

C⁺ONNECTIONS

A Newsletter Connecting Disciples of Jesus
with One Another and the Lord

**October
2022**

We are a Welcoming Community that Inspires Disciples of Jesus
to Share God's Love and Transform the World.



DIVINE MERCY PARISH

SACRED HEART CHURCH • ST. PHILIP THE APOSTLE CHURCH



WELCOME TO CONNECTIONS

All of us make connections every day. Lots of connections.

We make a phone call. We take a meeting. We bump into a friend or neighbor at the grocery store. We check and respond to texts and emails. We write a letter.

Some of these connections are mostly monologues; some are characterized as dialogues. They can be positive types of communications. They can be negative. They can also be mixed.

In a single day we can connect with people who are our friends, family members, neighbors, colleagues, strangers, professionals who are helping us, and those who are soliciting our help or support for whatever need they have. These connections might further our work, relaxation, affection, study, or health.

As humans who relate to others, we connect all the time. Even in our sleep we sometimes "connect" with others in as much as we dream about them.

It's no accident that this new parish newsletter is named *Connections*. A parish is nothing more than a stable group of the faithful. As such, we connect.

We connect with God. We connect with others in the household of the faithful.

The aim of this newsletter is to multiply and strengthen the connections we have with one another as disciples of Jesus Christ, the connections that bind us as one in the Roman Catholic tradition, the connections made possible above all by our Baptism and participation in the Eucharist, the connections that issue forth in our service of others in need. Our parish Vision Statement expresses that to which we aspire: *Divine Mercy Parish is a welcoming community that inspires disciples of Jesus to share God's love and transform the world.*

It is the hope of the writers who help to put together *Connections* that what we offer here each month enables us to make better connections within the household of the faithful, this beautiful parish.

How do we *do* the mercy of God? We in this parish try our best to connect with the Lord Jesus and with each other in such a way as to become good news and make a difference for the better in the world. Happy connections!

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Sharing Good News by Being Good News

Point of View

A PARISHIONER YOU SHOULD KNOW

Tom and Cathy Stegich | A Love and Faith Story by Liz Riggs

This is a story about faith, family, service, friendship, comfort, pancakes and Vegas.

Vegas?!

Yes, Vegas.

In order to tell Tom and Cathy Stegich's story, we need to start at the beginning - in Las Vegas - where they met through a mutual friend at a convention 35 years ago. Theirs was a quick courtship - they met, became engaged, and then were married - all within a year. And no, they did not get married at the Little Vegas Chapel with Elvis as the presider (I asked!). They were married in a traditional Catholic wedding ceremony at Cathy's family church, St. Philip the Apostle. Shortly after they were married, they started a family. The Stegichs raised their three children in Northfield, where they all attended religious education classes at St. Philip's. Cathy and Tom quickly became immersed in all of the opportunities that the Catholic faith community offers - from flipping pancakes at Parish breakfasts, to serving as a catechist in the PREP program.

Over the years, Cathy and Tom remained committed to their Catholic faith. Their three children are now grown and they now have eight grandchildren, the oldest of whom is three years old. They are still very invested participants in their faith and ministry, and participate through their Alpha involvement, volunteerism as greeters and ushers at weekly masses, and Cathy serves on the Senior Leadership Team.

One of the greatest benefits of being so active in the Parish has been the gift of friendship. Cathy reflects that as she grows older, she realizes that most of her closest friends are

from St. Philip's. When the Church was closed during the early days of the pandemic, she and a couple of her friends came up with a creative solution; they would meet every Sunday morning at the forest preserve so they could continue to feel connected in a safe way.

She is happy to be back in-person and shares one of her favorite quotes:

"There is not in the world a kind of life more sweet and delightful, than that of a continual conversation with God; those only can comprehend it who practice and experience it."

This active engagement in their faith and community started from the very beginning (even before Vegas!) - both Tom and Cathy came from families of five children and their beloved parents instilled the values of faith, hard work, generosity, resilience, service to and sheltering of others from a very early age.

Tom also reflected that taking time to pause in the midst of all the hard work has kept him grounded on even his most exhausting days. He shared, "I used to work all the time, seven days a week, I was so tired. And then, on Saturdays at 5:30pm mass, I would sit in the pew next to my family, and I just felt so comforted, so relaxed."

Tom and Cathy were quick to compliment one another and yet, they had a difficult time talking about themselves individually - they are true examples of humility. And, when prompted for his favorite quote, Tom responded,

"God doesn't love us because we are good, He loves us because He is good."

We've all heard the expression, "Everything that happens in Vegas stays in Vegas", we are grateful that the Stegich's story continued here.



Why I Feel Connected

Meet Patty Sanfilippo. Patty is a longtime parishioner of Divine Mercy, first joining Sacred Heart Church “at least 25 years ago!” Patty worked in the packaged goods industry for 30 years, and 4 more years as a project manager at a local brand imaging company before coming to work for Divine Mercy as our new Director of Evangelization and Lifelong Formation earlier this year.

Read Patty’s own words of how she became more connected to the parish, after being a parishioner for all these years, and all because of her involvement with Alpha.

* * *

For those who know me, you know that I am sort of an ALPHA addict. I’ve been involved in Alpha since the original pilot here at Sacred Heart in 2019. Since then, I think I’ve participated in about 10 Alpha courses. You may wonder why. And, you may be asking - What is it about Alpha that keeps you coming back? Well, first it’s the format: each Alpha course involves a series of interactive conversations exploring life, faith, and meaning in a friendly, open and informal environment. We start with hospitality, then watch a video and break up into smaller groups to share comments about the video, ask questions, share feelings, concerns, struggles, fears and often joyful, heart-warming stories.

It’s through Alpha that I’ve been able to really explore my faith, better understand what I believe, and strengthen my convictions, and most importantly, come to feel a closer, personal relationship with Jesus. I find myself more comfortable in solitary prayer, and in praying with others, especially when I can tell the other person is really sad or concerned or struggling with something.

And it’s through Alpha that I’ve been able to meet lots of new people and make great new friendships. I really feel so much more a part of this parish community because of Alpha.

Father Steve has written many times in the weekly bulletin about the need for change in the church so that we can be re-energized and reinvigorated. I want to be part of the change so that we fully realize our vision – to be a welcoming community that inspires disciples of Jesus to share God’s love and thus transform the world. Now I want to invite and encourage you to be part of the change by joining one of our upcoming Alpha courses.

In my mind, Alpha is a sharing, community-building process that’s grounded in establishing a feeling of belonging that

leads to believing and then “becoming.” Be Jesus to others. It’s an experience that’s appropriate for those of us with strong faith as well as those who have fallen away, or those who might not have any faith at all.

I know the many reasons for not joining (trust me I thought about all of them, too), but thank God I let my curiosity get the better of me and I joined Alpha!



Want to try an upcoming Alpha? We have plenty of choices for you to consider. One may easily fit into your schedule. Just click [here](#) to visit our Alpha website or scan the QR code.



The Viking Wire

"Once a Viking, always a Viking."

It's not just a slogan for a t-shirt or a catchy bumper sticker.

No matter where our graduates go, they can always count on being part of The Sacred Heart School Family. It's something that we talk about daily. We remind our students that we are all a family and that our time together matters. These are two of our five root beliefs –with us all being made in the image and likeness of God, that we are always learning, and that challenges are opportunities - that make Sacred Heart the special place it is. These beliefs are essential and form the core of what we believe to be one of the premier, values-based educational experiences anywhere on the North Shore.

Those sentiments certainly apply to former students Cara Murdock and Owen Gardner, who were graduates of the Sacred Heart Class of 2018.



Cara and Owen, 2017 seventh grade at Sacred Heart

paths merged two weeks ago at Villanova University on freshman drop-off day. Cara and Owen met up again, this time as incoming Wildcats. As anyone who's ever had a kid go to college knows, the first day can be overwhelming for new freshmen and their parents. But seeing a familiar face always helps, especially when it's one you have seen since you were kids.

Of course, the families knew well ahead of time - this wasn't some shocking reality TV reveal - so that night after drop-off, both families went to dinner together. It was an excellent



opportunity to take a much-needed breath after the hectic moving day and for Cara and Owen to pause before taking the freshman year plunge. It was time to smile. It was a time to reflect. It was a moment for both families to cherish.

Our time together matters.

At Sacred Heart School, we talk a lot about "the journey." We believe in educating hearts and minds to prepare our students for life after they leave our school. Cara and Owen's journey has taken them from our mighty school in the heart of Winnetka to a mighty university just twenty miles outside of the city of Philadelphia.

And for our current students, that journey continues today. Many of our future graduates will go off to follow different paths and pursuits in high school and beyond. But one thing is sure, like Cara and Owen, they will be connected by their time here at Sacred Heart School. They will carry the lessons they learned with them wherever they go.

And we can't wait to see where they all go from here.



Owen and Cara, 2022 at Villanova

After spending their grade school and junior high years here at Sacred Heart, they chose to go separate ways for high school; Cara went off to New Trier, and Owen transitioned to Loyola. They continued down their different roads for the following four years, engaged in distinct pursuits. And even as they did, they remained tethered by the invisible bonds that connect all Sacred Heart students.

We are a family.

Over the years, hundreds of graduates have left Sacred Heart to attend any number of high schools. This story is so different because their

In 2019, Sacred Heart School faculty defined the innate beliefs shared by everyone at Sacred Heart School. In summary, we believe:

- We are made in the image and likeness of God;
- We are a family;
- Our time together matters;
- We are always learning; and
- Challenges are opportunities.

With these beliefs at the root of everything we do, we are growing as a faith community focused on educating the hearts and minds of our students. Our core values of **Love, Serve, Engage, Discover, and Persevere** help us to consistently live out our root beliefs.

Engaging Children's Hearts

WHEN THE HOLY SPIRIT STEPS IN...

Sandy Norbot has learned that when the Holy Spirit gets ahold of her, things are going to happen.

Sandy and her husband John moved to Northfield in the summer of 2017 with their three young children. An already experienced catechist, Sandy decided to stay firm to her conviction that she was going to take a break from teaching and settle her family into their new home and community, especially as her youngest, Frank, was just a baby. She walked over to nearby St. Philip the Apostle Church and met Sr. Magdalena, who was running the Children's Ministry Program. Sr. Magdalena immediately invited her in to fill out the registration forms. That's when it happened. Sandy immediately blurted out, "I am a catechist. How can I help you?"

"I felt right then that you can never say no when the Holy Spirit takes hold," Sandy exclaimed. "I just love sharing our faith with the children, and ultimately, we are all closer to God."

Sandy's love for sharing our faith started before she even had children of her own. She followed in her mother's footsteps and became a catechist at St. Julian Eymard in Elk Grove Village. She had been married there, and even though she was living in the city, she enjoyed staying involved in the parish. Her first graders brought great joy. "It was so fun to be with them. They say so many cute things about God and all his love."

Pregnant with her first child, Sandy knew she would not be teaching the next year. On the last day of class, Sandy told the children she was having a baby and would not be returning. That's when one little girl blurted out, "Are you even married?" Sandy recalled, laughing.

Next, Sandy served as a catechist for five years at St. Josaphat in Chicago, which was close to home for her growing young family. "It was a nice way to connect with young families in our new parish and a great with to share the faith with our own children."



Since coming to Divine Mercy, Sandy has not slowed down for one moment. She has taught since 2017, including the pandemic year on Zoom, anywhere from PK to 6th grade. She always says, "Put me where you need me," which is such a blessing to our ministry.

Here is just one example of the types of things Sandy does in her class to capture the

children's attention and bring faith to life. Last year, after reading with the children about a program called Kindness to Action, Sandy ordered a special coin for the class and asked the children to nominate someone who had shown exemplary kindness to receive the coin. One boy nominated his father, who had come to the U.S. from Chile as a young man and helped many others from his home country who were in need. The family will in turn give the coin to another worthy recipient, and all these kind actions are registered on a website. Their motto: "Start everything with kindness and the end will be ok." The family will never forget the honor.



Sandy has served on the Children's Ministry Board since the fall of 2018, always giving good input on how to have the children and families even more involved in the Mass and ministry. Her calming presence was especially helpful during the early days of the merger of St. Philip the Apostle and Sacred Heart into Divine Mercy Parish.

She is the volunteer who says, on the busiest Sunday in December, "Sure, I'll come help with the Christmas Pageant back stage," even when none of her children are involved. Moreover, she has attended Alpha, been an Alpha leader, and given Alpha testimonials at Mass. She even volunteered her husband John to speak at the 7th Grade Bible Blessing Service when she was asked and busy teaching.

She has donned an orange vest and helped with traffic during the pandemic, and was the warm, welcoming face among the first group of greeters who helped reopen the churches. "We were so glad to see people at our place of worship and it was so nice for people to be in person," she recalled.

Sandy knows why she has been called to serve. She tells her children that once upon a time, Sundays were for attending



Mass and spending time with family. She reminds them that God is the reason that we get to do all the things that we do in our busy schedules, and that we have to make sure that God is ever present in our daily lives.

Engaging Children's Hearts (Continued)

Sandy brings so many gifts to our ministry and the children in her sessions. She believes it was a gift to have been brought up in a Catholic school with a deep connection to a vibrant parish life, and wants to pass the faith along.

One other gift? As a mother, she *knows* how the children feel on Sunday mornings when they need to roll out of bed and come to sessions. But, "We're not just teaching," she adds.

"We are sharing our love for Jesus, and what He brings to the world."



Faith in Action

WHY I AM A MINISTER OF CARE

by Mike Pearson, Divine Mercy Minister of Care

I'd like to share a story about being a Minister of Care. When I first met this man, he was confined to a wheelchair. He was told that he might never walk again. He questioned why God did not take him but, when he received Communion each week, I noticed that his inner strength grew.

Months passed, and with each visit I could see his faith become stronger. When I arrived at his home one week, to my amazement, he was carefully moving his legs and feet, walking with the help of his caretaker.

I assumed he was going to sit and have me administer Communion, but he wanted to stand and have the Host

placed in his hand. He took Communion and then blessed himself. I realized that I was a witness to the power of belief in receiving Christ. That is why I am a Minister of Care.

* * *

Divine Mercy Parish will train new Ministers of Care on Monday, October 24, at 6:30 pm. All are Welcome! For information please contact Liz McGowen, Lmcgowen@divinemercynorthshore.org; 847-446-0856, ext. 108.



Connecting on the Discipleship Pathway



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WEEKEND MASSES

Saturday: Sacred Heart Church - 5pm

Sunday: St. Philip the Apostle Church - 8am
Sacred Heart Church - 10am
Sacred Heart Church - 4:30pm

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