PY 2025

Pastoral Care
& Community Outreach

ANNUAL REPORT

Pastoral Care & Community Outreach ministries reach out in service to members of our wider community who are in need by nourishing and evangelizing through actions that point people to God.

Saint Michael Parish PCCO ministries have been successful in achieving their goals for the 2024-25 Pastoral Year.

This detailed report helps readers to understand the specific achievements of each ministry and how they align with the thematic goals and mission statement of the parish. This information could provide valuable insights into the impact these ministries have had on the community and how they have contributed to the overall mission of Saint Michael Parish.

"Never worry about numbers.
Help one person at a time,
and always start with the person nearest you."
- Saint Mother Teresa of Calcutta

Pastoral Care and Community Outreach ministries at Saint Michael Parish have made significant strides in fulfilling their mission to reach out and serve the wider community of Thurston County, Here's how we can break down and analyze their achievements:

Goals Achievement: Understanding the specific goals set by these ministries is crucial. Were they focused on providing tangible support such as food drives, shelter assistance, or educational programs? Or did they emphasize spiritual nourishment through prayer groups, pastoral visits, or counseling services? Knowing the goals helps us gauge their effectiveness in meeting community needs.

Alignment with Thematic Goals: How closely did these achievements align with the thematic goals of Saint Michael Parish? Thematic goals often reflect the core values and priorities of the parish community, such as fostering faith formation, promoting social justice, or building a welcoming community. Evaluating this alignment will highlight the ministries' effectiveness in advancing the parish's broader mission.

Impact on the Community: Understanding the impact these ministries have had on the community is key. Did they succeed in reaching vulnerable populations, fostering a sense of belonging among parishioners, or bridging gaps in services? Quantitative data (e.g., number of individuals served, hours volunteered) and qualitative feedback (e.g., testimonials, community

Pastoral Care & Community Outreach

MINISTRIES

Alzheimer/Dementia Support (St. Dyphna)
Cancer Support (St. Peregrine)
Christmas Giving Tree
Community Kitchen
Detention Ministry
Food Bank of Thurston County
Funeral Ministry
Funeral Receptions (St. Martha)
Grief Support (St. Elizabeth Ann Seton)
Helping Hands Ministry
Holy Oly Faith Sharing Group–Olympia Senior Center
Homeless Meals
Journey of the Heart
Men's Shelter
Miscarriage & Loss of Infant Support (St. Catherine of Siena)
Parish Health Ministry
Pastoral Care/Eucharistic Visitors to the Homebound
Pastoral Care & Community Outreach Commission
Prayer Shawl Ministry
Pregnancy Aid
Sanctity of Life
St. Vincent de Paul – Home Visits, Clothing Bank
Suicide Loss Support (Our Lady of Lourdes)
Thurston County Food Bank
Thurston County Pregnancy Aid
Weekly Dinners for the Hungry

Annual Ministry Review Questions

1. How many parishioners served in your ministry in the past year?
2. How many people received support/service through your ministry in the past year?
3. What new or ongoing challenges did your ministry face in the past year?
4. What was a highlight or "God-sighting" that you or others in your ministry experienced in the past year?
5. What plans do you have to change/grow/improve your ministry in the coming year?

responses) will provide insights into their reach and effectiveness.

Contributions to Parish Mission: Finally, assessing how these ministries contributed to the overall mission of Saint Michael Parish is essential. Did they strengthen parishioners' faith, enhance the parish's reputation in the community, or inspire greater engagement in parish life? These contributions will demonstrate the ministries' integral role in fulfilling the parish's overarching mission statement.

This report will provide concrete examples, statistics, and narratives that illustrate the successes and challenges of PCCO minisgtries. This information not only celebrates ministry accomplishments but also identifies areas for further growth and improvement. If you have specific highlights or aspects of the report you'd like to delve into further, feel free to share!

Eucharistic Visitors to the Homebound

This ministry coordinates and trains Eucharistic Visitors who bring Holy Communion on a weekly basis to Catholics who are temporarily or permanently homebound. Currently, 76 parishioners are trained and commissioned as Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion. 87 parishioners served in this ministry in the past year and 157 people received support/service.

Since COVID—and especially following Fr. Jim's illness and passing last year—Extraordinary Ministers haven't been able to gather as regularly as before. With such a large group, finding a time that works for everyone has proven difficult, if not impossible. As a result, many EVs have found it challenging to recall protocols, guidelines, and the proper ways to support those they visit.

Witnessing the power of faith in the lives of those we encounter as Extraordinary Ministers is both beautiful and transformative—it not only strengthens our own faith but also reveals how serving others in need leads to profound personal growth. Our plan is to hold regular meetings, workshops, and a retreat to help members build relationships, deepen their own faith, and form meaningful connections—so they are spiritually equipped to support the faith of the sick and homebound.

Helping Hands

This outreach ministry serves homebound individuals in Thurston County who need short-term assistance with tasks like transportation, meal prep, shopping, errands, or friendly visits. Help is provided regardless of income or faith background. 27 volunteers provided support/service this past year to about a dozen people.

We began distinguishing between those who wished to volunteer by visiting and supporting the sick and homebound (Helping Hands Ministry) and those interested in offering practical or manual assistance (Working Hands Ministry). However, due to the limited number of requests and volunteers being available only for specific tasks or days, we recognize that we have not done enough to effectively promote and grow this ministry.

Even when only a few individuals receive the help they need, the joy and gratitude they express is always deeply heartwarming and surely a God-sighting that boosts the desire to do more. As St. Mother Teresa once said, "The biggest disease today is not leprosy or tuberculosis, but rather the feeling of being unwanted, uncared for, and deserted by everybody. Loneliness and the feeling of being unwanted is the most terrible poverty." Recognizing that loneliness remains one of the greatest struggles, the focus in the coming year will be on more intentionally reaching out to those who live alone and may feel isolated.

Health Ministry

This ministry provides health-related education, CPR training, exercise groups, blood pressure checks, and home visits to support parishioners' well-being. Only four parishioners were actively involved, but many parishioners were served with blood pressure checks on Sundays. Also, a group of six parishioners meets weekly for exercise classes.

Engaging more parishioners who are willing to dedicate their time to fostering and nurturing the connection between mind, body, and spirit has been a challenge. Only a few parishioners volunteered yet witnessing their perseverance and the positive results of what we offered fueled the desire to continue offering this ministry.

St. Paul's tripartite model of spirit, soul, and body in 1 Thessalonians 5:23—"May the God of peace himself make you perfectly holy, and may you be preserved blameless, spirit, soul, and body, for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ"—is too often seen today as having separate parts, when in reality they are deeply and inseparably connected. Because the health of body, mind, and soul are interwoven, the goal of this ministry is to emphasize the importance of that connection. Pope Francis once said: "Thanks to interdisciplinary studies, we can come to appreciate better the dynamics involved in the relationship between our physical condition and the state of our habitat, between health and nourishment, our psycho-physical wellbeing and the care of the spiritual life—also through the practice of prayer and meditation—and finally between health and sensitivity to art, and especially music. It is no accident that medicine serves as a bridge between the natural and the human sciences, so much so that in the past it could be defined as *philosophia*

corporis, as we see in a manuscript kept in the Vatican Apostolic Library."

We will continue recruiting volunteers from different areas of knowledge and exploring the best ways to educate and engage parishioners in this holistic understanding.

Knights of Columbus

The Olympia Council partners with Sacred Heart, St. Michael, and St. George parishes to serve those in need throughout the greater Olympia area. The Knights of Columbus is a world-wide organization of Catholic gentlemen. In the Olympia/Lacey/Tumwater area, Saint Michael, Sacred Heart, and St. George Byzantine parishes are served by 3rd Degree Council 1643 and 4th Degree Assembly 1183.

The Knights have about 280 members in the Council and about 120 in the Assembly. The members are spread out over the three parishes the Council covers. About 60% attend Saint Michael, 30% Sacred Heart and 10% St. George. As of May 1, there were 264 third degree members from all three parishes.

We have a Golf Tournament Fundraiser that benefits St. Michael Parish School, Holy Family School, Pope John Paul II High School and St. Martins University. We support Seattle Diocese Seminarians with direct payments. We supported financially the Vietnam Mission group that went to Vietnam in 2025. We support pregnancy groups with direct funds for operations as well as supporting pro-life billboard rent. We have a "Coats for Kids" program every fall where we give out more than a hundred coats. We have a clergy/religious recognition/support dinner every year and every Catholic religious is invited. We recognize military veterans with our annual Veterans Day dinner. We recognize our Irish heritage with a St. Patrick's Day dinner. We sponsor a quarterly food drive for Sacred Heart Food Pantry and provide food for a Drexel House dinner about once a month. We cover the Fourth Sunday of the Month Coffee Hours at Saint Michael and about five coffee hours per year at Sacred Heart. We support Pregnancy Aid by delivering up to ten Christmas trees with all the needed supplies to selected families. We also support Sacred Heart needy families with ten trees and St. George with five trees. Our schola sings the National Anthem at a Tacoma Rainiers game every year. In the past year we have assisted Saint Michael with preparing hot dogs and setting up for a few parish functions. We bring comfort to members who have lost someone by holding a special Mass in November, remembering those deceased by name. In addition, we have a few fundraising dinners to support our donations. We provide monetary support to four seminarians through proceeds from our clergy appreciation dinner, and vocations fund. The Washington State Knights of Columbus also donated two ultrasound machines to Options Pregnancy Clinic in Lacey over the past few years.

Ongoing challenges: Only 30–40 members participate in any meaningful way. Our ongoing challenge is to be an organization that brothers want to be actively participate in.

Through our membership/recruitment group, we have been working to create a brotherhood where men can be active in their faith and be active together for the betterment of their faith community and the community at large.

Journey of the Heart Missions

Founded in 2003, this program offers short-term immersion mission trips to the Holy Spirit Community Center in Juarez, Mexico. Volunteers live and serve in solidarity with those residing near the city's old garbage dump. Over 25 years, 600 parishioners have participated, with an additional 2,000 supporting the project—totaling 2,600 involved parishioners across 47 trips.

Eight core team leaders and 22 parishioners participated in three trips over the past year. Trips included a retreat experience at the Holy Spirit Center, Juarez Mexico, and two construction-related trips to the Holy Family Refugee Center in El Paso, Texas. Several hundred people in a migrant shelter benefitted from this ministry as well as support for the leadership at the Holy Spirit Center who also care for hundreds of people. The biggest ongoing challenge continues to be cancellation of planned mission trips.

Repeatedly, participants shared how their hearts were touched by God through the people they served. Many spoke of renewed joy in their faith. Others shared about the gift of meeting and praying with fellow parishioners and those they served on mission. Participants expressed gratitude for a deepening of their prayer life and the beauty of briefly sharing in a more simple lifestyle. MIssionaries frequently reflected on

and marveled at how the people they came to serve witnessed trust in God, joy in the midst of hardship, and gratitude. Missionaries humbly and gratefully discovered that they were taught and served by the people they had come to help.

Preliminary plans include expanding the leadership circle and opportunities for mission service in new locations. The leadership team has proposed sponsoring a "reverse mission", bringing people from the Holy Spirit center to Saint Michael Parish, expanding mission outreach through other parish ministries (Dcn John and Thuy Nguyen are in discussion about this.), develop other ways to connect the communities of Saint Michael Parish to the Holy Spirit Center in our ongoing 25 year relationship as a means of serving people in the impoverished neighborhood around the center, ongoing mission education for the parish including youth, young adults and the parish school.

Pastoral Care & Community Outreach Commission

This commission currently has three members, including Kellie Patton, and supports decision-making processes such as the annual grant distribution. Kellie and I work closely with the commission on all initiatives. Here are the grants that have been assigned and approved for this Pastoral year.

Grants approved for the 2025/26 Pastoral year

Organization	**Grant Amount**
Thurston County Senior News & Medical Equipment	$5,000—August
Our Common Ground Home Farm	$5,000—July
Senior Center	$6,000—November
Options Pregnancy Clinic	$4,000—January
Michael Brennan	$5,000—March
Community Kitchen	$16,000
Total:	$40,000

Prayer Shawl Ministry:

Members create prayer shawls while praying over them. Each shawl is individually blessed by a priest and given to those in need of comfort or as a celebration of life milestones. About 15 who come on Wednesdays and four contribute from home. We have given out about 160 shawls so far this year.

Our biggest challenge is to keep up with the demand, but that is a good thing! We share our God sightings each week when we get together. And, while we really don't see the recipients of our shawls, occasionally we will get a thank you note.

Rise Up Hiking Group

About 8-12 core members come to most hikes with about 40 people participating throughout the year. We extend offers to our hikes to neighbors, friends and relatives outside the SMP community, often to people that desire to meet with others but do not have the community to share the hiking experience with. Each year we also have a hike, led by Jim French, to see salmon spawning on the Kennedy River. This is one of our most attended hikes. This year we plan on doing something similar at the salmon ladder at Tumwater Falls.

Our challenges include designing walks that are interesting but not too difficult for senior hikers and yet appeal to hikers of all ages and designing walks that are predominantly in the Olympia area to minimize transportation issues. We have been fortunate regarding weather issues but typically do not have hikes from mid-November through mid-March.

We most enjoy walking through the woods listening to people that have never met, talking, sharing and listening to each other as we walk through God's creation. Most of our hikes are after the Saturday morning Mass, but we are considering expanding to do some weekday hikes.

Support Groups

All support groups emphasize the role of faith in coping with grief and life challenges. While they do not replace professional counseling, both group and one-on-one support are offered free of charge. Groups are rooted in the Catholic faith but are open to all, regardless of religious background.

St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Grief Support

This ministry offers faith-based support to individuals coping with the loss of a loved one, illness, or other life challenges. We hold open meetings every Monday from 6–7:30PM, and offer a closed cycle of 10 consecutive meetings beginning in the Fall, on Saturdays . These Saturday sessions run from 10AM–NOON, following 9AM Mass for those who wish to attend.

Two individuals led the Saturday morning support groups and 18 people attended throughout the year. Witnessing participants grow stronger, nurture hope, and deepen their faith, eventually moving beyond their tunnel vision to recognize others' pain and actively support family, friends and one another is always a profound and deeply moving joy. At the end of each meeting cycle, participants are asked to complete an evaluation form. Their feedback is essential for improving how the group is facilitated.

For the Monday evening support group, 25 participated in open Grief Ministry in 2024. Participants come with a need—when that need is filled they move forward in their lives and no longer attend.

Keeping the flow of conversation going is an ongoing challenge. Staying on topic and discreetly moving on from a participant dominating the conversation so others can share are also challenges. Having backup materials when needed to encourage conversation and welcoming and encouraging new participants to share their stories continue to challenge as well.

Pparticipants sharing their appreciation of being with others who are experiencing the heartbreak of grief are true "God sightings". Someone suffering the emotional and physical devastation of grief needs to tell their story over and over again. They need someone to listen. In this ministry we do that. We cry together, pray together and support each other, not only on Monday evenings, but throughout the week. A voluntary call list with contact information of participants willing to offer support and help is available to any participant who wants one. We continually have participants say Monday evenings with the group are the highlight of their week.

A significant highlight in our grief ministry was seeing a participant, struggling with profound loss, gradually rediscover a sense of hope and purpose. Initially, she was withdrawn and struggled to find meaning in her grief, but over time, she started sharing her experiences, connecting with others, and eventually, actively participated in group activities, leading to a noticeable shift in her demeanor and outlook. This transformation was a powerful reminder of God's unwavering presence in the midst of suffering. The group provides a safe space for participants to connect, find support, and share their experiences, fostering a sense of belonging and encouragement.

We will continue with our current format and continue with social evenings for the group when the Parish Center is closed. This has been very successful in bringing the group together.

St. Peregrine Cancer Support Group

Open to cancer patients, survivors, caregivers, family, and friends, this group gathers in prayer, shares stories, and supports one another. Free cycles of meetings are offered throughout the year. One volunteer helped 10 individuals this year.
We did make a significant change, deciding that instead of meeting six weeks in a row and taking a month off, we would simply meet every other week.

We will start using *33 Days to Eucharistic Glory* by Matthew Kelly. Our format is still opening prayer, followed by *Lectio Divina*, health updates, and book/video discussion.

St. Dymphna Dementia and Alzheimer's Support Group

This faith-based group offers support to family members and friends of individuals diagnosed with Alzheimer's or dementia. Meetings are held Wednesdays from 10–11:30AM. We have had two parishioners serve in the ministry this past 12 months, with approximately 20 people being served in the group.

An ongoing challenge is reaching people who are currently caregiving and don't readily have back-up people to help. We've used Zoom but it has been difficult to capture the conversations.

We are always on the lookout for 'God-sightings'.. It is wonderful to see the numbers increase of those served. We will continue to have speakers, possibly quarterly.

St. Catherine of Siena Miscarriage and Infant Loss Ministry

Over the past year, only two individuals have inquired about this group and have met for sessions with a volunteer. Historically, very few have sought support, as this form of grief is often carried quietly and in isolation. Nevertheless, we remain committed to offering support to those who do reach out.

Our Lady of Lourdes Suicide Loss Support Group

This ministry supports individuals who have lost a loved one to suicide, offering a faith-based space to process grief, navigate emotions, and find healing. Nine people attended meetings this past year. Leading this group is not easy, as walking alongside participants who carry such deep sorrow can weigh heavily on the heart. As the sessions progress, it warms the heart to witness participants forming bonds and growing stronger in their faith—so much so that they begin supporting one another and even reaching out to those who share the same loss but lack the strength or opportunity to join the group.

Working Hands

This ministry assists homebound residents of Thurston County with minor home repairs, including building ramps, fixing appliances, and yard work. Services are offered regardless of faith or income.

12–15 men are on an email list. They include men with construction skills (including retired engineers). Some Working Hands are "regular' and others come when they are available. Anyone who would like to lend their skills is welcome to the ministry.

Deacon John receives requests from a community action group, Rebuilding Together, Catholic Community Services, and various individuas. Requests for help go out to the Working Hands group and include a job description, scope of work, number of workers needed and work party dates.

Deacon John and Pat McCarty serve as project managers for the jobs and meet with the individuals who will receive the service. Needs of the job are assessed and a materials list created. Deacon John schedules the work with the team and the recipient Supply pickup is shared between the team but most often done by John Hipp, Pat McCarty and Dcn John.

Bay View Building generously supports the ministry by giving a contractor discount on supplies. Rebuilding Together pays for all projects they generate. Saint Vincent de Paul Society–St.. Michael Conference, generously fund many projects. A few projects are paid for by homeowners who receive help from Working Hands. Currently, one large ongoing project in Shelton, benefits from a combination of grants and community contributions.

Work parties are generally scheduled once a month but do happen more frequently based on emergent needs such as a home without heat in the winter or a senior who needs a ramp immediately in order to come home from the hospital or convalescent care. The most common work is ramp building, The team has also done simple bathroom repairs, floor repairs, simple electrical work, making homes more ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) accessible, hot water tank repairs etc.

A project just finished by Working Hands was installing an ADA bathroom at the non-profit community based Medical equipment Bank.

Ongoing Working Hands projects include the Bleven's Road Mobile Home Park. The park is home to a large immigrant community, many of whom are parishioners at St. Edward Parish in Shelton. At the request of Catholic Community Services, Dcn John did an initial assessment of the homes that were in dire need of repairs. Temporary emergency roof repairs were me by the Working Hands who then taught residents how to do the work. To date, 30+ homes of 42 have received roofing assistance.

A fervent wish of the mothers at the park was a safe place for their children to play (approximately 100 children who live in the park). In response, the ministry sponsored the clean up of an acre of land adjacent to the mobile homes which involved tractor work, hauling out vehicles etc.

A picnic shelter was built by Working Hands on the cleared land and SMP youth built picnic tables for the community. Lumber was donated by Sierra Pacific, Shelton. Coby Farnham served for many hours doing tractor work to prep an area of the land for a soccer field. Residents installed a sprinkler system designed by a Working Hands helper. Donations for hydro-seeding the field came from Country Greens Turf Farm. A mother/child group worked to design a playground and the community organizer wrote many grants to fund the project. On July 17-19 ,Working Hands team assembled the playground! This brings the project to a close after 2 1/2 years.

Apart from these large-scale projects, ramp projects and home repairs benefit 50–80 people a year and help seniors and low income neighbors to stay in their homes. The blessing and immediate gratification of solving access and safety issues for neighbors in need is certainly a noteable highlight, while to ministry struggles to find more workers for projects.

Faith & Light

An international ministry where participants gather regularly for fellowship, prayer, and celebration. Faith & Light brings together people of all ages and Christian traditions—Catholic, Protestant, Anglican, Orthodox—from around the world. Currently, there are more than 1,200 communities in 86 countries, speaking 38 languages. Faith & Light meets September–May on the third Sunday of the month, 1:30–3:30PM.

25–30 core team members including some family members and a few caregivers benefit from the ministry and monthly meetings always include time to share friendship, scripture, prayer, songs and a meal. Special events include the annual Archdiocesan Inclusion Mass and party in March and the Saint Michael Parish picnic in July.

Challenges include transportation and securing a regular meeting space. Leadership members also experienced illness and injury throughout the year, so the load for meeting planning and organization fell heavily on a few faithful team leaders. Another challenge is trying to make the ministry more visible, including informing and inviting families who have members with intellectual disabilities. We would also like to connect youth with the ministry.

Christmas Giving Tree

350 gift cards valued at $25 each, were donated by parishioners for the Christmas Giving Tree, providing holiday gifts for low income children in the Tumwater School District, residents at Drexel House and children receiving services through Catholic Community Services.

Community Kitchen

About 25 Saint Michael parishioners each month are involved in food preparation, serving and clean-up after meals at the Community Kitchen. The Community Kitchen provides meals for people that cannot cook for themselves and are predominately living unsheltered or in temporary shelters. The Kitchen provides on-site and off-site meals. Offsite meals go to people living in tiny homes at two villages, to those living in veterans housing, and to young people visiting a Community Youth Services drop-in center. More than 125,000 meals have been provided during the past twelve months thanks to hundreds of volunteers. Each year, the Community Kitchen serves more meals than the year before, with a cost of approximately $6.50 per meal.

Every time a volunteer steps forward to help feed our neighbors is a blessing and an act of godliness. Each time food is donated or a cash donation is made, donors are acting in accordance with Christian values. Daily, volunteers listen empathetically and treat others with kindness and respect.

Detention Ministry

Eight parishioners are currently active in the Detention Ministry. Volunteers go in to the Washington Corrections Center in Shelton weekly with Holy Communion and for Catholic Bible Study.

"Catholic Bible Study is one of those not very common occasions when the men in the prison can get together and discuss matters of faith openly and without fear of judgement or mockery. From time to time

the talk rises above the level of discussion, especially when one of the men, 'Steve', who has been there for a long time, bears witness to his faith and counsels others in a way that can only be an inspiration and a source of great encouragement, not only to the other men, but to us, the volunteers privileged to be present." – Detention Ministry Volunteer

Funeral Ministry

Five volunteer funeral coordinators and 21 greeters served at 52 funerals at Saint Michael Parish in PY25.

"My God sighting this year was being able to serve with the Funeral Ministry team. The team was so welcoming when I expressed my interest to join. I was thrilled to serve as a greeter for a while and then I was trained to do the incense. I was not sure I would ever be ready for this task and I only did the training because I did not want to say no to such a wonderful team. After a few 'observations' with more experienced members, I am now able to support the ministry by preparing incense. What a gift it has been this year to be able to serve in this ministry!" – Funeral Ministry volunteer

We are always looking for ways we can grow in service so the loved ones of those who have passed feel wrapped in the love of Christ during a difficult time.

Funeral Receptions

There are 44 funeral reception volunteers who hosted 34 funeral receptions in our Gathering Space in PY25. As servants of God, we strive to make everyone attending the reception comfortable and take care of the details so the family of the deceased can focus on being present for one another and receiving the love and support of their friends. We continue to look for small ways that we may continue growing in service.

"It is a joy to surround families with care, compassion, and faith. Seeing family members together, supporting one another, sharing memories and watching slideshows on the screens, sharing laughter and tears is a great gift to witness." – Reception volunteer

Men's Shelter

123 volunteers filled 588 volunteer shifts, serving as hosts, chefs, laundry angels, and sack lunch preparers during the PY25 shelter season. We provided shelter to 34 individuals for 2,038 bed nights, which is 2,038 instances when people were safely indoors, warm and fed rather than sleeping in doorways or the woods.

Building relationships is the heart of this ministry. When guests come to the parish during the off-season, sometimes they come asking for help in the form of food, socks, or a sleeping bag. A former shelter guest showed up one day and said, "I wanted to tell someone my news, so I thought I'll come to Saint Michael Church to tell you all!" We continue seeking ways to include our shelter guests in the life of the church.

Sanctity of Life

Saint Michael parishioners actively support life through participation in *40 Days for Life*, Sacred Heart's Respect Life group, Human Life of Thurston County, Options Pregnancy Clinic, and Pregnancy Aid of Thurston County.

We were blessed to have four local pro-life groups come together in January after weekend Masses to share the work they are currently doing in support of life and demonstrate the scope of the work so parishioners could see the many different ways to be involved in supporting life. We also encourage youth to think deeply about this topic and work towards building a youth-driven SOL ministry.

St. Vincent de Paul–Home Visits

During this last year, in addition to our Clothing Bank, we had 38 parishioners and leaders serving in our St. Vincent de Paul Conference. They provided direct service to our neighbors in need including home visits (the core of our ministry); telephone transactions, especially in emergency situations, such as threatened utility shutoffs and imminent evictions; and meetings with and assistance to homeless individuals. A vital part of our team are our telephone committee members who respond to the initial calls from our neigh-

bors and record the important information for our volunteers as they plan their visits. During this year, we served 1,522 individuals with financial assistance totaling $214,127. Most of this assistance went toward rent, deposits and utilities, although we helped 448 mostly homeless individuals with propane tank refills and vital identification cards including replacement of lost or stolen IDs.

Most of the funds for these assistance efforts came from our very generous parishioners, many of whom give significantly and regularly through online donations, contributions to our second Sunday collections, and individual mailings. We are most grateful and blessed for the generosity of our parish supporters.

Continuing challenges in our ministry include:

1. Much more effective outreach to our younger parishioners to join us as volunteers.
2. We are in need of bilingual volunteers, particularly Hispanic volunteers, and our outreach to serve our Hispanic neighbors needs to be improved.
3. We need to improve our regular communications to our donors.
4. We need to improve the timeliness and consistency of our response to the *Safeguarding* program. \

We have some immediate opportunities in the near future:

1. Thanks to the initiative of our volunteers (especially Kate Schollard, Pamela Zalucha, and David Cawthorn) and the fine assistance of our parish staff, we are organizing a *Friends of the Poor* run/walk event to occur on September 6, 2025. This is a fundraising event and an opportunity for us to raise the visibility of SVDP in our parish and community.
2. We are organizing a new outreach and encounter ministry to commence in August 2025 —the Emergency Services Office (ESO). This builds on a recommendation from SVDP member Deacon John Bergford to provide an office that our neighbors can visit to handle immediate needs such as laundry service, auto parts for repairs, household goods, food vouchers, etc. The ESO will operate once a week in our Clothing Bank. Much of the inspiration for this effort is the ongoing work of our *Partners in the Gospel* SVDP Conference at St. Edward Parish where they regularly operate on a "small services" basis in their community.
3. We want to continue to communicate the true nature of our organization. Most people know St. Vincent de Paul as a charitable organization providing material services to our neighbors in need. However, the key element of SVDP is spirituality. We are an organization dedicated to building the holiness of our members through our interactions with our neighbors and building friendships within our conference. In every home visit, in every encounter at the clothing bank, in every telephone contact, we strive to see the face of Jesus in our neighbors and hope that they will see the face of Jesus in us.

St. Vincent de Paul–Clothing Bank

Approximately 40-50 parishioners regularly volunteer at the SVdP Clothing Bank. For the 11 month period July, 2024–May, 2025, we served a total of 4,896 neighbors or an average of 445 neighbors per month.

Using our own funds, we constructed new fencing, added new locks, and installed multiple cameras. The parking lot was also graded and two speed bumps constructed.

We experienced a broken pipe that brought inches of water into the Clothing Bank floor. Volunteers helped dry the floor, and washed and cleaned the wet clothes. We continue to adjust how many items of clothing we can give away based on our inventory, and we inform parishioners monthly in the bulletin on what items (of primarily clothing) are in most need of donations. St. Vincent de Paul also provides funding for some of the necessary items that are not donated (e.g. men's jeans). We celebrated two years in our new facility and increased the numbers of neighbors served by 638—a 15 percent increase from last year. More than 87,000 items of primarily clothing have been distributed since our opening on May 11, 2023.

God sighting moments are demonstrated by the energy, enthusiasm and laughter of our volunteers who serve on a regular basis. It is shown by the neighbors who arrive hours early and help us set up. They look forward to seeing us and sharing their stories. It is seen in the generosity of the parishioners who donate clothing and support the clothing bank.

In the coming year, we have entered into an agreement with SafePlace to accept their clothing and serve their population. In addition, we will be providing office space for the new SVdP Emergency Office that will serve the poor beginning in Augus. Lastly, we plan on having our SVdP Clothing Bank flyer translated into Spanish for our increasing Spanish-speaking population.

Thurston County Food Bank

The first weekend of every month, we collect non-perishable food for the Thurston County Food Bank. In PY25, we did an additional collection of games, art supplies, and other small items for "Winter Break Stockings" that the Food Bank distributes to children, filling two collection boxes full of small treasures.

Thurston County Pregnancy Aid

We have been growing steadily, serving 479 clients in the pastoral year July 1, 2024–June 30 2025. 31 volunteers (29 of which are Saint Michael parishioners) staff Pregnancy Aid.

Our continuing challenge is that our facilities are at maximum capacity and a future increase of families is problematic. We can serve about four clients at a time. Often, other families are out in the lobby waiting their turn and as we approach the end of a shift, there is great pressure to make sure that everyone has been helped before we close. Although we continue to streamline our operations, our dreams include working out of a larger space with a safe area in which children can play.

The face of God is not always plain to see. Clients are at times a little pushy—asking for things that are clearly not sorted yet or that are stacked in the shed in storage. We all struggle occasionally with keeping a generous spirit. However, it has become clear to all of us that asking clients a few questions reveals a world which is often very foreign and always eye-opening. One young woman, aged 20, told us about caring for her family in Guatemala. After listening to this story, all of the volunteers had nothing but admiration for this client. What had been viewed as pushiness was transformed into a plucky determination to provide for many who depended upon this very young and hardworking woman!

Weekly Dinners for the Hungry

67 chefs prepare meals for residents at the Interfaith Works Overnight Shelter, Plum Village Tiny Homes, and Franz Anderson Tiny Homes. We deliver dinner to all three sites every Monday night, as well as one additional night monthly to Franz Anderson and Interfaith Works. Saint Michael Parish volunteers prepared a total 8,600 hot dinners for Interfaith Works, Plum Village, and Franz Anderson Village in PY25!

One of our former shelter guests who is an artist is now a resident at Plum Village and every week when the food is delivered he comes out to help carry the meals in and talks excitedly about the different paintings he is currently working on. What a blessing to see his creativity bubbling to the surface!

We are continuing to work to build up our dinner teams for the residents at the Franz Anderson Tiny Homes.