



St. John Fisher - Parish Council

Minutes from Meeting – January 23, 2025

Parish Staff/Trustees		Parish Council		Other Attendees	
<u>Ex officio</u>		Jim Castellani	R	Carlos Pina	√
Rev. Alvin J. LeBlanc	R	Pedro Cristavao	√		
Sr. Dcn. Em. John McKaig	R	Barbara Gaudette	√		
Dcn. Bill Gilles	R	Tim Geary	√		
Marlene Luebeck (Trustee)	R	Nancy Gianetti	R		
Peter Yorio (Trustee)	√	Julie Groene	√		
<u>Non-voting</u>		Trevor Hooker	√		
Janice Reska (DMM)	√	Paul Kriksciun (Vice President)	√		
Cindy Bryan (CFF)	√	Barbara Meyer (President)	√		
Helena Thomas (CFF, DYM)	√	Colin Tracey	R		
Todd Gianetti	√	Nancy Visco	√		
		Christina Warchut	√		
		Matt Wilson (Secretary)	√		
√=present R=regrets					

- I. **CALL TO ORDER** – PC President, Barbara Meyer **7:01 PM**
- II. **OPENING PRAYER** – Barbara Meyer
- III. **REVIEW MINUTES** of **November 21, 2024** – All
 - Barbara Meyer provided a markup of the minutes. Julie Groene made a motion to accept the November 21, 2024 minutes with Barbara's changes, Paul Kriksciun seconded the motion, and the minutes were approved with changes unanimously by voice vote.
- IV. **PARISHIONERS' COMMENTS** – All
 - Trevor Hooker said that the visit from Archbishop Coyne went well.
 - Janice Reska said a parishioner asked if we got any feedback from Archbishop Coyne about our parish and his opinion about what he experienced.
 - Peter Yorio said that the Christmas decoration made him feel that Christ was present.
 - Barbara Meyer thanked all who baked, cooked and helped coordinate the reception following Archbishop Coyne's visit at the January 5th 10:30 Mass.
 - Janice Reska said that Archbishop Coyne asked anyone to come up and share their burdens. She said that after 5 minutes, she felt heard, and he prayed with her.
- V. **DEACON'S COMMENTS** – None
- VI. **PASTOR'S COMMENTS** – None
- VII. **OLD BUSINESS** – All
 - Barbara Meyer discussed efforts to reach out to parishioners (as outreach or to welcome them back to Mass and to our community) – (1) for the Christmas Masses, we distributed a flyer with the messaging of "we are so glad you are here and we are better as a community when you join us", Father wrote a message and the flip side outlined the Mass schedule and the opportunities/ministries that may be helpful in encouraging active involvement, (2) a flyer was included the bulletin the weekend the Archbishop was here that outlined a review of our 2024 Year of the Eucharist (and efforts to build a family-friendly parish), set the stage for the "Pilgrims of Hope" 2025 theme and share the names and contact info for our parish council members, (3) specific outreach to parishioners (via

various means) will begin this 1st quarter of 2025 as the smaller committee meets and continues its efforts.

- Please text or call Todd Gianetti at 860-402-3213 to notify him if something needs addressing/cleaning at church. Also notify Todd if you are having an event what tables/chairs are necessary so he can set it up. This will also help him know to check to see if something needs addressing.
- Parish Council Communication – Barbara Meyer suggested that one way to increase awareness of the Parish Council and to foster communication would be to have the PC members wear name tags at coffee hour, or when greeting.

Julie Groene suggested having a couple PC people at each Mass.

Matt Wilson suggested taking a group photo of Parish Council members and putting it on the website. The caption will identify each member in the photo, but also list those that are not in the photo.

Barbara Meyer suggested highlighting one ministry/committee the bulletin each month. Barbara distributed a calendar of service and outreach opportunities (Attachment 2).

Welcoming Parishioners Back – Barbara Meyer said that Peter Yorio, Tim Geary, Jim Castellani, Deacon Bill, and Paul Kriksciun are working on outreach to parishioners that haven't been attending recently. We will try outreach calls to each family.

Barbara mentioned a Pastor in Fairfield who was sending out a novena regularly, and announcing in Mass, "Let me know if you didn't get the email, and I'll send it to you directly." This enabled the parish to update their email list.

VIII. **NEW BUSINESS** – All

- Barbara Meyer said that the Archdiocese will be standardizing websites across the Archdiocese. Gil is studying how we will move our website onto the new template. The Faith Formation pages may stay the same.
- Barbara said that Gale Busemeyer kept a list of people who received sacraments, and issued certificates. Jan Fowler will take over. Midge Lenihan is taking over the editing and proofreading of the bulletin, which Gale used to do.
- Theme for 2025 – "Pilgrims of Hope" is the focus for the Jubilee Year. Barbara shared "*Hope is Gift and Duty for Every Christian*" by Pope Francis (Attachment 1).

Barbara suggested the theme "Hope through Reconciliation, Redemption, and Forgiveness."

Janice Reska said that the choir discusses how the lyrics of songs they recently practiced fit in with theme of a message of hope.

Paul Kriksciun said that we should think about how each Parish ministry or committee contributes to hope. We could suggest to Father LaBlanc or Deacon Bill to give a homily on how each sacrament corresponds to hope.

Todd Giannetti said that news of enthusiasm and growing numbers of parishioners gives him hope.

Trevor Hooker said that while he was overwhelmed by college applications, he asked Father LaBlanc to pray for him, and that gave him hope.

Barbara Meyer said that Deacon John is willing to help with the theme. He is accustomed to bringing hope those who are sick or dying.

Cindy Bryan said that her mother is concerned about mortality, and Father LaBlanc spent an hour with her, which gave her hope. She also said that she felt hope before charity events.

Julie Groene said that sometimes hope is a whisper. We need to be open to hope; to know that salvation is possible. At baptism we become temples of the Holy Spirit. Julie said that it is empowering to know that we are conduits of hope and become Jesus's eyes and hands.

Peter Yorio said that when we receive the Eucharist, we become the Tabernacle.

Trevor Hooker said that "Hope is waiting for something that has already been given to us: Salvation in God's eternal and infinite love."

Paul Kriksciun said that hundreds of people in the parish have stories of hope. Janice Reska said that we start with a situation that is not good, and hope to get better. Faith gives strength to rise up. Barbara Meyer suggested that we have individuals tell their stories of how they overcame difficulties as a way to give other people hope.

IX. COMMITTEE/MINISTRY REPORTS

PASTORAL CARE

- **Christian Outreach Updates** - Barbara Meyer from January 2025 Christian Outreach Report:
 - All Souls' Mass and Reception – This year we celebrated during a 10:30 am Mass in the midst of November vs on All Souls' Day for those who lost loved ones during this past year. A wonderful opportunity to gather that involves our youth artists, parish bakers and committee members involved with setting up the reception. This "event" is now under the COC umbrella, given the gracious support of the committee.
 - Thanksgiving Food Drive – under the leadership of John Noel, we had another very successful Thanksgiving Food Drive to collect and supply requested food items for the patrons at the Marlborough Food Bank.
 - Christmas Cards to the Bereaved - for those family members who lost loved ones in the past year, we write specifically "messed" cards of God's love, support and strength. Sabrina Paradise coordinates a social gathering for all those who participate in the effort as well.
 - Christmas Giving Program – another very successful year supporting a variety of organizations (7) in their needs and in "giving" to their patrons and/or residents: Marlborough Health Care Center, By-the-River (residential in-house healthcare), Protectors of Animals, Sacred Sweats (women being released from prison), Journey Home (transition to sustainable housing situation), St. Vincent DePaul (Middletown soup kitchen) and Caring Families (support to young parents raising their babies). The group also introduced a new set up for the giving tags (using smaller trees) which then were used to create a "woodland" set up for our Christmas decorations. Many thanks to the committee members for taking on this new effort and to Annie Mariano for her help in the subsequent decorating (and de-decorating) for the Christmas season.
 - Weekly and Monthly Efforts – (1) the weekly food drive for the Marlborough Food Bank (managed by John Noel) and (2) the monthly sandwich making (either done at home or as a group the last Thursday morning of the month following morning Mass), collection (between 7:00 and 7:30 pm at church the last Thursday of the month) and delivery to St. Vincent DePaul (the following Friday morning) continues (managed by Jen O'Neill, funds by the Knights of Columbus and collection and delivery by Doug Meyer).
- **Community Garden** – Barbara Meyer.
 - Community Giving Garden – is sleeping and resting up for another productive season – Peg Filloramo and her team are always interested in new gardening members – no gardening experience required. Stay tuned as spring comes around!
- **Lending Library and Book Club** – Barbara Gaudette from January 2025 Lending Library Committee report

- The SJF Lending Library Committee continues to process donations. Christmas books were available to families at the entrances of the church during the Christmas season. As sponsors of the SJF Book Club (with 19 members) we discussed The Christmas Train by David Baldacci on Wednesday, December 11, 2024. We will discuss This Is Happiness by Niall Williams on Wednesday, March 12, 2025. New members are always welcome.
- **Comfort and Warmth (Prayer Shawl) Ministry** – Mary Horrigan from January 2025 Prayer Shawl Ministry report
 - One Baptismal Blanket has been distributed since the last report.
 - As we currently have a good supply of blankets and shawls, some of us are making use of donated yarn and making hats, scarves, and mittens to donate to clothing drives.
 - We participated in the Marlborough Arts Center's Holiday sale and made \$97.00 from the sale of crocheted baskets and Christmas ornaments. We plan to display those baskets which were left after the sale at the coffee hour following Masses on January 26. We will sell them for whatever donations are given. Proceeds will go toward the purchase of yarn for our projects.

LITURGICAL

- **Altar Serving Ministry** – No report
- **Ministers of Communion** – Peter Yorio from September 2024 Ministers of Communion report
 - Home and Infirm Visits – Marlborough Health and Rehab Center is back on our Friday visit schedule. We also continue with our weekly visits to the By The River and have three home bound individuals that we visit each week.
 - We continue with a 5 person/team rotation for the Ministers of Communion coverage:
 1. First Friday on the month, Melissa Jordan/Jen O'Neill,
 2. Second Friday of the month, Sue Hurley.
 3. Third Friday of the month, Peter Yorio.
 4. Fourth Friday of the month, Tom Reiser.
 5. Barbara Myers covers the 5th Friday of the month, when they occur.
 - With the increase of residents being served at MHRC, we are looking to add another volunteer each week. You will be amazed and rewarded by the miracles you experience by serving Communion to those who cannot attend mass. Please let Tom Reiser or Pete Yorio know if you are interested in assisting, even if you can't make a commitment every month.
- **Liturgical Committee** – No report
- **Reader and Greeter Ministry** – Julie Groene from January 2025 Report
 - As of 1/14/25, there are 15 readers and 10 greeters. The reader and greeter ministry served during Advent and the Christmas season including Archbishop Coyne's special visit to the parish on Sunday, January 5 for the Epiphany of our Lord. In 2025, the need to recruit and train new volunteers for both ministries remains the priority.
 - It is with appreciation that we note Gale Busmeyer's service to the reader ministry. She leaves behind a legacy of leadership and service to our parish.
- **Music Ministry** – Janice Reska from January 2025 Music Ministry Report
 - This year's Christmas Eve 4:00 mass featured the Adult Choir, the Young People's Choir, two guitarists and a flutist, making the musical sound at this special mass glorious.

The Young People's Choir grew to 11 children ranging from Pre-K to Grade 8. Directed by Monica Dostaler, a retired music teacher from Colchester, the youngsters sang several songs alone during the Prelude before mass, and later joined the adults in two other Christmas hymns. Monica is trained professional in conducting and working with children, so her help was invaluable and greatly

appreciated. Krysta Wallace helped the youngsters organize their music, which made things easier for everyone.

Paul Kriksciun and Jim Henderschedt accompanied the youngsters on their acoustic and bass guitars. Teresa Hooker played her flute during mass which added a nice touch to the overall sound.

I am deeply grateful to everyone who gave their time and musical talents to make this Christmas Eve mass very special.

- Carlos Pina helped our music ministry by hanging our current microphones from brackets above the choir seats. These microphones were designed to be hung, and should now pick up and project the vocals of the choir members much more clearly.
- We used the Wilcox donation of \$500 to purchase two additional condenser microphones which will be used on the floor in front of the choir as well as by the cantors. Between the hanging microphones and these new floor microphones, we now have the equipment we need to achieve the best vocal sound. The overall balance of the sound needs some adjusting by a trained sound professional, but this is planned for the near future.
- An anonymous donor purchased and donated eight copies of Respond & Acclaim 2025 for our music ministry. These booklets will be used by the choir members in singing the Responsorial Psalms and Gospel Acclamations at weekly masses. This gift is deeply appreciated.
- The Adult Choir continues to practice weekly and sing at Sunday services, alternating between the 8:30 and 10:30 masses. We will soon begin rehearsing songs for the upcoming Palm Sunday and Easter week services.

EDUCATION & FAITH DEVELOPMENT

- **Faith Formation (Grades K,1,3,4,5,6)** – Cindy Bryan from January 2025 Faith Formation Report
 - At the end of November, Family Faith formation had their Advent Event, “Prepare Ye the Way of the Lord”. Stations were set up with activities for children of all ages to do with their families. There were at least 12 families that passed through, as well as parishioners without children. The activities included making their own Advent Wreaths, an Advent Activity chain, The Joshua Tree displayed upstairs in the church during Christmas Season, coloring pages, word games and crosswords, a table for “Keep Christ in Christmas” entries, and lastly ‘A Pocketful of Love’. These are paper pockets filled with cards, affirmations and pictures for the residents at By the River.
 - This Advent Event was in place of December classes to give families time to celebrate the Christmas Season. It was greatly appreciated by the parents.
 - Our Saturday January session began with a prayer and scripture reading together with the parents. Then the children went downstairs to the hall to further discuss church vs. Church. (the building vs the Community of parishioners), ways they could more fully participate in this community, and the various roles of the community- Arch Bishop, Priest, Deacon, etc. We ended with a discussion on The Epiphany. This coincided with the visit from the Archbishop and that Sunday’s Gospel.
 - Our Thursday session was for the children only. They are separated by age so the discussions were more in depth.
 - Attendance remains at 15 for both Saturdays and Thursdays. Not always the same 15. Enrollment is 18. One attends Helena’s class, and another attends the 7th and 8th grade group.

2nd Grade and 9th Grade Faith Formation – Helena Thomas from January 2025 report

- 2nd Grade Sacramental Year: Class attendance and participation continue to go very well with this group; most classes have all enrollees in attendance or one missing due to sickness. This group has completed the Archdiocese annual requirement of the Empowering God’s Children program of teaching two lessons on this topic (1st lesson in September and 2nd lesson in November).

The **1st Sacrament of Reconciliation is scheduled to occur on Saturday, January 18th at 10:00.** At our last class 1/7, I took the children upstairs to visit Jesus in the tabernacle and show them where they will receive this Sacrament. Each child was given a sheet of the Steps of Reconciliation to put

their minds at ease along with age-appropriate questions to help them with their Examination of Conscience prior to receiving this sacrament. Please remember them in your prayers that they have a wonderful experience of God's forgiving love embracing them this day. May the Holy Spirit continue to guide them as they move onward towards their 1st Holy Communion which will happen on May 3.

- **9th Grade Confirmation Year:** Class attendance and participation continue to also go very well with this group; classes have most enrollees in attendance (1 or 2 missing due to sickness). This group has completed the Archdiocese annual requirement of the Empowering God's Children program of teaching two lessons on this topic (1st lesson in September and 2nd lesson in November).

This group completed another community service event on January 5 to benefit the Catholic Worker House located in Hartford. The families brought in a multitude of breakfast items such as granola bars, fruit (oranges, apples), prepackaged muffins, juice boxes, and other food items. We also reached out to the parishioners for any donations. There was so much donated that the teens assembled almost 400 brown lunch bags of breakfast treats! After speaking with Jackie Allen-Doucat who runs Catholic Worker House with her husband, Chris, she agreed that at least half of these bags should be donated to Kids' Café of the House of Bread. Tom Porell, Co-Director of House of Bread, was very happy to take the breakfast bags!

Our next Service Event will be held following class instruction on February 9. The recipient will be By the River. The teens will again make Valentine's Day cards and assemble care packages of goodies to eat (according to their diet restrictions) and fun small activities. I'd like to schedule a day later in February when the teens will meet at By the River and spend 2-3 hours conversing and playing games with the elderly residents. We tried this last year but some of the kids were sick (including me) so we had to cancel the in-person part.

Youth Ministry – Helena Thomas from January 2025 report

- December Youth Ministry was originally scheduled for December 14 from 5:30 to 7:00 but we cancelled this date since originally Archbishop Coyne was scheduled to celebrate Mass the following day on December 15 and the hall needed to be prepped. Archbishop Coyne's visit was later changed to January 5. But we decided in lieu of the December Youth Ministry meeting, the teens would assist with serving at the Spaghetti Dinner on December 7. We had three teens who assisted, and they had a great time doing it!

Our next one is scheduled for Saturday, February 21, from 5:30 to 7:00.

Also, I contacted Lisa Ciarrocchi, the Holy Family Church parish secretary and the one in charge of Youth Ministry along with her husband, Michael, in hopes that we could combine efforts for Youth Ministry meetings. Her husband returned my call, but I am currently waiting for him or Lisa to return my second call. I know they have ongoing Youth Ministry meetings at their church with attendance so I'm hoping to learn some ideas from them that we can incorporate in our Youth Ministry meetings or simply combine both churches for this effort. Hopefully I'll have more details to divulge at our next parish council meeting.

- **Order of Christian Initiation for Adults/Adult Confirmation — Jim Castellani from January 2025 Report**
 - OCIA: No activity. 4 Inquirers during 2024.
 - Adult Confirmation - No active participants

ADMINISTRATIVE

- **Finance Council – Peter Yorio from January 2025 Finance Council report**
 - Key financial updates for the six-months period 7/1 to 12/31/24
 - The Finance Council has made the church's finances more visible and timelier by publishing weekly and YTD offertory collections (Goal versus Actual) and related variances
 - YTD Weekly offertory collections are under budget by about \$2,800

- Generous Christmas season donations exceeded budget by about \$1000
 - Thanks to the generosity of many parishioners, we exceeded the church's annual collection goal by approximately \$5,000. These included two very generous donations from the Wilcox and Tracey families that fully paid for painting of the church.
 - On the expense side, we had \$4,000 in unexpected HVAC repairs and a planned expenditure of \$10,000 for the painting of the church exterior.
 - Overall, we have a slight revenue deficit of \$550.
- **Maintenance Committee** – Peter Yorio
 - We have been given a second Automated External Defibrillator (AED) that we are considering installing downstairs.
 - Nancy Visco's son Hudson mounted a plaque with the "Our Father" prayer on a post in the prayer garden.
- **Communications/Social Media** – no report
- **Web Ministry** – Gil Thompson from January 2025 Web Ministry Report
 - New Parishioner Form Problem: On our website, in the Church Welcome section is a bright green banner containing a link for a "New Parishioner Form". This is a Google form which collects information for someone to request contact to join our parish. The questions asked are:
 1. Family Name (Last Name),
 2. Street Address,
 3. Town/City,
 4. State,
 5. Zip Code,
 6. Contact Phone Number,
 7. Family Email Address,
 8. Special Accommodations (Disabled, Homebound, etc.),
 9. Do you wish to use contribution envelopes? (Yes/No), and
 10. A Submit button.
 - In the past, a potential parishioner would fill out the form and copies of this information would go to several people so contact could be made. In addition, the information would be stored in a worksheet summary online.
 - Now it no longer works. Apparently Google has decided that they should charge \$50 a year for this functionality and it didn't bother to notify anyone that their forms no longer works as it originally did. \$50 a year is a pretty good deal if you were collecting a lot of data, but it is not such a good deal when you only collect 5 or 6 per year.
 - I have been sending out the summaries as I find new inquiries, but I don't get confirmation of receipt, so I don't know if anyone actually gets the summaries. I've attached the most recent worksheet, so please review the entries. Really it would be a shame to have people who want to join our parish and we fail to contact them.
 - We need a different solution. I'm looking, but "two eyes are better than one".

PARISH LIFE

- **Social Committee** – Christina Warchut from January 2025 Social Committee Report
 - Coffee Hour is continuing. Attendance varies. Many people who come are grateful for the time to share and socialize. Some people have approached me asking if they can make a contribution toward coffee. I declined, but thought that this may be something to discuss.

- The Spaghetti Dinner was held December 6. We sold 75 Tickets and had a good turnout. Some people came after the town tree lighting and then went out again for the fireworks and then came back in to have dessert. Some commented that having this on the same night of the tree lighting was a positive thing.
- The reception for Archbishop Coyne was held on January 5. Since I was away, Barbara Meyer oversaw the reception and from what I understand everything went well.
- We need to settle on a date for the Parish Picnic. Either June 8 or October 5.
- It was suggested to try to do the Chili Dinner again. Also, to have a Talent Show. We probably could combine the two, but need to find a date.
- **Knights of Columbus** – Jim Castellani from January 2025 report
 - Lights on the Green, December 7, 2024 – The Knights again provided FREE POPCORN. The event was wildly successful and ran during the lighting of the Christmas Tree & fireworks on the Town Green.
 - 2024 KofC Scholarship – Awards have been presented to both winners; Christopher Richard and Hudson Visco.
 - 2025 KofC Scholarship - Contest has been initiated. 2 \$750 scholarships are available. Deadline for applicants is March 31, 2025. Program Chairman is Frand Daudish. See the parish website for details.
 - "MARCH FOR LIFE" CONNECTICUT
 - Wednesday, March 19, 2025 at the Capitol
 - 12:00pm RALLY
 - 1:00pm MARCH- around Bushnell Park.
 - Marshaled by the Knights of Columbus
 - PLEASE ATTEND
 - JOIN THE KNIGHTS – Contact Carlos Pina or any Knight. Informational materials are available in the vestibule.
- **Men's Prayer Group** – Jim Castellani from January 2025 report
 - Regular Gatherings - We continue to meet in-person the 1st Thursday (7pm) and 3rd Saturday (7am) of each month. (NOTE: Meetings continue throughout the year.) Contacts - All are welcome to participate, just contact Jim Castellani or Pete Yorio to get on the mailing list or to have questions answered about the Group.
 - Christmas Lights – With the conclusion of the Christmas Season this past weekend, on the celebration of the Baptism of the Lord, the parish outdoor Christmas lights were unplugged. All electrical cords and timers were packed away along with some of the string lights and Advent Candles from the church grounds and the rectory. They are stored in the Knights of Columbus shed area. I will ask for volunteers to remove lights on all the trees and shrubs as soon as I recover from COVID.
 - Bookmarks and Mission Cards – Both of these are located at the exits of the church and are FREE to take. The latest bookmark offers the encouraging statement – *"The Messiah is among you."*
 - Join the Men's Group - Just come to any session and see if the experience is or you. God Bless.
- **Women's Prayer Group** – Barbara Meyer from January 2025 report

- X. **NEXT MEETING** - Thursday, **March 20, 2025** (7:00-8:30 PM)
Email Committee Reports to the Parish Council email list by **March 13, 2025**
- XI. **ADJOURNMENT – 8:30 PM**
- XII. **CLOSING PRAYER** – Offered by Barbara Meyer

Attachment 1

Pope Francis: Hope is a Gift and Duty for Every Christian

Pope Francis writes that hope is a gift from God and a task that must be cultivated by all Christians, in the introduction to his new book, "Hope Is A Light In The Night," which collects excerpts from various speeches by the Pope on the theological virtue of hope.

By Pope Francis

The Jubilee of 2025, a holy year that I wanted to dedicate to the theme "Pilgrims of Hope", is a propitious occasion to reflect on this fundamental and decisive Christian virtue – especially in times like the ones we are living, in which the third world war being fought "piecemeal" that is unfolding before our eyes can lead us to assume attitudes of gloomy discouragement and ill-concealed cynicism.

Hope, on the other hand, is a gift and a task for every Christian. It is a gift because it is God who offers it to us. Hoping, in fact, is not a mere act of optimism, like when we sometimes hope to pass an exam at university ("Let's hope we make it") or when we hope for good weather for the trip out of town on a Sunday in the spring ("Let's hope for good weather"). No, hoping is waiting for something that has already been given to us: salvation in God's eternal and infinite love. That love, that salvation that gives flavor to our lives and that constitutes the hinge on which the world remains standing, despite all the wickedness and nefariousness caused by our sins as men and women. To hope, then, is to welcome this gift that God offers us every day. To hope is to savor the wonder of being loved, sought, desired by a God who has not shut Himself away in His impenetrable heavens but has made Himself flesh and blood, history and days, to share our lot.

Hope is also a task that Christians have a duty to cultivate and put to good use for the sake of all their brothers and sisters. The task is to remain faithful to the gift received, as rightly pointed out by Madeleine Delbr  l, a 20th-century French woman who was able to bring the Gospel to the geographical and existential peripheries of mid-century Paris, marked by de-Christianization. Madeleine Delbr  l wrote: "The place that Christian hope assigns us is that narrow ridge, that borderline at which our vocation requires that we choose, every day and every hour, to be faithful to God's faithfulness to us". God is faithful to us; our task is to respond to this faithfulness. But take care: it is not we who generate this faithfulness; it is a gift from God that works in us if we allow ourselves to be molded by His power of love, the Holy Spirit Who acts as a breath of inspiration in our hearts. It is up to us, then, to invoke this gift: "Lord, grant me to be faithful to you in hope!"

I said that hoping is a gift from God and a task for Christians. And to live hope requires a "mysticism with open eyes", as the great theologian Johann-Baptist Metz called it: knowing how to discern, everywhere, evidence of hope, the breaking through of the possible into the impossible, of grace where it would seem that sin has eroded all trust. Some time ago I had the opportunity to dialogue with two exceptional witnesses of hope, two fathers: one Israeli, Rami; one Palestinian, Bassam. Both lost daughters in the conflict that has bloodied the Holy Land for too many decades now. But nonetheless, in the name of their pain, the suffering they felt at the death of their two little daughters – Smadar and Abir – they have become friends, indeed brothers: they live forgiveness and reconciliation as a concrete, prophetic and authentic gesture. Meeting them gave me so much, so much hope. Their friendship and brotherhood taught me it is possible that hatred, concretely, may not have the last word. The reconciliation they experience as individuals, a prophecy of a larger and broader reconciliation, is an invincible sign of hope. And hope opens us to unimaginable horizons.

I invite every reader of this text to make a simple but concrete gesture: in the evening, before going to bed, as you're thinking over the events you have lived through and the encounters you have had, go in search of a sign of hope in the day just gone by. A smile from someone you didn't expect, an act of gratuitousness observed at school, a kind act encountered in the workplace, a gesture of help, even a small one: hope is indeed a "childlike virtue", as Charles P  guy wrote. And we need to go back to being like children, with their sense of wonder, to encounter the world, to know it, and to appreciate it. Let us train ourselves to recognize hope. We will then be able to marvel at how much good exists in the world. And our hearts will light up with hope. We will then be able to be beacons of the future for those around us.

Attachment 2

Service and Outreach Opportunities - St. John Fisher Parish

SJF's Christian Outreach Committee (COC) continues to secure and offer service and outreach opportunities for all parishioners throughout the year. We are always looking for new members to join us as we research and plan various events to involve parishioners as they act on what Jesus asks of us – **“Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet. I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you.”** John 13:14-15

COC initiatives focus on food, health and financial insecurity and parishioner & neighbor support – we offer recurrent monthly opportunities, scheduled outreach initiatives and support to various organizations, as needs arise. For 2025, please mark your calendars with the opportunities that interest you and stay tuned for more details as the various dates approach.

Recurrent Weekly or Monthly Outreach	Service and Outreach Opportunity
Weekly at each Mass	Weekly Food Drive supporting patrons of the Marlborough Food Bank
Last Thursday of each month	Sandwich Making and Collection serving patrons of St. Vincent dePaul in Middletown
Months of Spring thru Fall	Community Giving Garden serving patrons at the Marlborough Food Bank with fresh produce on a weekly basis

Monthly Outreach 2025	Service and Outreach Opportunity
January 26	Drive-Thru Café serving patrons of the Marlborough Food Bank
February	(Possible) Items Collection for ImmaCare, House of Bread and Journey Home
March 22	American Red Cross Blood Drive hosting a community blood drive in our hall
March 30	Drive-Thru Café serving patrons of the Marlborough Food Bank
April 27	St. Vincent dePaul Sunday Supper serving patrons in Middletown
May 10/11	Baby Shower – supporting young moms and their babies through the organization Caring Families
May 18	Drive-Thru Café serving patrons of the Marlborough Food Bank
June	(Possible) Journey Home Collection
July	Back-to-School Supplies Drive – supporting Marlborough Elementary (MES) families who have requested help
August	
September 21	St. Vincent DePaul Sunday Supper serving patrons in Middletown
October 25	National “Make a Difference Day” American Red Cross Blood Drive hosting a community blood drive in our hall
November	All Souls' Mass & Reception supporting those who lost loved ones during the year Thanksgiving Food Drive supporting patrons on Marlborough Food Bank
December	Christmas Cards to the Bereaved who lost loved ones during the year Christmas Giving Program supporting organizations with specific needs from their patrons