

St. Michael's Messenger

VOLUME XIII ISSUE 3

DECEMBER 10, 2009

And a Little Child Shall Lead Them...

By Dottie Knutson

Time has a way of flying by when you're having fun! How true that is—I have genuinely enjoyed coordinating the LIFE program for the preschool through fifth grade children this fall; and Jennifer has repeatedly mentioned the same regarding the middle and high school students. Still... it is hard to believe that we are already in the middle of Advent, with Christmas just around the corner!

In addition to our regular LIFE sessions, the past few months have been filled with a variety of wonderful events and experiences! In October, our middle and high school students paired up with the elementary school children for an "All Saints Buddy Night". More recently, our LIFE Families gathered for a "Large Group Ministry Night" in which we spent time enjoying a pot-luck spaghetti dinner, followed by a tour of the many on-going ministries in our parish. Many thanks go out to the chairs of these ministries for making time in their busy schedules to speak with our families about their area of expertise.

Undoubtedly, the most memorable event this fall was our Parish Renewal Mission that just ended. In the midst of the hustle and bustle of our busy lives, we needed this! A simple reminder of what our faith means, how very much we are loved by God, and who we are called to be as Christians.

What a gift this mission was for our children and youth as well. Their enthusiasm inspires me and I am always amazed by their wisdom and understanding. As much as we are striving to pass our faith along to them, they are also teaching us. It is no wonder that God came to us as a little child.

As we move forward into the coming year, may we all have the faith of a child ...to love without condition, to trust in God completely, and to always look at the world with wonder and joy!

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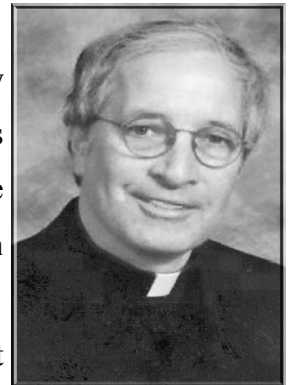
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SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST:

- *Father Dennis' Message. See Page 2*
- *Feed My Starving Children on Page 5*
- *Finance Council Reports on Page 3*
- *What's Happening at St. Michael's? Read the Upcoming Events on page 6.*

A Light for our New Year 2010

The one image that stands out for me at Christmas is the image of light. May that light stay with you throughout the New Year. The prophet Isaiah announces to us: "The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; upon those who dwelt in the land of gloom a light has shone." **A light has shown forth in our darkness.**



Darkness can be something very scary to children and also to adults. A light left on in the darkness of a strange room will give us bearing. A lighthouse on a hill will give direction to a ship tossed about on a stormy sea. A storm comes and knocks out the lights in our house, we no longer take for granted the light that we have in our house. Christ is our light.

We thank God for the revelation of that light of Jesus Christ. That is the light that gives direction to our life and to our world. Each one of us needs to see that light with new eyes and hear that message anew with open hearts and minds as we begin the New Year of 2010.

I am sure we have all found ourselves like the shepherds tending their sheep in the darkness of night, what are we to make of this news of Jesus Christ? The angel of the Lord appeared to them and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were struck with great fear. The angel said to them; "Do not be afraid; for behold, I proclaim to you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. For today in the city of David a savior has been born for you who is Christ and Lord." We are the faithful who have come to adore the Christ Child, who in his circumstances speaks to us a word of hope that gives meaning to our daily lives in 2010. This is the One who teaches us what the incarnation means, not with abstract theories or theology, but by becoming one with us here on earth he walks among us. We learn from the humbleness of his situation that there is an infinite dignity and nobility to be discovered in the average tasks and ordinary events in this New Year. Jesus calls us to be the light of our world. Where there is darkness we bring that light of Jesus Christ. May that light of Christ guide all of us in the New Year and new decade of 2010.

God bless you all in this New Year,

Father Dennis Thompson

Notes from the Finance Council

By Mark Wood, Chairman

First Quarter Results:

The members of the Finance Council extend their best wishes to all our fellow parishioners for a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!

As 2009 draws to a close, we are grateful that our financial position remains relatively stable despite an increasingly difficult economy. While we are monitoring a drop off in contributions which I'll review below, we are blessed to belong to a parish where so many are willing to share their gifts of time and talent, as well as their financial resources for the benefit of us all. Here is a current update on key finance council issues:

2010 Budget:

Through October, our total revenues for the fiscal year to date were \$266,538 vs. \$287,897 last year and expenses were \$278,761 vs. \$287,236 last year. We are 7% under plan on revenues. About half the deficit comes from our regular Sunday collections, but we have 8%-15% shortfalls in each of our income categories. These shortfalls are clearly associated with the economic environment, and we will continue to carefully monitor our income streams to make sure we keep our expenses in line with our income. Expenses are below this time last year, but are still running 3% over our plan to date. Expense control remains a high priority to make sure we don't endanger our cash position or increase our debt. At this point in the year, we believe resources can be stretched to ensure all our

current ministries continue as they are today. As the situation changes we will provide this information via the bulletin and special announcements.

Despite the rather bleak picture painted above, our financial situation continues to be a blessing, particularly compared to other parishes. St. Michael's is in good financial position thanks to your continued generosity. You are invited to monitor parish finances at your convenience by checking the Finance Council section of the parish website: www.stmichael-farmington.org/finance. We keep our minutes and detailed financial reports current on the site, and welcome your comments, questions and suggestions. We also welcome comments or suggestions at any time. The Finance Council meets the third Tuesday of each month and our meetings are open if you would like to offer comments to the group, or just listen to the discussion.

Pledge Drive:

The Pledge Drive has been completed, and the results are as follows:

- Pledges completed: 535
- Amount pledged: \$510,677

Average pledge amount increased 1% over last year.

We received pledges from approximately 40% of our registered families, which is fairly consistent with the past 3 years, and also consistent with the number of families who contribute each month by way of the

envelope system or electronic giving. While your ongoing financial support is vital to our ability to continue to provide the ministries and physical environment in which we can experience and grow in our faith, please remember that "your presence at Mass is our present"—especially at this blessed time of year.

We ask that those who find themselves unable to make a financial commitment to the parish offer their prayers that our parish community will remain strong and unified through this difficult period, and that all will seek to offer their time and talent for the good of the parish.

Debt Management:

We continue to make progress on our debt, and as of 10/31/2009 our loan balance was \$2,218,103. We will continue to focus on managing our debt, but are also mindful of the need to maintain a commitment to our ongoing ministries. This is going to be an increasing challenge as the year goes for-

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Notes from the Finance Council (Con't)

By Mark Wood, Chairman

ward, absent a more positive change in current giving patterns. We remain grateful to all for your faithfulness and commitment to the Uniting in Faith program and the use of the special envelopes to contribute to this debt reduction effort.

Year End Gifting:

It is the Christmas season, a great time of giving. If you have extra holiday money we would ask that you consider adding St. Michael's to your Christmas giving list. Also, remember that all

donations made to the church by 12/31/09 may qualify as charita-

ble contributions which are deductible on your federal and state income taxes this coming year. As we have a bigger need for support, please consider making a contribution, and we are always hopeful that our parish and the success of its ministries remain in your prayers.

As always, the Finance Council is grateful for the support provided by you. Please contact any member with your questions and comments, or email us at financecouncil@stmichael-farmington.org



Prayer Shawl Ministry

By Sandy Glau

Several months ago, Pat Pariseau approached me and asked about the possibility of starting a "Prayer Shawl Ministry" here at St. Michael's. The first meeting was held July 29 and 8 people attended. The group will typically be meeting the last Tuesday of each month 7-8:30 p.m. The next meeting will be January 26. There is much conversation, sharing of ideas for patterns and the ministry in general. In the November 2006 Franciscan Retreat brochure, the following was said about the "Prayer Shawl Ministry": "Shawls...made for centuries, universal and embracing, symbolic of an inclusive, unconditionally loving God. They

wrap, enfold, comfort, cover, give solace, mother, hug, shelter and beautify. Those who have received these shawls have been uplifted and affirmed, as if given wings to fly above their troubles... Whether they are called Prayer Shawls, Comfort Shawls, Peace Shawls, or Mantles, etc., the shawl maker begins with prayers and blessings for the recipient. The intentions are continued throughout the creation of the shawl. Upon completion, a final blessing is offered before the shawl is sent on its way. Some recipients have continued the kindness by making a shawl and passing it on to someone in need. Thus, the blessing ripples

from person-to-person, with both the giver and receiver feeling the unconditional embrace of a sheltering God!" If you would like to know more about this ministry you may contact Pat Pariseau at 651-463-8496. If you know of someone who might be comforted by receiving a shawl, you may contact me, Sandy Glau, at 651-463-5228 or sglau@stmichael-farmington.org. Shawls from St. Michael's have been given to people in the hospital, people recovering from illness and are homebound, a family struggling with personal problems, a family who lost a child – to just name a few.

Feed My Starving Children By Dottie Knutson

Hands down... one of my very favorite places to spend time is at "Feed My Starving Children" in Eagan! This is a place where each of us (young and old alike) can come together to live out our faith by the simple act of packaging meals for children in need throughout the world.

As a Catholic people, we are reminded to give God thanks for the many blessings He has given us, and in turn, strive to make a difference for those in need wherever they may be. This is one such opportunity to do so.



For the past four years, we have been gathering twice yearly to package meals at FMSC. It has been heartwarming to see many generations come together to learn about the needs of the hungry - *in both body and spirit*. As we work to package meals, music plays in the background, stories are shared, and laughter is the common thread that weaves itself throughout our brief time together. What fun we have! Before the meals are shipped off to a final destination, everyone is invited to say



a prayer over the shipment along with the staff from FMSC. I can think of no better way to end our time together than to bless not only the food, but the lives that will be touched by it.

This past October, we had over **90** volunteers from St. Michael's participate at this event. We will be gathering at the Eagan location of FMSC again on Saturday, March 27th 2010 from 11:15 am-1:30 pm. If you are interested in participating at our next event at Feed My Starving children, or have any questions, please feel free to contact me at any time. All are welcome!

1st Reconciliation (2nd, 3rd, 4th grade children)

If you have a child (or children) in the 2nd, 3rd, or 4th grade, there were parent information meetings held Nov. 9 and 12 regarding the sacrament of 1st Reconciliation. For the past several years, 1st Reconciliation has been celebrated when the children are in the 4th grade. In a recent article in the Catholic Spirit by Archbishop John Nienstedt – it was pointed out that 1st Reconciliation should be celebrated before 1st Eucharist. He says, "The Church

is even more clear that prior to making their first Holy Communion, children are to celebrate their first confession." In following the guidelines of our Archbishop, St. Michael's will now be making the sacrament available to children who are preparing for 1st Eucharist, any 3rd grade children who would like to celebrate the sacrament this spring, and to the 4th grade children who would be celebrat-

ing as already planned. If you were unable to attend the parent meetings – or – if you have children who are not presently in our LIFE programs but are in these grades, you may contact Sandy Glau 651-463-5228 or sglau@stmichael-farmington.org to schedule a time to get materials, to get more information, etc.

Upcoming Community Events at St. Michael's

Although winter usually brings the chance to hunker down for a long winter's nap after the festivities of the holidays there is still a great deal going on at St. Michael's! Among the events taking place and coming up include:

Feed Our Starving Children

We had another great turnout at the last Feed My Starving Children event in October. Over 90 parishioners turned out to help pack food for those in need. The next FMSC will be held on March 27th, 2010 from 11:15 to 1:30. See the article on the previous page for more information about this worthwhile and enjoyable way to help the less

fortunate.

Cana Dinner

The Cana Dinner will be held on Saturday, February 20th. See the article below for more information.

Pancake Breakfasts

Farmington/Hampton Council 2400 K of C's will be holding several pancake breakfasts in the coming months. See the Knights of Columbus article on the following page for more information.

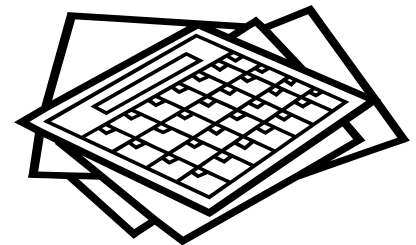
Family Movie Night

The next Family Movie Night is scheduled for Friday, January

15th at 7:00 PM. The movie being shown is "Igor".

Ash Wednesday Soup Supper

The Ash Wednesday Soup Supper will be held on Wednesday February 17th at 6:00 P.M.



Mark Your Calendars with These Upcoming Events!

An Electronic Version of The Messenger

As I have mention in past issues the cost to print and mail each issue of the Messenger exceeds \$600 an issue. The costs are split evenly between printing and mailing. The Farmington/Hampton Knights of Columbus are supporting the publication of the Messenger thru Grill Raffles and Pancake Breakfasts. We have begun looking at ways to

reduce these costs and one method being considered is sending the Messenger electronically via e-mail to parishioners who have computer access. This method of delivery reduces costs in two ways...less printing cost and less postage required. If half the issues could be sent electronically that would reduce our

costs to \$300 an issue, a significant savings. Of course, those who do not have computer access would continue to receive the Messenger through the mail. I would like to have your feedback on this approach. Please e-mail me at ezlivin@charter.net.

Cana Dinner By Madonna Perry

What have you done for your marriage lately? The Knights of Columbus Ladies Auxiliary is planning a romantic evening just for you and your significant other. Mark your calendars for Saturday, February 20th immediately following the 4:30 Mass for the Cana Dinner, a special evening for all married and engaged couples.

Our speaker this year is Judy Janish from Victoria, Minnesota. Judy is a former educator and humorous speaker. She will share with you the value of taking a minute or two just to have a little fun with the people around you. You won't want to miss this uplifting, informative and surprising presentation.

So do something for your marriage and come and enjoy a delicious meal, good company and an entertaining speaker. We will be taking reservations starting in mid-January. Watch the church bulletin for more details.

The Knights Corner

The Farmington/Hampton Knight of Columbus Council 2400 would like to take this opportunity to wish everyone a Merry Christmas and a Happy and Prosperous New Year.

Council 2400 has started its Pancake Breakfast Season. So far we have held three Pancake Breakfasts and thank St Michael's parish for supporting these events. The proceeds from the past breakfasts will go to several organizations. The proceeds for the first breakfast were designated for the church acolytes (servers) who assist Father Dennis

during the Mass. The Knights plan to take them to a Twins game this May so they can experience 'outside' baseball. The proceeds from subsequent breakfasts will go to support the needy families of St. Michael's.

The Knights also held their annual turkey bingo in November. A Sloppy Joe dinner was served and thirty turkeys were given away at the bingo game which followed the dinner. The Knights also donated thirty turkeys to the local food shelf.

Upcoming breakfasts will be held on January 3rd, February 7th, March 7th and April 25th.

If you would like to join the Knights of Columbus, contact any Knight or call Vince Olson at 651-463-9456. The Farmington/Hampton Council is always looking for Catholic men who enjoy giving back to the Church and community while having a good time and enjoying the camaraderie of like-minded men. Please consider joining.

Ladies Auxiliary

The Ladies Auxiliary is a group of women who assist the Knights of Columbus in their various functions and activities, and have functions and activities to promote Catholic charity and tolerance. The Auxiliary also operates as a social group to promote and maintain a spirit of friendly cooperation and understanding among individual members. All women 18 years of age or older are welcome to join. Meetings are held five months of

the year - September, November, January, March and May. We meet on the 3rd Thursday of those months at 7:00 p.m. in the gathering space at St. Michael's. Annual dues are \$10.00. For further information, please contact Mary Czech at 651-463-4133.

Upcoming Activities:
January 9, 2010 Potato Bar (after 4:30 Mass)

February 20, 2010: Cana Dinner

April 18, 2010: Belgian Waffle Breakfast

"While they were in Bethlehem, the time came for Mary to deliver her child." May the Christ Child bring you blessings to last the whole year through.

Wishing you all a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!

RCIA

By Andy Schwarz

The Rite of Christian Initiation for Adults (RCIA) is in high gear! The RCIA program allows interested adults to formalize their relationship with the parish community, by joining the Catholic Church in the Rites of Baptism, Confirmation, and First Eucharist. With

the completion last month of the Rites of Acceptance and Affirmation, our three Candidates: Scott Claeson, Chelsi Martin, and Jeff Forga have all moved into the period of Catechumenate, where they will receive formal teaching on the beliefs, traditions, and rituals of the Catholic Church. All have shown a real

enthusiasm for learning more on their personal journeys with Christ. Please join us in offering them your prayers, that they might walk with our parish community... and closer to the Lord.

Many Thanks.

**St. Michael's Catholic Church
Farmington, MN**

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Weekend Mass Times:

Saturday 4:30 P.M.
Sunday 8:00 A.M.
10:30 A.M.

Visit our website @
www.stmichael-farmington.org

Looking Ahead

I want to take this opportunity to wish everyone a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

As mentioned in the article on page 6 I am looking at e-mailing future issues of the Messenger to help reduce costs. Please let me know your thoughts on this and any other Messenger related topics.

The next issue will be published during the Lent/Easter time so I will be looking for articles in early March.

Please note my e-mail address and continue to provide your comments regarding the St. Michael's Messenger to me at ezlivin@charter.net.

Edmund Schultz

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A Little Levity!



One Sunday a pastor told the congregation that the church needed some extra money and asked the people to prayerfully consider giving a little extra in the offering plate. He said that whoever gave the most would be able to pick out three hymns. After the offering plates were passed, the pastor glanced down and noticed that someone had placed a \$1,000 bill in the offering. He was so excited that he immediately shared his joy with his congregation and said he'd like to personally thank the person who placed the money in the plate. A very quiet, elderly, saintly lady all the way in the back shyly raised her hand. The pastor asked her to come to the front. Slowly she made her way to the pastor. He told her how wonderful it was that she gave so much and in thanksgiving asked her to pick out three hymns. Her eyes brightened as she looked over the congregation, pointed to the three handsomest men in the building and said, "I'll take him and him and him!"