

St. Mary Community-Service Commission: Christian Service and Community Life

Revised on June 15, 2009

Commission Re-Structuring in 2008: The reorganized Community / Service Commission consolidates the activities and programs of the former Christian Service Commission and the former Community Life Commission. The following mission statements represent the two sections of this reorganized parish commission.

- **2012 Christian Service Mission:** The Christian Service ministries of our Community / Service Commission serve, support, reach out, and respond to the parishioners and neighbors of St. Mary Parish, who are sick, elderly, hungry, homebound, unemployed, and homeless. We motivate ourselves and others to put Catholic social teaching into action. We do these things for the least of our brothers and sisters, following the loving example of Christ.
- **2012 Community Life Mission:** As disciples of Jesus Christ, the Community Life organizations of the St. Mary Parish Community / Service Commission bring our parishioners and other community members together through social and charitable events and programs. Our fun, exciting, and engaging social activities, as well as our service-oriented and spiritual opportunities, encourage all our participants to feel wanted and welcome in our parish community of faith.



Joint Vision Statements: The following vision statements reflect the Service and Community dimensions of the reorganized Community / Service Commission.

Christian Service Vision for 2014: "Whatsoever you do to the least of my brothers and sisters – that you do unto me." Our ever-expanding base of willing and eager volunteers strengthens our connection to each other, those we serve, and those who watch from the sidelines.

Our wide variety of ministries serve young and old alike, creating a record number of people being helped. Christian service is a daily part of parishioner's lives. Many people are eager to get involved with employment assistance, phone buddies for the homebound, give a ride to church, handy-man ministries, the popular parish work day and the monthly food collection which supports local food banks as well as the long distance ministry to our sister parish in the south.

These amazing connections happening in our parish are the direct result of our phone alert system, cable access, Mass announcements, and the information monitor in the narthex. We even see participation by some non-parishioners who hear of our activities through the media and by word of mouth. Being active and socially responsible fosters the sense of unity and fulfillment that we enjoy, and the pay-it-forward attitude that we encourage.

We do all of these activities because Jesus told us that as His followers we are to serve the poor but we also love hearing comments like: "That was fun and fulfilling." "I am so glad I was there." "I wish I had been there." "I am so glad I heard about this at Mass." "I hope we do that again." "I am going to miss seeing, (visiting or working) with them." And our favorite is: "What else do you have for me to do?"

Former Christian Service Vision for 2008: Christian Service will nurture a caring community by providing assistance to individuals and families within our parish and beyond. Open communication among our various parish service programs will be enhanced by regular joint sessions with our parish community organizations. Ministries exchanging and sharing tasks will give all our commission members a greater sense of service and community resources. We will have a heightened awareness of all our activities within the Community / Service Commission and within the parish as a whole through such networking. This will promote greater use of our parish service programs, and encourage more volunteers to staff our parish service programs. In particular, we will offer volunteers new ways to serve, such as: regular food collections, the annual work and pray day at Hopkins Park, and quarterly projects designed by the Peace and Justice Committee. Through targeted recruitment efforts based on information from our parish census update, we will increase membership and active participation in all our parish organizations for greater effectiveness. We will establish a special Christian Service Sunday in the late Fall to make personal contact with the attending assembly in order to further increase our parish volunteer base for service to others. We will communicate with our parish community through the weekly bulletin and the seasonal parish newsletter to bring a spirit of Christian Service to the whole parish community and to invite the participation of more and more parishioners in the spiritual and corporal works of mercy encompassed by our Christian Service programs. The Ministers of Care program will bring the love of Jesus and news of our parish to the homebound through an increase both of ministers providing this service and of parishioners requesting this service.

Community Life Vision for 2014: Community life at St. Mary Parish is the talk of the town! Social events are held every week to meet the needs of the community for all ages. We offer numerous 'after Mass' events to accommodate the busy schedules of parishioners. Having events immediately following the Masses for all ages throughout the year gives everyone the opportunity to participate in at least one event a year. We have Donut Sunday, Pancake Breakfasts, Parent/Child Open Gym, Bake Sales, Family Carnivals, Liturgical Activities as well as many other events that our annual interest survey communicates to us. Some ministries have begun to hold their meetings on Sundays after Mass and by doing so have increased participation.

We have multiple events for each age group every year. Our new young adult ministry has people coming from surrounding parishes to participate in these fun and exciting events. Because babysitting is provided at ALL social events, more young couples have the opportunity to build relationships with others in the parish community.

Our full time community event coordinator does a fabulous job working with the various ministries to plan a variety of outings such as daytrips to sporting events, water parks, theater events, overnight trips, the horse races, and more! He/She has even organized a bowling league and some fun volleyball and basketball events for families. The community life ministries, with the support of the event coordinator, plans events that help parishioners feel welcomed, wanted, and more alive in their faith.

One of the major influences in the high attendance at these events is our excellent multi-point communication system that the parish has developed. Every parishioner knows what's going on because of a system that uses many "points" - weekly activity calendars via the bulletin, email alerts, phone message delivery system, the parish website, weekly Mass announcements (important to all ministries because we get the people while they are there!), and the state of the art flat screen community event display in the narthex.

St. Mary parishioners look forward to all the social opportunities which allow them to feel like our church is their second home. After each event the parking lot is full of people giving high accolades such as "That was great!", "What a good time!", and "I can't wait until the next event." St. Mary is a warm and inviting community of faith.

Former Community Life Vision for 2008: To further the work of Christ and his Church, the Community organizations of our parish are committed to dramatically increasing all parish organizational memberships, and to building up the parish community in the following ways: By monthly events for every age group from the young to the Young at Heart, we will nurture a parish where people care about each other, do meaningful things together, socialize together, and experience a heartfelt sense of belonging and togetherness as a welcoming community of faith and love. In particular, we will take a leadership role in the welcoming and nurturing of all our new parishioners. We will communicate with the parish community through the weekly bulletin and the seasonal parish newsletter to bring a greater spirit of Christian community togetherness to the whole parish and invite their active participation in all of our parish ministries, programs, activities, and organizations. As we grow into a parish of 5,000 families, our parish will need a new staff person to help oversee all our growing Community Life activities. This new staff person will coordinate our annual parish-wide Ministry Fair, and will follow up with volunteer recruitment, development, and appreciation efforts throughout the year, that bring a greater sense of involvement and belonging to all of our parishioners. Through targeted recruitment efforts based on information from our parish census update, we will increase membership and active participation in all our parish organizations, so that we may become an even friendlier and more welcoming Christian community of faith and love.