and homelessness are close at hand and once a month it comes very close."

Colborne United Church - Rev. David R. Carrothers

"I was part of the founding group that started what was then called "Northern Hospitality" to address a growing need in our community to feed the hungry. My congregation felt and continues to feel and see the importance of this outreach program and ministry. When we were beginning, we participated in a Mayor's Hunger Task Group to assess and then determine how to best respond in providing meals to individuals and families in need, without duplicating our efforts. The plan was to cover every lunch and supper during the week at some location in the inner city. We began by serving an evening meal. It has been my privilege to have attended and served at nearly every meal for which Colborne Street United has been responsible over the years, and what I have witnessed is the "hands on" living out of the message of Christ that when we feed and serve others, we are serving Him. I have also seen that the spirit of hospitality is evident in the way that we treat our "guests" who come to dinner.

While we all wish that there was no longer a need to provide such a service within our community, we realize that sadly that is not the case. Therefore may we continue to do so with the same love and care for others which we have expressed every time we welcome our dinner guests."



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New St. James Presbyterian Church - Rev. Andrew Reid

"When I came to New St. James in 2007, Northern Hospitality had been running for thirteen years. The program was well established as one of our community service ministries, so I am not in a position to comment on how engaging with the program alongside our sister congregations of Trinity, Colborne Street, and St. Michael's has changed New St. James. But I can comment from my

Northern Hospitality Update continued



observations over the last eight years. The program remains a key ministry for New St. James. It brings people together in different ways to exercise their varied gifts and skills, in purchasing, preparing, and cooking the meal, in set-up and take-down, in greeting the guests, and in serving our sisters and brothers in the community. It has allowed people of different ages and backgrounds within the congregation to work together towards a goal that benefits none of us, but benefits individual and families who would otherwise remain hungry.

It has allowed us to engage not only with one another and with our sisters and brothers in Christ of the other congregations involved, but also with the young men from a Jewish fraternity at the university, and with young people from the Muslim Youth organization, who were looking for a community service activity.” For a longer view I asked May Lou McCrimmon, who has coordinated New St. James’ involvement from the beginning, for her thoughts. She wrote “The countless hours of shopping, cooking, serving and cleaning up done by myriads of dedicated people – not to mention the costs involved – are far outweighed by the rewards and satisfaction that come from knowing that we are doing what our Lord commanded us to do in his name: “do unto others...”

St. Michaels’ Catholic Church - Rev. Murray Sample

“I believe hosting Hospitality North at St. Michaels’ has given the parish the opportunity to see in action the Gospel invitation to feed the hungry. It has allowed

many in the parish to have a hands-on experience of this invitation to Christ. It allows us to see Christ in the poor and for them to see Christ in the people who are serving. It has made us more aware of the hunger that exists in Old London North; I believe we are more proactive when it comes to care and concern for the poor.

The Vatican Council II invited us to work together as the Body of Christ, to forget what makes us different as Churches and to see what makes us all one. This adventure of ecumenism between the four churches allows this to be seen in action, not just words. We have found ways to work together and to pray together.”

To be a volunteer, it takes...

- ♥ Generosity, a willingness to give your time to others
- ♥ Understanding, because their lives might be different from your own
- ♥ Compassion, to truly care about making someone else’s life better





Keeping “Christ” in Christmas

by Angela Townend

“Mankind is a great, an immense family...This is proved by what we feel in our hearts at Christmas.”

- Pope John XXIII

Celebrating the birth of Christ is such a special time of year. However it can be challenging at times to stay focused on the birth of Christ as the commercialization of Christmas is powerful and can leave us feeling overwhelmed, stressed and wishing the season were over. Gifts, baked goods, and Christmas songs are wonderful additions to the season but only if we are able to stay mindful of what really matters and not let the busyness and an unrealistic “to do” list take center stage. We’ve listed below some strategies to help keep your gaze fixed on Jesus this Christmas and stay alert to the “reason for the season.”



1. **Christian Christmas music.** Whether it’s online, CDs, YouTube, or just the car radio, wherever you go to listen...play Christian Christmas music. It’s infectious and shouts to our soul about the birth of Christ. Oldies and classics are great but don’t forget some of the more recent songs purposefully written about keeping the focus on Jesus, such as Matthew West’s “The Heart of Christmas” or “This is Christmas” by the Christian band Kutless.
2. **Non-material gifts.** Forgiveness, time, prayer, a humble heart, faith under fire, compassion, understanding. Or maybe this is the season to give Christ centered gifts. Everyone is “gifted for ministry” - take some time this season to reflect on what yours might be. You can find ideas on www.buildingchurch.net.
3. **Simplify.** Consider what resource you find lacking; is it time, energy, focus, money, motivation? Dr. Seuss demonstrated what really matters when he wrote: *“And the Grinch, with his Grinch-feet ice cold in the snow, stood puzzling and puzzling, how could it be so? It came without ribbons. It came without tags. It came without packages, boxes or bags. And he puzzled and puzzled ‘till his puzzler was sore. Then the Grinch thought of something he hadn’t before. What*

if Christmas, he thought, doesn’t come from a store? What if Christmas, perhaps, means a little bit more.” Dr. Seuss, *How the Grinch Stole Christmas!*

4. **Christmas concerts.** Pageants at any church are a wonderful way to celebrate with music, drama and prayer. Ask a friend to join you, perhaps someone who normally doesn’t attend church services. This can be a great time of year to expose them to your faith.
5. **Childhood memories.** Do you remember family rituals from the past that focused on the birth of Christ; midnight mass, carols, lighting the advent candles, Christmas pageants, donations to the needy? It’s wonderful to re-experience a piece of youth at Christmas time.
6. **Christmas Eve or morning devotional.** Before opening gifts, pause to read Chapter 2 of Luke and remember the miracle of Christ’s birth and his humble beginnings. *“The very purpose of Christ’s coming into the world was that He might offer up His life as a sacrifice for the sins of men. He came to die. This is the heart of Christmas.”* Rev. Billy Graham
7. **Christmas movies/books.** Movies or books can reflect Christian values of compassion, sacrifice, and commitment. Check out the series by Donna LanViere; *The Christmas Shoes*, *The Christmas Blessing*, *The Christmas Hope*, *The Christmas Promise*, *The Christmas Secret*.
8. **Nativity scene.** Remember to set up a nativity scene. Be creative and thrifty, check out YouTube or Pinterest. Some of the most beautiful nativity scenes around have been made by little hands with big hearts for Jesus!
9. **Advent candles and prayers.** Remember to light your Advent candles and read the accompanying prayers. The candles signify Hope (week #1), Preparation (week #2), Joy (week #3) and Love (week #4) and their lighting can be a great way to share our faithful preparation for the birth of Christ. *“At this Christmas when Christ comes, will He find a warm heart? Mark the season of Advent by loving and serving the others with God’s own love and concern.”* Mother Teresa.
10. **Witness.** Share Christ and the meaning of Christmas whenever you can during the season; through the cards you send, the angel cookies, the small talk you make at parties and social events. Decorate your workspace or home with Christian symbols of Christmas as a reminder to others of the focus for you and your family. *“The way you spend Christmas is far more important than how much.”* Henry David Thoreau

Ministry Fair 2015

by Howie Wright
Pastoral Council Chair



The Ministry Fair:

- ✚ Provides Parishioners an opportunity to experience the depth of Christian Ministry at St. Michael's. A time and place to help parishioners determine how to use their gifts of service to others and become more actively involved in the Parish.
- ✚ Answers any questions interested parishioners may have about the various Ministries.
- ✚ Helps parishioners understand the impact that their gifts of time, talent and treasure have on the lives of others inside and outside the parish community.



With these principles in mind, St. Michael's held a very successful Ministry Fair on October 3rd and 4th, 2015 with 38 ministries represented. This is a reflection of the activities developed and nurtured in our parish community, the work of many dedicated Parishioners and the support

of Father Murray, Father Don, Yana Adkinson and Sylvain Patry. As Father Don has commented "St. Michael's takes a pro-active stance with active Parishioner involvement."

There was significant interaction between parishioners and Ministry volunteers with one Ministry enlisting as many as 35 volunteers! More parishioners are sure to come forward after they have had time to reflect on how involvement with a specific ministry might be helpful to themselves or someone they know.



Some comments from parishioners:

- "A fulfilling day, pleased to meet other volunteers"
- "Great event for the parish, glad to see it went so well"
- "It was important that Father Murray encouraged people to attend after Mass"
- "I think we need to update our display"
- "How can we do things differently to have more parishioners visit the displays?"

The Parish Council thanks the Social Committee for providing coffee and cookies, the ministry volunteers for creating and being available with their displays and all the parishioners who took time out of their busy schedule to make the Ministry Fair the success that it was.



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Seminarians at St. Michael's

by Yana Adkinson

St. Michael's Parish enthusiastically welcomes Glen Ball, Steven Eckert (seminarians studying for our diocese) and Peter Le (Diocese of St. Boniface). Deacon-Elect Trevor Plug (Diocese of Hamilton) may also preach at our parish.

You might see these seminarians at our weekends Masses or ministering to the sick and homebound, or teaching an RCIA session and leading table discussions as well as sponsoring RCIA candidates. I asked them to share a bit about themselves and why they chose St. Michael's for their Field Education Ministry.



Peter Le (Field Education ministry: RCIA Catechist and Sponsor) My name is Peter Le, and I am 33 years old. I was born in Hue, a province in the central part of Vietnam, to a devout family with six siblings. I am currently studying Theology II at St. Peter's Seminary in London, Ontario. I was an altar server in

my youth. At Hue University, I was a member of a Vocation Group of the Archdiocese of Hue, Vietnam, where I was able to discern and maintain my vocation. After graduating, I entered the Hue Major Seminary in 2008, and completed a three-year Philosophy program. I also spent a pastoral year of internship at La Vang, a Marian National Shrine in Vietnam. I was invited by Archbishop Albert LeGatt and granted permission by the Archbishop of the Archdiocese of Hue to continue my formation in Canada. After a two-month visit in 2012, I decided on the Archdiocese of Saint Boniface. I have felt God's calling since I was a little boy, and it is still echoing in my heart. I really desire to bring the love of God to everyone. That is why I wish to become a shepherd after Jesus' heart. Doing RCIA at St. Michael's is a good opportunity for me to learn and grow. As a catechist, I lead the table discussions, and will be giving some presentations. Journeying with an RCIA candidate in the role of a sponsor gives me a chance to share the faith as well as deepen my own faith. I enjoy meeting and working with people who come from different cultural backgrounds, as it helps me experience deeply the universality of the Church, within which people of all nations share one faith, one baptism and belief in the Lord. In short, I am enjoying getting involved in the pastoral life of St. Michael's parish, because I have a good chance to practice, to learn, and to grow for the sake of my pastoral improvement.



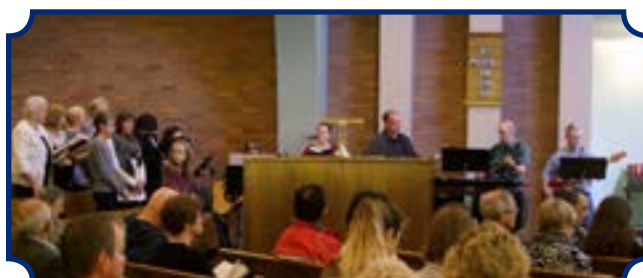
Steven Eckert (Field Education ministry: RCIA Catechist and Sponsor) I am glad to be posted in your parish! I am currently assisting in RCIA and meeting parishioners before and after masses. A little bit about myself: I am originally from St. James parish in Seaforth. I grew up on a dairy and crop farm. I have two

brothers and three sisters. While working and traveling overseas I was struck by the history and charity of the Christian faith. I found our faith to be more than a set of beliefs and more than good works. I felt a call to "step out of the boat" like Peter and follow where Christ would lead me. I entered into the lay ministry program at St. Peter's, and then became a seminarian for the diocese of London. I am now in my first year of formation. I encourage people to inquire about the ordination program, and the great lay ministry program and courses available to learn about one's faith and ways of sharing. I hope that I can assist new parishioners to develop a love for Christ and his Church. Please pray for me as I continue to discern a call to the priesthood. Thank you for the warm reception into your parish.

Glen Ball (Field Education ministry: Ministry to the Sick and Homebound) I am originally from St. Michael's Parish in Ridgetown and have now entered my fourth year of theology at St. Peter's. I have just returned this year from my internship in Tecumseh. I come from a farm family and spent several years farming with my grandfather, father, uncles and brothers before entering the seminary. During my previous years in formation at St. Peter's I had the good fortune to be assigned to work at St. Michael's. During that time, I got to know many of the parishioners and now feel a connection to the parish. I did not think twice about returning to this parish where I had worked for so long and I am grateful to be back once again.



Parish Photos



Parish Information

St. Michael's Parish, 511 Cheapside St., London, ON N5Y 3X5

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E-mail: stmichlon@dol.ca • www.stmichaels.dioceseoflondon.ca

Office Hours: Monday to Friday 8:30 a.m. to noon and 1:00 to 4:00 p.m.



Sunday Masses

Saturday: 5:00 p.m.

Sunday: 8:30 a.m., 10:30 a.m., 12:30 p.m.

Weekday Masses

Tuesday & Thursday: 12:00 noon

Wednesday & Friday: 8:00 a.m.

Saturday: 9:00 a.m.

African Caribbean Catholic Community Mass (St. Josephine Bakhita)

4th Sunday of each month at 2:30 p.m.

Sacrament of Reconciliation

Saturday: 9:30 – 10:30 a.m. and 4:00 – 4:30 p.m.

Free Bus Service to 10:30 a.m. Mass



The route . . .

9:50 a.m.

- 64 Wyndham
- Blackwater east of Adelaide - bus stop
- Grenfell just east of Blackwater
- Fanshawe/Trossacks - bus stop on corner
- 770 Fanshawe Park Rd east of Fremont - bus stop
- Fanshawe Park Road - west of Fremont
- Adelaide/Fanshawe - bus stop south of Fanshawe
- Kipps Lane/Adelaide - bus shelter just east of Adelaide
- Kipps Lane/Barker
- Kipps Lane - bus stop east of Barker
- Kipps Lane/Kenmore Place - bus stop
- 295 Briarhill
- Cheapside/Boullee
- Huron Street - bus stop east of Wedgewood Drive

10:15 a.m.

- Royal Oak Apartments - 3 stops
go to St. Michael's Church

*The bus will stop at regular bus stops or wherever it is
hailed along the route.*

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Sid Wocks, Hall Coordinator

swocks@dol.ca

ext. 210

Parish Council Chairperson

Gail Brown

Children's Ministries

Sunday: 10:30 a.m. Mass

Liturgy of the Word: Grades 2, 3 and 4

Sunday School: Aged 3 to Grade 1

Babysitting: Infants to age 3

Calendar of Events

Christmas Day	December 25
Feast of Mary Mother of God	January 1
Pancake Supper	February 9
Ash Wednesday	February 10
Parent Meeting - First Eucharist	February 11
Wedding Anniversary Celebration	February 14
Family Day	February 15
Marriage Prep Weekend	February 26-28
Easter Confession - All Day	March 9
Family Skate	March 14
Mass of Chrism	March 21