

# CHURCH OF THE ASCENSION CATHOLIC CHURCH

## Faith Formation Volunteers Provide Living Examples for Parish Youth

**Y**ou have to walk the walk if you're going to talk the talk. For parishioner Matt Mullally, this popular phrase captures the essence of why he chooses to volunteer for Ascension's Faith Formation program. His wife was already involved in the ministry and Matt, having a bit more time in his schedule, felt like this would be a great way for him to give back and model the importance of faith to his own children.

"We both wanted to really show our kids the importance of faith formation and this seemed like a great way to do that," says Matt, who serves as a hall

monitor. "I think when your kids see you investing your time and volunteering like that, it's just an important part of the message — it helps instill in them the importance of faith because we are actually living it out."

Parents and parishioners are sometimes reluctant to get involved in this ministry because they feel unqualified to serve as a catechist. Yet, says Matt, what's great about the Faith Formation program is that it offers a wide variety of ways to serve, from actual teaching to logistics and planning. For example, Matt has spent

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Parishioner and Faith Formation volunteer Matt Mullally with his wife and two children

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**OCTOBER 2018**

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# The Stewardship of *St. Francis of Assisi*

He was born as Giovanni di Pietro di Bernardone in Assisi, Italy, in 1181 or 1182 and died at the age of 44 in 1226. In spite of his given name, his father was traveling in France at the time of his birth, so he opted to call him Francesco, which means “the Frenchman.” We, of course, know him as St. Francis of Assisi, whose feast day we celebrate on Oct. 4. To say that he is among the most revered of our Catholic saints would be an understatement.

In their pastoral letter *Stewardship: A Disciple's Response*, the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops states, “After Jesus, we look to Mary as an ideal steward.”

Our Catholic saints also provide us examples of what it means to be a steward, but perhaps none more than St. Francis of Assisi. Like the Lord and His Blessed Mother, St. Francis exemplified stewardship.

We were reminded of that fact when our Holy Father chose the name Francis. The pope explained his choice in this way: “For me he [Francis] is the man of poverty, the man of peace, the man who loves and safeguards Creation. He is a man who gives us this spirit of peace.” From the time he was a boy, Francis recognized that he was gifted — he also understood that he needed to put his gifts at the service of God and others. One of his followers, Brother Leo, was fond of telling that he could hear Francis praying at night, and that St. Francis used the same prayer over and over. It was, “Oh God, Who are You, and who am I?”

Striving to come to an understanding of his relationship with God, and his role as a disciple of the Lord, St. Francis tried to rid himself of all the things that might prevent him from discovering his role in the Kingdom. Early on, he embraced poverty



as a way of life. By eschewing possessions, Francis maintained that his voluntary poverty gave him freedom, freedom from owing anyone other than God, and thus giving him the complete freedom to serve God.

We speak of the Four Pillars of Stewardship — Prayer, Hospitality, Formation, and Service. The life St. Francis embraced and the life he lived can almost be defined by those pillars. Francis and the community he developed did not accept money — they worked for enough food to eat for that day, or for water, or for a place to sleep. His example coerces us to ask, “Are there

possessions that restrict us, that hinder our ability to be a disciple?”

St. Francis dedicated his entire life to imitating the life of Christ and to carrying out the work of the Lord as he, Francis, perceived Christ would do it. Of course, St. Francis had ultimate love of the Eucharist, and great respect for the priests who carried out this sacrament. As stated, poverty became a way of life for him. In fact, in his last written work, *The Testament*, Francis stated that personal and corporate poverty were essential as the lifestyle for the members of his Order.

Francis was a steward of all Creation. He believed that nature and what it represented was the “mirror of God.” Most representations we see of Francis have animals with him and surrounding him. He called all creatures his “sisters” and “brothers.” He had particular love of birds, and was known to preach to them. As a steward and a disciple of Christ, St. Francis viewed all people with love and respect. He said, “How can I be a friend of Christ if I do not cherish those for whom Christ died?”



*A Letter from Our Pastor*

# This Month and Beyond, Let Us Share the Faith in Word and Action

Dear Parishioners,

**W**hen reading through our newsletter, it is clear that we often discuss and reflect upon the topic of ministries – within our community and beyond – and how Christ shares His ministry with us.

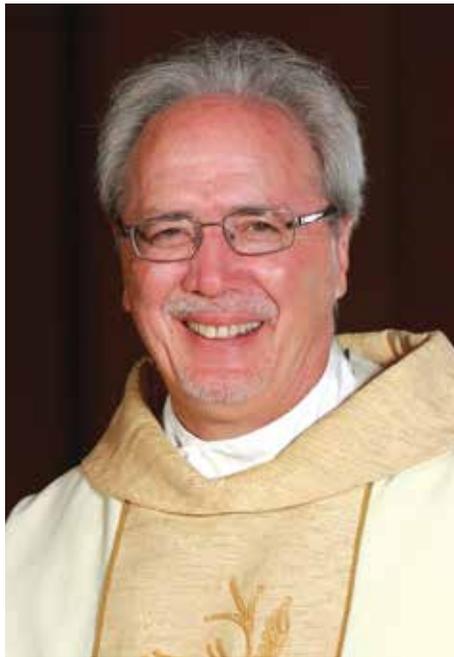
As a faith community that is committed to living out stewardship, we all share in Christ’s ministry. And while we share our many gifts with God and His Church, we take the truths set forth in the readings from Scripture and apply them to present-day life. Of course, that’s what you are supposed to do when you share your faith with your family, friends, neighbors and coworkers.

But what does it mean to “share our faith”? Well, it is exactly what parents – as the “domestic church” – are supposed to do with their children. Furthermore, lay people act as catechists when they teach religion classes in Catholic schools or help with religious education programs in their parishes.

“Sharing the faith” also encompasses serving and providing assistance to those in need, both within and beyond the parish community, or bringing the Eucharist to the ill or homebound who cannot regularly attend Mass. In these ways and more, lay people have many opportunities to participate directly in the ministry of the Church.

But as the Second Vatican Council reminded us, “An apostolate of this kind does not consist only in the witness of one’s way of life; a true apostle looks for opportunities to announce Christ by words addressed either to non-believers

with a view to leading them to faith, or to the faithful with a view to instructing, strengthening, and encouraging them to a more fervent life” (*Apostolicam Actuositatem, Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity*, 6).



In other words, we must proclaim our Christian faith through our actions and how we live our lives – and *also* be prepared to share it in words if we are given the opportunity. With this in mind, we may each want to make a commitment of time to study the Scriptures and the Church’s teachings so that we may be better prepared to share the faith!

Of course, the month of October draws us a little closer to the end of the year – thus, we are soon approaching the celebration of Thanksgiving, and the Advent and Christmas seasons. In the next few months,

we will each have so many opportunities to share our faith through words and actions. I ask you to prayerfully consider how you will take advantage of these opportunities, living as stewards carrying out His ministry every day, for the rest of this year and beyond.

May God grant you the grace to share richly as a disciple of Christ!

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Msgr. Jim Braaten  
*Pastor*



# Parish Picnic *a Time*

We thank all who joined us for our Ascension Parish Picnic. We also extend our gratitude to all who gave of their time and talents to make this year's event possible!





# *for Fellowship and Fun*



## **Upcoming Events**

**Oct. 3**

Living Rosary during all  
Faith Formation Sessions  
in the Church

**Oct. 10**

Faith Formation Grill Out  
4:45-6:45 p.m.  
in Community Room

**Sept. 26**

Faith Formation Grill-Out  
4:45-6:45 p.m.

**Oct. 7**

Ninth Grade  
Confirmation Enrollment  
Mass and Sponsor  
Candidate Retreat  
11 a.m. to 2 p.m.

**Oct. 21**

K of C Breakfast  
9 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.  
in the Community Room

**Oct. 31**

All Saints Day  
Celebration  
5:30 p.m. in the Church  
Food, party and  
Trunk or Treating!

**Oct. 24**

Reconciliation grades for  
Grades 3-5 at 7 p.m.

# Questions & Answers About Our Annual Stewardship Renewal

Once again, it's time for our Annual Stewardship Renewal. Just as the Church proposes a time of spiritual renewal each Lent, we believe in the importance of a yearly examination of commitment. Is the Lord asking you to give more time, talent, or treasure to our parish this year?

## My age or physical limitations prevent me from being active in the parish. Should I still turn in a Commitment Card?

Yes! The first section of the card — Stewardship of Time — is the most important because it allows you to make commitments to *prayer*. Even if you can't join a ministry or make it to Mass on Sunday, you can still pray for our parish. Your spiritual support has tremendous value in the eyes of God.

## One time I turned in a card, but no one ever called me when I signed up for a ministry.

If this happened in the past, please forgive us! And don't give up on filling out your Commitment Card! We have a very good plan to call every person interested in joining a new ministry. If for some reason the ministry leader does not call you within four weeks of turning in your card, let the parish office know.

## What if I can't fulfill my financial pledge?

While our pledge is not a "contract," we should all make a good-faith effort to fulfill it. Of course, if your financial circumstances change — if you lose your job, for instance — then the amount of money you give the Church will change, too. Likewise if you get a raise or bonus. The biggest reason many people don't fulfill their pledge is that they attend Mass at another parish when they go on vacation, attend a wedding, etc. If you're out of town, just make up for the missed Sunday when you write your next check to the parish or go to our parish website at [ascensionbismarck.org](http://ascensionbismarck.org), then scroll down to the Online Giving section on the right side of the homepage to submit your offertory amount securely online. Or, use the Electronic Funds Transfer (EFT) option. Using your envelopes is a good way to see which Sundays you missed.

**Commitment Weekend is  
October 6-7. Don't forget to bring  
your Commitment Card to Mass!**

## I don't even go to Mass very frequently. Why turn in a Commitment Card?

Because this is your chance to turn over a new leaf! Why not make a commitment to God to come to Mass every Sunday, and then write down that commitment? Even if that's the only commitment you make, take a step forward. Jesus Himself is waiting for you!

## What happens if I don't return my Commitment Card?

We will mail you a reminder letter that includes an extra Commitment Card (in case you misplaced yours). Make every effort you can to participate. Our Stewardship Renewal is a very important annual event in the life of our parish. You and your family are part of what makes Ascension a great community! Most importantly, your commitments are actually promises to Christ Himself. All of us are called to give back to God a portion of what He has given us.



Every parish family receives a special "Stewardship Package" in the mail that further explains our parish's vision of stewardship. It includes a booklet that describes every ministry in the parish, as well as your Commitment Card.



# Meet Linda Bortke and Lil Krance

## *Two Great Friends Living Stewardship Together*

**F**or many years, Linda Bortke and Lil Krance have made answering the call to stewardship something they enjoy doing together. By sharing their time, talent and treasure with our parish family, alongside one another, they have embraced the joy that comes with giving.

“We volunteer together for things at church very often,” Linda says. “We are very good friends. We first met when she joined the Ladies of Ascension. She was new and she asked if I would like to start volunteering along with her. We have done so many things together. She is one of my best, dearest friends. She is like a sister to me. A best friend like her is gold! My husband Al [now deceased] just adored her and she is the kindest, most wonderful person ever.”

These days, Linda and Lil stay busy serving the Lord in numerous ways. They both serve as coordinators of the Circle of Friends Group, which meets on the first Thursday of every month at the Elks in Bismarck.

“The Circle of Friends group is a means of fellowship for ladies who have experienced the loss of a spouse, a child or a grandchild,” Linda says. “We get together to share camaraderie and support each other.”

Each December, they help decorate for the Circle of Friends potluck party, and invite parish staff to the party. They also decorate the Community Room for Christmas, and put up the tree. They are also well-known for the fabulous cooking they do for our parish Spring and Christmas Dinners.

“We have been helping with the potluck for several years now,” Linda says. “It’s a lot of fun and it helps us get to know other parishioners. I believe we have to pray every day to love the Lord and be kind to others.”

Furthermore, Linda and Lil enjoy helping with sacristan duties — Lil takes care of the altar cloths, and Linda sews our parish’s baptismal gowns. They both set up and clean the altar candles and candle holders, volunteer on the Environment Committee, and help with our parish bulletins as well.

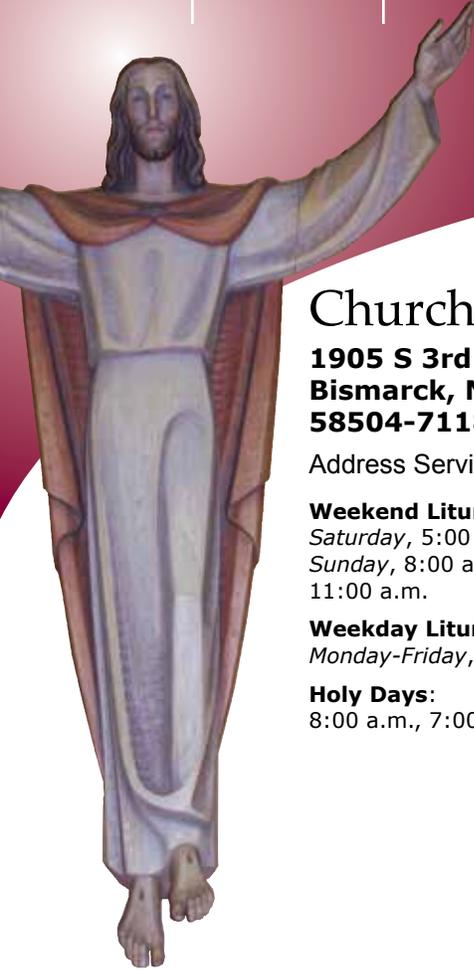


*Lil Krance (left) at her 90th birthday celebration with her close friend Linda Bortke*

“Lil is such an amazing woman!” Linda says. “She is 90, yet she still does so much for the church. She inspires everyone!”

Over the years, they have discovered that being an active member of the parish community is a great blessing.

“By volunteering for different events, I’ve realized that our parish is like a close-knit, extended family,” Linda says. “It is so wonderful to have the companionship of your fellow parishioners when you are down and out, and in need of some help. To be surrounded by godly people — what more could you ask? It is so beautiful!”



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## Church of the Ascension

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**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.

## Faith Formation Volunteers *continued from front cover*

the past year serving as a hall monitor, when needed. His experience with the program has allowed him to become more familiar with the ministry, giving him the confidence to continue to volunteer this fall.

Since becoming involved, Matt has come to realize how crucial Faith Formation volunteers are to both the program itself and the Church as a whole. For not only does it help catechize our children in the teachings of our faith, but it also helps evangelize them by showing them what it means to be an active disciple.

"I think Faith Formation is important in helping our youth realize that faith is meant to be part of their daily lives," Matt says. "We want them to see that faith and

being part of our church is more than simply giving an hour on Sunday — to help them understand that faith is something that is meant to be with us always."

And in the process of serving, Matt adds, Faith Formation volunteers can't help but be transformed themselves as they become more connected with their faith, as well.

"Volunteering for this ministry reminds you that faith formation isn't something that you ever really graduate from," Matt says. "We are called to always grow and serve, and this is a great way for us to do that. And, hopefully, by us adults doing that it will plant the seed for kids so that they'll get involved when they get older too."

We invite all parishioners to consider volunteering with the Faith Formation program. There is a specific need for additional catechists for the 2018-2019 school year. Help make the faith come alive for our parish youth through your gifts of time and talent. For more information, please contact Director of Faith Formation Jessica Mattson at either [jmattson@ascensionbismark.org](mailto:jmattson@ascensionbismark.org) or 701-223-3606.

**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.