

Dates of Interest

*Sacrament of Penance/
Reconciliation*

9:00 AM on Saturday
mornings in chapel

First Penance/Reconciliation

7:00 PM on Wednesday, March 11
and Monday, March 16

[Note: No confessions on
Confirmation Saturday, March 21
nor on Holy Saturday, April 4]

*Communal Reconciliation Service
with Individual Confessions*

7:00 PM on Tuesday, March 24

Stations of the Cross & Benediction

Fridays, 7:00 PM

February 20 & 27; March 6, 13 & 27

Living Stations of the Cross

Friday, March 20, 1:30 & 7:00 PM

Confirmation Ceremonies

10:00 AM and 2:00 PM on
Saturday, March 21

Adult Faith Formation Presentation

7:00 PM on Wednesday, March 25

Faith and Family Life

Presenter: Mr. Kevin Reilly,
Former Philadelphia Eagle

Holy Week Services

Palm Sunday, March 28-29

Mass at 5:30 PM, 8:00 AM,

9:30 AM & 11:30 AM

(continues on page 6)

**Reflecting upon our Past, Planning our
Future at Saint Elizabeth**

It may be hard to believe, but this summer will mark the 15th anniversary of our vibrant parish community here at Saint Elizabeth Church. Many parishioners can still remember the mixed emotions of being asked to leave their former established area parishes, meeting for Mass in a makeshift school gymnasium, and trusting a new pastor who spoke about pulling together to construct a church on an unoccupied field at the little-known corner of Pottstown Pike and Fellowship Road in Upper Uwchlan. In true pioneer spirit, our parish members approached the challenge with faith and perseverance, guided by our mantra: *Unless the Lord build the house, they labor in vain who build it (Psalm 127/1).*



From the completion of two large, successful capital campaigns, to the construction of our church, parish education center, gymnasium and ministry center, to the blending of five area parishes into an exuberant, stewardship-focused community, our accomplishments have been plentiful. Yet, we continue to look ahead and plan for our future, consistently maturing in spirit, open to the Lord's guidance and grace.

During the coming year, the Pastoral Council will work to update the parish strategic plan to provide direction for the next five years. In preparation, members of the Finance, Pastoral, and Stewardship Councils recently came together for a joint session to reflect upon the state of our parish. During this time, members of the three councils, led by Father Mullin, collaborated to review the accomplishments, challenges and vision for the future of Saint Elizabeth Parish. Their discussions included the following:

(continues on page 5)

In this issue:

Reflecting and Planning1,5
 Young Adults in Service2,7
 Family Spirits3
 School Spirits.....4,5
 Meet the Sacristans.....6

Saint Elizabeth Young Adults Committed to Volunteer Service

While the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics reports that fewer young adults in our country volunteer today in comparison with just a few years ago, the numbers may be deceiving and unfairly give the young adult demographic a bad rap.

The Bureau relies on a traditional definition of volunteering – unpaid work performed for third-party organizations – which does not take into account several booming trends such as pro-bono and skills-based volunteer service, online service opportunities and using purchasing power to support causes (i.e., Alex’s Lemonade Stand). In these non-traditional ways, today’s young adults are actually exceeding the service levels of previous generations. Many perform smaller acts of service more often, whether using their internet social networks to rack up millions of views for civic-minded videos or mobilizing Facebook friends and Twitter followers to raise awareness or dollars through online fundraising platforms like GoFundMe and HopeMob. This past summer’s ice bucket challenge – driven predominantly by young adults – earned the ALS Association more than \$100 million in donations!

Saint Elizabeth parish young adults are increasingly active in their commitment to serving the needy both in our local community and in far-off places through both conventional and contem-

porary avenues. From service trips to weekly commitments, these inspiring 18- to 30-year-olds continue to impact the world around us while living out their Catholic faith. Here are the touching stories of two such parishioners.

Natalie Burke, age 26, Equine-Assisted Therapy for Children

Horses have always been a big part of Natalie Burke’s life. She started riding when she was just seven years old and was part of her university’s equestrian team throughout college. Yet, she has never received greater satisfaction from these gentle creatures than when she started leveraging her skills to help children with special needs through Quest Therapeutics in West Chester. Here, Natalie works with kids of all ages who struggle with a wide range of challenges from physical handicaps to emotional needs. Riding and caring for the horses helps the children improve muscle stamina, coordination and strength, as well as increase their self-esteem and support the development of social skills. “There are so many amazing ways that horses can empower and enable people with disabilities,” explained Natalie. “It’s all-around good therapy for all types and all ages.”

Natalie graduated with a Bachelor of Science degree in Community Health Education in 2011, and now lives with her parents in Chester Springs. She enjoys a demanding full-time job in the communicable disease division of the Montgomery County Health Department, but still volunteers every Saturday.

“Horses have always been my passion, so being able to translate that into service to others is the perfect blend for me,” said



Young Adult Parishioner, Natalie Burke, Volunteers with Equine Therapy Program in West Chester.

Natalie. “Volunteering serves two purposes: I can meet other young adults with similar interests and values. Plus, I benefit spiritually and mentally by getting my mind off myself for a little while. It’s tempting for single, young people to become too self-centered. Service distracts you away from yourself and reminds you to think of others for a more enriched life.”

(continues on page 7)

Family Spirits: Ranalli's Share Their Bounty and Count Blessings

Not surprisingly, Jen and Vinnie Ranalli have a multi-faceted answer when asked what the best part of being Saint Elizabeth parishioners is for them. The couple devotes many hours to stewardship service.

"Saint Elizabeth has become the cornerstone of our lives," they replied. "We love attending Mass each week and seeing friends – both old and new. This parish has become our home and our community. We've made life-long friends here."

The Ranallis have been parishioners members since they moved into the area in May 2002, when Mass was still being held in the Lionville Middle School gym.

"We were both raised Catholic, and eager to find our parish when we moved," they explained. "Our neighbor at the time, Laura Forlano, told us about Saint Elizabeth's and introduced us to Father Mullin."

Vinnie's from West Chester, and Jen grew up in Malvern. They met in high school through mutual friends and were married in 2002 at Saint Patrick church in Malvern. Vinnie is a commercial real estate broker for CBRE, and Jen, a registered dietitian, specializing in pediatrics, works for All Star Pediatrics.

The couple's first stewardship calling came when they began

having children. They were asked to join the Pre-Jordan Team and help prepare parents for the Baptism of their children. They served on the team together for five years.



The Ranalli Family ~ Jen and Vinnie with their four children: Lindsey, Gretta, Cole and James.

"Father Mullin must have noticed that he was frequently baptizing our babies, when he asked us to help," they joked.

The Ranallis have four children, who attend Shamona Creek Elementary School. Gretta, 11, is in fifth grade, and plays flute, field hockey and tennis. Fourth grader James is 9, and plays piano, baseball, swims, and is active in Cub Scouts. Cole is 7, in second grade, and enjoys soccer and baseball. Kindergartner Lindsey is 5, plays soccer and loves swimming.

"We so enjoyed our experience as members of the Pre-Jordan Team that we couldn't wait to get more involved in other stewardship opportunities. As our children have grown, it has pulled us into

different ministries within the church," Jen said. Jen has been an Elementary Faith Formation catechist for the past five years, currently teaching kindergarten, and also volunteered with Children's Liturgy of the Word.

After Pre-Jordan, the two also got involved in the Archdiocesan Heritage of Faith-Vision of Hope campaign. More recently, they have taken on a leadership role in the Sharing Our Bounty Committee.

"Working with Sharing Our Bounty was influenced by our desire to teach our children about kindness and charity, as well as make a difference in the community around us,"

Jen explained. Indeed, that message does seem to be spreading to their children, as they too are involved by helping with the collections and deliveries of donated goods.

"We believe that a strong faith is the best gift we can ever give our children, and that has guided our involvement with our parish," added Vinnie.

It seems no matter what they participate in, here at our parish or otherwise, the Ranalli family remembers the importance of stewardship, and to count their blessings. "We love the feeling we get by being involved, and seeing the many lives that we can touch by doing so."

~ Sara Richardson

School Spirits—Introducing the Parish School Advisory Council

Since holding its inaugural meeting on November 19, 2014, the Saint Elizabeth Parish School Advisory Council (PSAC) is officially off and running. The council is working together with school parents and parishioners to help guide the parish school to achieve its fullest potential.

The council's specific purpose is to serve the parish school in cooperation with the pastor and principal by offering insights and recommendations regarding the identity and mission of the school as a ministry of Saint Elizabeth Church, the ongoing development of the overall school program, other issues of interest among parents whose children attend the parish school, and the interests of other parishioners.

"The PSAC was implemented partly in response to an archdiocesan recommendation that all Catholic schools have a council or advisory board in place by 2015," noted Dr. Greco. "We did have the STEPSS Leadership Council in place, but its main focus for the past few years was on achieving Middle States accreditation. In order to keep moving forward, we needed a more structured council to advise and make recommendations on what the parish community, parents and faculty need, while keeping in mind the philosophy and mission of the school."

The council consists of the pastor and parish school principal, plus

elected and appointed members representing families whose children are enrolled in the parish school, the school's faculty and staff, and the parish com-



munity at large. The key is diversity of representation because it increases the wealth of experience and knowledge of the council, plus gives all stakeholders a voice.

"The council will be working in an advisory capacity," stressed Dr. Greco. "Members will be researching and providing educated recommendations to the school administration throughout the year. Having more minds and hands to help with investigating new programs and materials, visiting and learning what other schools are doing, and seeing what's out there will significantly increase the opportunities available to us."

In order to address all important areas, five standing committees have been formed: 1) Strategic

Planning, 2) Educational Resources, Technology and Curriculum; 3) Student Recruitment and Retention; 4) Communications, Marketing and Public Relations; and 5) Alumni Relations. Ad-hoc committees may be established as needed. The Strategic Planning committee will work to ensure that the council's proposals and recommendations align with the parish school's goals.

Parish-at-large member, Maria McDowell, and elected parent member, Maureen Bellafante are both excited to get started. "My goal is to contribute to recommendations that will allow our parish school to meet or exceed the academic excellence of our public schools, while providing a faith-based Catholic religious education," Maria emphasized. Maureen added, "I hope to help Saint Elizabeth Parish School reach its full potential. I'm excited to be a part of this new council as we strive to help make the parish school a successful environment for current and future students and families, as well as a positive work environment for faculty and staff members, and an integral part of the parish community as a whole."

Congratulations and good luck to all the council members.

~ Rhonda Jones

Parish School Advisory Council

Elected Parent

Representatives:

Maureen Bellafante

Maria Frasier

Sheila George – *Chairperson,
Committee for Communications,
Marketing and Public Relations*

James McHugh

Joanne Metzger – *Chairperson,
Committee for Educational
Resources, Technology and
Curriculum*

Kerry O'Connell – *Chairperson,
Alumni Relations*

Appointed Parent

Representatives:

Theresa Matalavage – *Chair-
person, Committee for Student
Recruitment and Retention*

Brian McGonagle – *Chair-
person, Committee for Strategic
Planning*

School Faculty

Representative:

Marion Binder

Appointed Parish at Large

Representatives:

Maria McDowell

Albert Riviezzo

Appointed Parish Staff

Representative:

Clare Kane

Ex officio:

Dr. Diane Greco

Rev. Thomas Mullin

Reflecting and Planning *cont'd*

- Council members agreed that the Saint Elizabeth community is youthful and vibrant, with a steady, consistent and strong staff, powerful stewardship volunteers and a welcoming pastor who provides leadership by example. Unique to our parish community is the high level of involvement by some of our parishioners, leading to good daily Mass attendance, a successful parish school, and a commitment to stewardship by a great number of active families. As a result, the parish has a great reputation in the community and beyond.
- Among the most significant accomplishments of our parish community are the quick completion of our physical facilities, growth of the parish school, the institution of several new ministries and stewardship opportunities, and strong management of our parish financial resources. Also, active parishioners have become a close and dedicated group that has transitioned from a start-up parish to a community dedicated to spiritual growth and outreach.
- Council members concurred that some of the key challenges facing our parish community include: lack or limited involvement of many parishioners, the difficulty people have making church and their faith a priority in their lives, declining Mass attendance, sustaining

enthusiasm by currently active parishioners and stewardship volunteers, engaging the youth of our parish, building financial sustainability, and sustaining and growing parish school enrollment. Additional challenges include incorporating more technology and social media in parish operations, as well as a succession plan for parish staff and clergy.

- Feedback of council members regarding future development initiatives that might be considered in the 2015-2020 plan included: the potential creation of a Youth Council to further expand the involvement of young adults in the parish, since they are the future of the church; the expansion of evangelization programs to engage inactive parishioners and strengthen parishioners' commitment to keep church and faith life central to their daily lives; developing a systematic plan for the successful transition of new members for the parish, and exploring new methods to maximize the use of internet and social media communication vehicles at the parish.

Since our parish's founding, we count numerous achievements and blessings, while humbly acknowledging the challenges that lie ahead. Let us all approach our future with the same faith and perseverance.

~ Julie Krumenacker

Behind the Scenes at Mass – Meet the Sacristans!

There are many individuals who offer their time and talent to make each Mass at Saint Elizabeth church a reverent liturgical experience. The priests and deacons, lectors and Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion, altar servers, liturgical musicians and sound system technicians, ushers and greeters, and an active congregation all play their part in the celebration. But there is another group that works largely behind the scenes to make sure each Mass runs smoothly – the sacristans.

The sacristans at Saint Elizabeth are a group of men and women who help to coordinate some very important logistics for each Mass. This includes setting up the sanctuary and the sacred vessels; greeting and signing in lectors, Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion, altar servers and leaders for the Children's Liturgy of the Word; checking with the celebrant to gather any special instructions for the Mass; and generally being 'on call' throughout Mass to make sure all flows smoothly.

"Because the sacristans are here to make sure that each Mass runs smoothly, the celebrant and deacon don't need to worry about the logistical details and can, instead, focus on the liturgy," said sacristan Patty Mullen-Smith.



Saint Elizabeth is blessed to have both daily and weekend sacristans. This ministry is open to any parishioner age 16 or older.

Our parish is blessed to have both daily and weekend sacristans, each generously donating time and talent throughout the year. Many of the sacristans also offer their stewardship service by training new altar servers and providing church tours to children in the Elementary Faith Formation program.

"As a sacristan, I am truly blessed to be able to share the many facets of the Mass and our liturgical environment with children as we train altar servers and give tours to the EFF classes. It's also a blessing to greet visitors each week and help them feel welcome," added Patty, who says a simple prayer before each Mass at which she serves. Patty prays,

"I am setting out the vessels, Lord. I am reaching for the chalice, paten, pitchers, and bowls. Now they are empty. Soon they will hold the bread and wine that will become your Body and Blood. Make me a vessel, Lord. Open my heart to all I meet."

The parish sacristan ministry is open to any parishioner age 16 or older. Training is provided and a commitment of at least two years is expected. If you're interested in becoming a sacristan, email Gen Miceli at gmiceli@stelizabethparish.org, or contact the Parish Services Office at 610-646-6550.

*~ Sue Morgan
(also a Saint Elizabeth Sacristan)*

Dates of Interest

cont'd

Holy Week Services

Holy Thursday, April 2
Mass of the Lord's Supper
at 7:30 PM

Good Friday, April 3
Passion Service at 3:00 PM

Holy Saturday, April 4
Easter Foods Blessing at 11:00 AM
Easter Vigil Liturgy at 8:00 PM

Easter Sunday, April 5
Mass at 8:00, 9:30 & 11:30 AM

Stewardship Day of Service
8:30 AM on Saturday, April 18

Young Adults—Volunteer Service *cont'd*

Kaitlyn Meier, age 21, Service Trip to Ecuador School

When you are only 20 years old and have never traveled alone anywhere outside neighboring states, the thought of going thousands of miles away to a country where you don't speak the language can be quite intimidating. Thankfully, this didn't stop Kaitlyn Meier, Saint Elizabeth parishioner who has just one year to go before graduating with a Master's degree in Occupational Therapy.

Last fall, Kaitlyn applied to the University of Scranton's International Service Program and was one of hundreds applying for just a few spots on a service trip to Ecuador. "When I realized that I was accepted into the program, I was excited but a little nervous," said Kaitlyn. "I had never traveled abroad by myself so this was really outside of my comfort zone, but I knew that it was also something I needed to do despite my fears. I listened to God's call, and it turned out to be the best decision of my life."

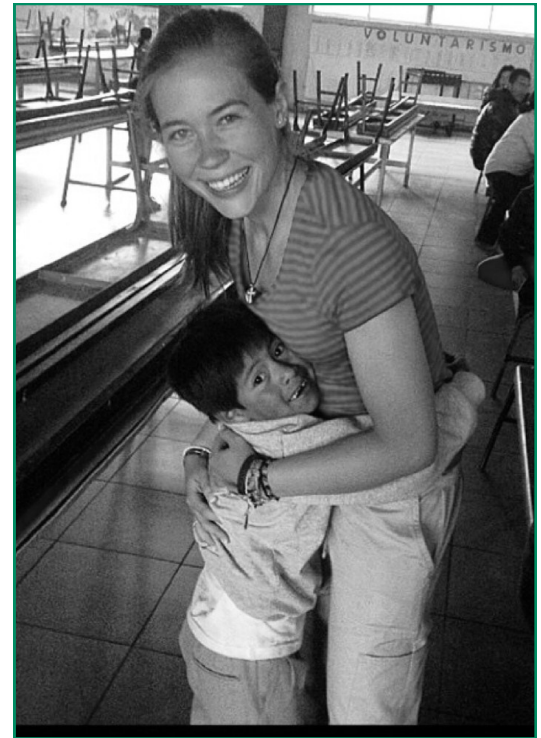
Kaitlyn spent two weeks tirelessly working in Quito, the capital of Ecuador, at the *Working Boys Center* – a not-for-profit organization founded by Father John Halligan and Sister Mary Miguel Conway from Brookfield, WI. In Ecuador, uniforms are required to attend public school and cost a mere \$15. Still, hundreds of thousands of people go uneducated and hungry. The center provides food, child care, housing, and education

to all those children whose parents cannot afford to buy them a school uniform. Parents can take classes at night, as well, and running water is provided so students can bathe.

Kaitlyn woke up with the sun every morning and spent each day cleaning or painting the facilities, preparing lunches for students and helping both kids and adults with their school work. But, Kaitlyn's most memorable moments include the times she spent laughing with the little girls on the playground and seeing looks of pride in the eyes of grown men who started to read independently for the first time.

"I had done retreats before, but since going to Ecuador, I have gained a whole new perspective and a greater sense of purpose. It's so easy to get distracted in the world today, but service trips like this one bring you back to your faith, closer to God, and remind you to be grateful for all you have," said Kaitlyn.

Knowing her daughter well, Kaitlyn's mother thought that after making this trip to Ecuador that Kaitlyn would want to volunteer abroad for a longer period of time....and she was right! Kaitlyn is now researching the possibility of being away from home for a "little longer" as she hopes to do a full year of service



Kaitlyn Meier, a senior at University of Scranton, spent two weeks volunteering with the children in Quito, Ecuador.

through the Mercy Corps upon graduation.

Both here and around the world, in ways big and small, many Saint Elizabeth parish young adults are actively giving back. We are grateful for their humbling service and the example that they set for the youth who are following closely behind them. As Natalie Burke put it, "Don't wait to get involved – no matter your age. Try something, anything. And if it doesn't work, try something else. Look for a stewardship service opportunity that brings you joy so you will want to continue doing it your entire life. The rewards will far outweigh any sacrifices."

~ Lisa Barbadora

