

Home Visitor Ministry

By Sr. Alexine Meronek, SSJ TOSF

In January, 1976, I was hired by Fr. James Falconer to be a Parish Visitor for the sick in nursing homes, in hospitals and in their own homes, and to be available for the elderly and home-bound of St. Joseph Parish.

From the very beginning of this ministry, I considered it a privilege and a trust to be so involved. Daily I looked forward to meeting and helping the people referred to me by the pastor. Quite a number of them lived alone. What a job it was to be able to help in doing things for them.

During the course of 26 years as visitor at St. Joseph Parish I served them as Eucharistic Minister, as an objective listener to their varied and numerous life experiences, as driver to the doctors if family members were not available on that certain day, as an organist for special services like the Anointing of the Sick.

Sometimes I participated in their family's jubilees, birthday parties and get-togethers. These gave me a chance to meet their extended families. Always there were days of mourning for a person(s) I had visited. For most of them I played the organ as the Resurrection Choir sang hymns that the family had chosen for the occasion. Many times I was asked to lead the rosary at wakes when the priest was not available.

Throughout the years that I was at St. Joseph's (1976 - 2002) I felt affirmed in my work by the pastors. They, together with the wonderful people at St. Joseph's made my work, my time spent there, very memorable.

When I realized I could no longer keep doing what I expected of myself, I retired to St. Joseph Motherhouse in Stevens Point in July 2002. Here I spend time in service to others and in prayer.

Home Visitor Ministry

By Myrna Horgan

One of my richest experiences at St. Joseph Parish was the four years that I spent as Home Visitor, visiting and taking Communion to shut-ins from 1886 - 2000. I was job-sharing with Sr. Alexine Meronek who had done this for the parish full time since 1975 when she was hired by Fr. Jim Falconer for the new position.

By 1996 she was looking to cut back her hours to half-time and the job was a perfect fit for me. I had just graduated from

school with a degree in Sociology/Gerontology and wanted part-time work. It allowed me to use my new knowledge and help my parish at the same time. I would like, here to remember and pay tribute to that very special ministry and the very special person who kept it alive for so many years. It was a full-time job for Sr. Alexine to visit the sick in the hospital, the nursing homes, and the home-bound.

She listened to their stories, prayed with them and brought them Holy Communion. She was the link that kept them connected to their parish and assured them that they were not forgotten. She also kept a parish pantry and often took them food when she thought there was a need. In October of 1996 she was recognized by the Diocese with the "Gospel of Life" award which was presented to her at a banquet in LaCrosse. She was revered and loved by her people and she worked tirelessly for their benefit. It was a privilege to be a part of her legacy.

Many of our parishioners today may not have had the privilege to know Sr. Alexine, but she served our parish well until her retirement in June of 2002. Now, at the age of 90, she enjoys a well deserved contemplative life at St. Joseph's Convent on Maria Drive. She remains a dear friend and an inspiration to me and we still enjoy sharing our memories of that very special ministry to the elderly of St. Joseph's Parish.

St. Vincent de Paul

By Dolores Mansavage

For more than 10 years, I have been the Pantry Coordinator of the Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP) currently located behind the St. Vincent de Paul Thrift Stores in Plover. Other longtime pantry volunteers from St. Joseph Parish include Vera Glaza, Ruth Shuda, Ernie Helminiak, Val Omernick, Lorraine Prodzinski and the late Mona Yulga.

TEFAP is administered by the Department of Public Instruction to facilitate food supplied by the USDA. Individuals meeting the 150 percent of the Federal Poverty Guidelines are welcome at the pantry once a month.

Each month St. Vincent de Paul has made it a priority to make sure each recipient receives a minimum of one protein (meat) source, in addition to bread. Canned vegetables and produce donated by local growers.

St. Joe's has been a generous supporter of TEFAP, not only with food donations but also with monetary aid. The collections on Thanksgiving Day are usually given to the TEFAP program.

Members for 50 Years

By Mike & Betty Wondzell

We are grateful to have been members of St. Joseph Parish since 1959.

Mike is a member of Holy Name Society and has enjoyed helping with breakfasts (he makes the coffee for socials), and serves for weekday Masses and funerals. He became a server at the request of Estelle Roseth. When Mike accepted, Estelle said her work on earth was done. She prayed long for it to happen.

Betty celebrated 50 years with St. Anne's Society in 2009. She was an officer for two years and on the Advertising Committee for five years. She enjoyed being involved with funeral dinners, the Cookie Walk, and being a member of the Parish Family Life Grief Committee. Betty also knits shawls for the prayer shawl ministry.

Mike and Betty both worked on the Picnic Committee and senior trips, were home visitors and Eucharistic ministers and keep the sanctuary lights burning by filling them with oil. They think of St. Joe's as their extended family. They used to enjoy when grade school children attended Mass and loved the homilies for the children.

Window Boxes & Garden

By Pat Horn

The window boxes at the entrance of the rectory, and the Wyatt St. entrance to the church were placed there approximately in 1997. I have been planting them for 8 years.

The beautiful flowers, in the colors of the rainbow, are enjoyed by all as we enter the house of the Lord. Many parishioners and visitors comment on their beauty. How wonderful it is to welcome them to the rectory with flowers at the entrance.

When the new Parish Family Center was added, a St. Francis of Assisi Garden was placed at the entrance of the courtyard. Recently, after many years of wear on the St. Francis statue and overgrown flowers and plants, I chose to renew the garden. I painted the St. Francis statue, stained the benches, and added prayers to the benches in honor of St. Francis and St. Claire. As "gardener," I replaced most of the plants, added a wolf statue and a few other things. Many compliments have been received on this garden.

A Parish Together in Faith

By Raylene Seramur

In 1988 we moved from a much larger parish (Christ the King in Wauwatosa) and were able to make an immediate attachment to the warmth of the St. Joseph's community. "Together in Faith" is a most appropriate motto.

Our family was welcomed into activities easily and has had the benefits of Fr. Lyle's and Fr. Al's thoughtful and inspiring homilies, several Bible study groups, and active CCD program and especially the one-to-one mentoring in the Confirmation program. Our thanks still go out to Kati Bemowski, Karen Trebatoski, Deb Frisch and Rick Zahn for mentoring our four children.

When my husband Steve died, it meant so much to our family that the 10:30 choir was able to sing. Friends from Milwaukee still remember the wonderful music and several have asked, "Do you have music like that ALL the time?"

Thankfully, yes, we do. I don't know if the choir members can even appreciate what an important role they play in the faith lives of many.

We are very fortunate at St. Joseph's to have three very unique, talented and dedicated choirs. With Fr. Al's words and their music, we are sent out to serve others each week.

Adult Servers

By Gail Tubbs

About eight years ago, Mike Wondzell asked if I'd be interested in being a Mass server. I thought, "Yes, that's something I could do when I'm older." But it was only a week or two later that he offered to start training me. I guess he thought I was old enough already!

Anyway, I felt very flattered to be asked, and honored to be able to do so. I'm already involved in the Sunday Mass as part of the choir, but this gave me the opportunity to be involved on weekdays, too. It's so much more meaningful when you can participate that closely.

When we were children, my brothers were "altar boys." I remember thinking how lucky they were to be able to do that. It never occurred to me to be jealous, because girls just weren't servers then, and I accepted that. I'm so glad to be able to have that privilege now.

Thanks for thinking of me, Mike!

Knights of Columbus

By John Schlice

One of the functions of the Knights of Columbus is to create a roundtable in each parish consisting of KC members of that parish. We currently average 50-70 members of the parish that are KC members.

The Roundtable is established to help the Pastor in the various areas that the Pastor determines are needed. The St. Joseph Parish roundtable has been in existence for over seven years. Any practical Catholic can join the Knights of Columbus and work with the Parish roundtable.

It became apparent that a number of people did not understand that the roundtable was there to help the Pastor and when the Knights proposed to put on their first meal some of the parishioners questioned "how much will the Knights make on the event" it wasn't until Fr. Al assured them that all funds raised by the Knights stayed in the parish that some of the members felt comfortable with the Knights putting on the function. Unlike other parish groups, all money raised at functions goes to the operating budget of the parish.

The St. Joe's Roundtable is headed up by Fr. Al, Duane Zaborowski and myself. The roundtable has provided assistance to the parish in a number of different areas such as putting on meal functions or by working on Saturday mornings on the parish grounds doing raking, trimming trees and bushes and general cleanup.

In addition to Fr. Al, Duane and me, Bob Simonis, Rodney Hopp, and Mark Strojny got a lot of work done in a short period of time in the Spring and Fall Cleanup. The work list is compiled during a working breakfast meeting of Fr. Al, Duane and me. It seems that Fr. Al has a list that never ends when it comes to work that needs to be done.

The Knights are active in many areas of the parish serving as Eucharistic ministers, ushers, choir members, and building maintenance, just to name a few areas. If there is work to be done around the parish there is generally a Knight of Columbus involved which is always the case if Father Al is involved, because he is a Fourth Degree Knight.

The most visible showing of what a Knight can do for the parish is Everett Eppers, a 60-year member who donated the Ten Commandment Monument that is located on the church grounds on Jefferson Street. The entire parish says, "Thank you Everett." If there is a need, ask a Knight and we will respond.

Knights of Columbus

By Bob Simonis

Every church has a group of Knights of Columbus members who do things at their local parishes.

Members are volunteers, some very active, who work at different events and projects at the club house also. Members from our parish are: Ray Pozorski, Bob Rutkowski, John Schlice, Greg Henning, Mark Strojny, Rodney Hopp and myself.

This group is active at both parish events and KC functions. Some of the activities are to recruit new members, help with picnics, set up and work around the grounds. We also set up for various functions at the KC clubhouse.

Oak St. Parish Convent

By Janet Jacoby

Early memories of 1724 Oak St. were when we first moved to Stevens Point in 1979. Three Sisters lived there: Sr. Eileen, Sr. Alexine and Sr. Miranda. They were always so hospitable and served delicious meals (Sr. Miranda taught home economics for years and we benefited from her excellent cooking!). The convent was always immaculate – everything had a place. The front room was a chapel, always sacred ground.

Little did we ever imagine that that parish convent would eventually be our home! One of my former teachers who was a nun said she always thought I'd end up in the convent but did not anticipate it would be with a husband and two children. It is always fun when one of the sisters who used to live in the house stops by to share memories of which bedroom they had and prayer on the front porch or in the chapel. One Sister said because of her vow of poverty, she only used one of the huge closets in her bedroom (wish I could say the same). Then there are the stories of former St. Joe's students who used to come and wash the windows for the Sisters.

We have always felt it a gift to be able to buy the parish convent and have tried to create a hospitable environment. Though we do not feel as Franciscan as the Sisters when it comes to the bats that have lived in the convent for decades!!

Another fun story: The bed in our guest room was purchased at an auction in Wausau at the Bishop's house – so our guests sleep in the bishop's bed in the convent.

No matter how long we've lived in our home, we still identify it as St. Joe's Convent and people know exactly where we live!

Building & Grounds

By Ron Kobishop

It was 1970 when the wooden doors to the Wyatt Ave. entrance of the church (how many remember those!) were replaced.

I was a fledgling member of the Buildings and Grounds Committee in the company of some very respected gentlemen of the parish: Dominic Stroik, Walt Okray, Ray Fliehr, John Simonis, Myron Haase and George Phillip. George is still with me on the committee and well-respected for his parish input.

From the installation of the new Wyatt Ave. doors in 1970-71 to the recent heating improvement in the school, and from chasing pigeons out of the bell tower to filling the tent stake holes in the parking lot, and to the dark corners of the school basement, there is almost not an inch of the property I have not covered.

The rectory will just have to wait until St. Joe's 150th anniversary.

1984 Remodeling Project

By Ron Kobishop

The 1984 remodeling project was a very busy time, a lot of work had to be done from Christmas to Easter.

The altar area was gutted to the brick walls and rebuilt. The pews were removed and refinished. We needed to have a crew on hand every Friday afternoon to remove five rows of pews and install the five refinished ones. The kneelers were recovered, new decking on the floor and carpet installed.

Saturday was clean-up day and the ladies had their hands full. We had a great bunch of volunteers to help finish this project on time.

All the decorations on top of the columns in the altar area we cast ourselves. Fr. Lyle and I made a rubber mold of the decorations and I poured the cast at home.

The molding plaster hardened very quickly so we had to mix up just the correct amount to fill the mold, nothing less and not too much over. Tim Kaczmarek and I went through several Dremel tools cleaning up the castings, not to mention the dusty basement. Juany Heck and Nancy Kaczmarek were doing ceramic work at that time and had a large assortment of paints to match the originals. It is a professional-looking job, if I say so myself.

Church Renovations

By Fr. Lyle Schulte

On the occasion of our 100th Anniversary, among the many things we did that year was to renovate the interior of the church—along the guidelines recommended by Vatican II.

The committee made all the decisions and I was brash enough to think I could design the pulpit, the new altar, the see-through doors in front of the tabernacle and a special canopy over the sanctuary. And I did!

Three things remain in my memory about all that.

One was that the altar and the pulpit were on castors—so that the pulpit could be front and center for the Liturgy of the Word. It would help highlight the Gospel and the homily.

Then the altar was moved front and center for the Liturgy of the Eucharist!

Two the altar base was surrounded by statuettes of 10 “saints,” all originals carved by Bavaria artist Edward Dietmaier (who once was a soldier in the German army).

Those images are special, especially the one of Martin Luther King. Take a look. I’d wager there isn’t another Catholic altar in the world with a statue of M.L. King on it, a Baptist minister and man of the gospel and social justice.

What inspired me to put King’s image there was the work of our parish Social Justice Committee. It was very special to me.

Remember, for instance, our very active role in the Overground Railroad Refugee Program—helping to move victims of the persecutions of the poor in El Salvador and Guatemala safely through the USA (where they were not wanted or allowed to stay) up into Canada (which did offer them refuge).

I was so proud of work like this in our parish in the 1980s—so why not honor a man of justice like King!

Three, that canopy! I recall actually designing, building and hanging that piece by myself. The curved design of many pieces and the many light fixtures was a challenge.

My workshop was the Ehr Hall floor during Christmas break; my tools were an electric drill, a saber saw, a router, a sander and a screwdriver. I was amazed when I saw it suspended in the sanctuary. I did that??



A new hydronic heating system was installed in St. Joseph School in the spring of 2008.

Parish Projects

By Joann Kronebusch

Each new parish or diocesan project adds another job onto the parish office, so I have seen the work expand more and more over the years. Without all the wonderful volunteers who fold, stuff, seal, input, etc., I would be buried knee deep in projects.

There have been on-going building projects in the parish. Since I joined, there was the remodeling of the interior of the church – new sanctuary design, removal of the pews to be stained and varnished, new paint, new carpeting.

Next there was the Parish Family Center, then new windows for the school, new roof for the church, asbestos removal, new toilets in the school, new boilers for the church, new telephone system, tuck pointing of the brick every few years, central air for the rectory, repair and re-leading of church stained-glass windows, handicapped entryway doors, and the new heating system for the school.

The parishioners of St. Joseph's have been great at responding to the building needs of the parish.

TgIF Tale

Choir Loft

*By Ron
Kobishop*

In 1973-74, the choir loft was remodeled to its present state. There was one casualty, though. There was a clock on the old railing.

I don't know for sure, but I think the clock was there to remind the celebrant of the length of his homily!

Building and Grounds

By Richard Horn

In the years I have been on the Building and Grounds Committee we have made these changes:

Getting ready for the new boiler we tore out an old stairway in the basement. All old radiators for heat were taken out of the school. One classroom wall was replaced because of water damage. The upstairs bathroom was remodeled in the rectory. The front pews in church were reconstructed for wheel chairs. We also installed new garage doors on the rectory garage.

Tgif Tale

Custodial Duties

By Ron
Kobishop

In the late 1960s, Mr. Ed the custodian was getting up in age, so a friend of his (about the same elderly age) was hired to help him with custodial duties.

Their friendship began to deteriorate rapidly when light bulbs had to be replaced in hanging light fixtures in church. Neither one wanted to go up the ladder.

We would put two wooden tables across the pews and set a 10-foot aluminum ladder on them to change the bulbs.

Now, I'm the elderly guy, but now the custodian goes up on a sturdy 14-foot ladder. The 10-footer is now a sturdy 3-footer!

The Way Things Used to Be

By Helen Tuszka

We moved to Center Street in the fall of 1944. The following Thursday I went to the rectory to join St. Joseph's Parish. On Saturday, I received a card in the mail stating "You are on the committee for St. Anne's meeting on Tuesday evening. Bring \$2.00 and two bingo prizes."

I eventually learned that when you joined the parish you were automatically a member of St. Anne's Society.

Recently, when we were having trouble getting volunteers to clean the church, I remembered being called several times a year to scrub the wood floors in the church on my hands and knees. There was no carpeting then.

Parishioners, enjoy the wonderful parish you have now!

For the Love of St. Joe's

By Tim Kaczmarek

The year is 1972 and it is a beautiful, quiet summer morning in Stevens Point. Driving down Jefferson Street you see the usual sites of people walking their dogs, Mr. Okray walking from his house to his business next door (Kleenaire Corp.), Dave Ligman on his mail route with his bag slung over his shoulder, Mrs. Laska watering her plants in the front yard and a couple of young girls riding double on a single bicycle with the one on the seat holding a guitar case in each hand while the one in the front does the peddling and steering.

Oh, that's the young Hodgson and Kobishop girls going to St. Joes to sing for weekday morning Mass. That's how Kathy (Hodgson) Hansen and Nancy (Kobishop) Kaczmarek started out giving their time and talent to the people of St. Joes and have continued non-stop on a weekly basis over the past 37 years.

During those early years, the girls had their own group, primarily consisting of themselves and Lana Hucke. At other times, they were joined by other classmates, such as Barb Webb and Juanita Omernick. The group played for the weekly school liturgy and alternated with two other groups (one group consisted of Tom Corcoran, Tom Okonek and Steve Schultz, to name a few and the other group was led by Debbie Cisewski).

That once a week school gig led Kathy, Nancy and Lana to expand their singing opportunities. They provided music for the 8:00 a.m. weekday morning Masses at St. Joes during the summer months and would go on sick calls with Fr. Falconer on Saturday mornings.

Picture this: The three of them and one guitar would drive from house to house, sing an opening song, pray with the person they were visiting, Fr. Falconer would give communion, they would sing another song, pack up the guitar, get back into the car and off to the next home. Didn't matter what the weather – snow, rain, and sunshine – in and out of the car with that guitar over and over again!

Kathy's dad, John Hodgson, was the director of the Folk Choir, which sang for Mass on Sunday morning. What a day it was when Nancy and Kathy and some of their friends finally were old enough to join!

Somewhere around 1979, Fr. Lyle Schulte expressed an interest in forming a children's choir to sing at the Saturday evening weekend Mass. Nancy took the reins on that project and with the help of Donna Mitch they were able to gather a

good number of students from the 6th – 8th grades at St. Joes and formed the “Children’s Choir”.

Approximately six to eight years later, after the Catholic schools combined and we didn’t have the older students in our school building, the children’s choir evolved into the Family Choir and that is the group that Nancy continues to spearhead today.

After John Hodgson retired from the Folk Choir, Carol Krause was at the helm for a few years followed by Jan (Stenger) Omernik, among others. Eventually Kathy and Nancy took over planning the music and organizing the practices until Nancy went solely to the Children’s Choir in the late 1980s and Kathy continued directing the Folk Choir.

Fast forward to 2009 and they are still playing their guitars for the weekend Masses at St. Joes. Their involvement in the guitar choirs over the year has been nothing short of selfless and amazing.

Both of these wonderful ladies currently serve on the Sacred Worship committee, coordinate and lead weekly practices for their respective choirs and have spent thousands of hours over the years seeking, teaching, and perfecting new music to be used in accordance with the church’s guidelines. Also, in the late 1980s Nancy attended the two year Lay Ministry Program put on by the Diocese of La Crosse, further choosing to reaffirm her ministry in music at St. Joseph Parish.

Kathy and Nancy both have made themselves available over the years by volunteering to provide the music at special events occurring within the parish, such as holy days, First Communion Mass and First Reconciliation services, weddings, funerals, baptisms, memorial masses, communal penance services, parish mission and summer gatherings.

It seems that they especially enjoy the times when their two choirs combine, as they do for the Parish Picnic, Parish Mission, an occasional funeral, and the Memorial Day mass at the cemetery.

Over these past 37 years, both of these special women have unselfishly volunteered their time and talent while working full time jobs, being married, and raising their families. They also are both involved and can be seen volunteering in other areas of the parish such as the parish picnic, summer gatherings, Fall Fest and Winterfest.

Ladies, thank you for being wonderful role models and for showing us the ultimate in commitment and in giving of yourselves to the community of St. Joes. Truly it must have been and continues to be “For the Love of St. Joes”!