



A bimonthly publication of Good Shepherd Catholic Church ~ steadfast in awakening our true being in God.

SO THAT THEY MAY ALL BE ONE ... JOHN 17:21

Fitting together the many pieces of Christian community

Jigsaw puzzle enthusiasts know the joyful satisfaction of fitting together all the pieces and seeing the “complete” picture. Perhaps, it’s a beautiful landscape, a scenic view, or symbolic imagery.

The same can be said of Christian community; different people working together, sharing their gifts and talents, enriching the relationships brought about by Christ, all the while building up the Kingdom of God.

As different interlocking connections among people reveal new meaning and purpose to individuals’ lives, and the whole body, the Christian community facilitates a profound *journeying* which is best described by Pope Francis in *The Joy of the Gospel*:

“...the challenge of finding and sharing a ‘mystique’ of living together, of mingling and encounter, of embracing and

supporting one another, of stepping into this flood tide which, while chaotic, can become a genuine experience of fraternity, a caravan of solidarity, a sacred pilgrimage.” (EG 74)

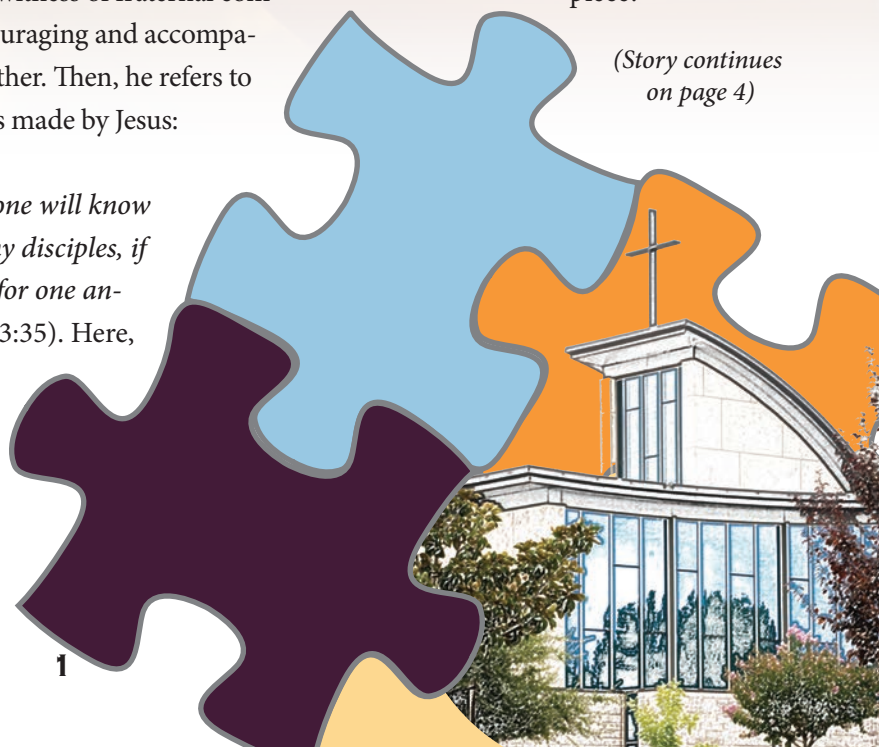
In this journeying, Pope Francis asks Christian communities “to offer radiant and attractive witness of fraternal communion,” encouraging and accompanying one another. Then, he refers to two statements made by Jesus:

“By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another” (John 13:35). Here, Pope Francis seems to punctuate how love for one another is central to discipleship

– an interlocking piece of the puzzle!

Next, the Pope points to John 17:21 and says, “*That they may all be one... in us... so that the world may believe.*” In their loving responses to this world, missionary disciples live in communion with the Holy Trinity. Another interlocking piece!

(Story continues on page 4)



THE BODY OF CHRIST

The People of God



Back, standing: Dcn. Rommel Declines, Teresa Maloof, Maria Serpa, Leela Mattathil, Fr. Julius, Len Beltran, Carlos Ramos, Reggie Seward, Steve Ramirez. Front, seated: Sharon Dorricott, Irene Camerino, Fr. Michael, Juanita Baier, Alex Sargent

PARISH PASTORAL COUNCIL:

“...the eyes and ears of the parish”



The work of a [parish pastoral council](#) (PPC) focuses on the parish **community**. It serves the pastor in consultative and advisory

capacities, assessing parish needs, and facilitating responsive and welcoming outreach.

“We’re the eyes and ears of the parish,” says PPC chairperson Juanita Baier describing the council as “very diverse” in terms of representing life stages and spiritual needs as well as racial and ethnic heritages of parishioners.

Monthly meetings are guided by an agenda and address various initiatives and topics brought forth by the pastor or council members.

“We are working on selected initiatives in response to Bishop Soto’s [Pastoral Letter on Call to Holiness](#),” Juanita ex-

plains, which details important objectives intended to revitalize parish communities and foster parish co-responsibility, accountability, and hospitality.

Juanita and council members diligently address how the lay faithful can accept a greater, shared, and accountable role in promoting the Catholic faith.

“We were focused on milestones and activities in the past,” Juanita explains, recognizing these important aspects of parish development. Yet, it is in forming missionary disciples that the PPC, in concert with Father Michael, pursues renewal, and that by virtue of baptism, the faithful inspire and evangelize each other and those around them.

“We need to incorporate missionary discipleship in our language and actions,” Juanita continues, gently suggesting “we need to do more.”

“We go to church and individually live Christian values,” all of which are vitally necessary, but Juanita stresses how authentic missionary discipleship calls

us to do more. We need to demonstrate Christ’s love in every part of our lives.

The PPC is investing its energy in the development of a parish pastoral plan focused on instituting missionary discipleship.

“It is like a corporate strategic plan, but focused on spirituality” Juanita explains, confident that the document will guide parish initiatives for the next three to five years. She shares how its vision will prompt a new parish mission statement and values.

“We want a sense of belonging and we want fellowship,” Juanita continues, “but with missionary discipleship, we move out of our bubble” and invite others to join us in community.

Juanita acknowledges that acting on missionary discipleship will require movement beyond our comfort zone, “but imagine how society would look if all Christians lived their faith” in this way.

Let's Gather

AND AWAKEN THE JOY!

*In the smiles and greetings of brothers and sisters in Christ,
we gather with joy, in faith, hope and love, ready for fellowship, fun and hospitality!
Mark your calendars with gratitude and praise God as we gather.*



Trunk or Treat WOWS!

By all measures, the October Trunk or Treat event was a scary success! Twas the night before Halloween, when all through the parking lot, creatures were, indeed, stirring! More than 1,200 attended, roaming rows

of 60 cleverly-crafted automobile trunks- ghoulish, fun, festive... you name it. This family-friendly, safe twist on

trick-or-treating ensured endless smiles and almost endless treats for young parishioners and their families. Beyond enormous supplies of candy, 690 hot dogs were served along with popcorn and hot chocolate. It was heard as the autos drove out of sight, "God was working here...it was a great event...God bless...good night!"

Make & Take Craft Event brings out the best!

Little hands and big hearts worked collaboratively for this November sign-up event which allowed young crafters to rotate through craft stations and create items to keep or gift ahead of the holiday season. About 200 creatives came enjoying the chance to make ornaments, advent calendars and chains, paper stars, snow globes and more. Most of all, they enjoyed the time together!



COMING UP NEXT!

Friday, January

14
2022



Bingo Night

Game Night/
Bingo

Good old-fashioned bingo! Great family fun in the spirit of great bingo halls, random numbers and prizes. "Let's Gather" coordinators will provide free bingo cards and players will enjoy a chance to win gift cards for every winning bingo card. Fabulous fun to start the new year! Bingo!

Friday, February

11
2022



Dance the Night Away!

Date Night

Plan for this special evening out and dance the night away! Just in time for Valentine's Day! What better way to celebrate than with a few new dance moves? The "Let's Gather" coordinators have arranged for dance demonstrations and even a little dance instruction. Whether you see yourself as Fred Astaire, Patrick Swayze or Michael Jackson...or

maybe Ginger Rogers, Paula Abdul or Tina Turner, this night will blend art, athleticism, creativity and community. So polish off your dancing shoes and motivate your spouse, significant other or best friend... just for adults this time. Enjoy charcuterie boxes for added energy! No experience necessary!

Watch for more details and updates in the bulletin as these dates approach!

Save these dates for future Let's Gather events!

<p>Saturday, March 26 2022</p> <p>MARCH MADNESS</p> <p>March Madness</p>	<p>Sunday, April 10 2022</p> <p>Easter Egg Hunt</p>	<p>Saturday, May 21 2022</p> <p>Let's Gather at the Table Family Dinner</p>
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INTERLOCKING *pieces* .

(Continued from page 1)

Paula & Salvador Gonzalez A SACRED PILGRIMAGE



Parishioners since 1999, **Paula and Salvador** have experienced a deep connectedness with the Good Shepherd community.

“It’s very important,” Paula says of the “common bond” with people who have the desire and the will to deepen their relationship with Christ. She describes “an understanding of what we all believe...to be with Jesus...to be in heaven.”

Paula suggests there are no words to really explain what it feels like to pray together and serve with compassion as brothers and sisters in Christ. Yet, her words flow.

“There is a longing, a fellowship and a sense that you’re never alone,” she says of her experiences whether at Mass, serving

in ministry, or praying the rosary at night with Salvador.

Salvador, too, conveys a strong spirituality that develops while engaging in the liturgy.

“You start to *not* think of yourself,” he stresses as he details “a connection to those around you” partaking in Holy Communion, adoring God “with all our heart and mind.” Salvador further describes Mass as “so moving that it feels like the heavens are being opened up.”

“We have our eyes fixed on the kingdom of heaven,” Salvador says echoing the Pope’s reference to a *sacred pilgrimage* realized best in community.

“Getting involved with ministries really does deepen one’s understanding,” Paula explains referring to the Catholic faith but also to how “you can be an instrument of helping others.”

“You have a connection not only with your church members but those that are outside the church,” Salvador offers fully aware of the Holy Spirit’s “light within” moving and prompting the faithful.

While raising two sons Paula participated as a Eucharistic Minister, and volunteered with Kinderchurch, and the confirmation program. Salvador is active in a new ministry, Sacred Silence Adoration Ministry. Together, they were moved to serve the homeless and volunteered with *Winter Sanctuary* when Good Shepherd was a host site prior to the pandemic. And this year, they joined the formation team for the Rite of Christian Initiation for Adults.

“We know several families who have a lot of curious interests about Catholicism,” Paula explains emphasizing their desire to guide them and “help them with their journey of experiencing the enrichment of what it is, and what their faith can bring them.”

Tina Nguyen

A CARAVAN OF SOLIDARITY

“I’m so grateful to the Church,” says **Tina** sharing a myriad of experiences and heartaches which transpired over the years. “The parish helped me get back,” she adds, recalling the death of her first husband and finding her spiritual home at Good Shepherd.

“I learned so much,” she says signaling great appreciation for then pastor, Father Leon and former parochial vicar, Father Ed. “They helped me so much,” she insists indicating otherwise, “I wouldn’t be here, going to Church and helping others.”

Tina’s two older children, now 23 and

19 respectively, participated in Catholic Faith Formation and received their sacraments. Tina’s youngest son, Lucas, 8, attends St. Elizabeth Ann Seton School.

“This prepared me,” Tina begins, sharing how her faith and parish involvement made all the difference. She realizes “it’s my calling to be here for my kids as their single mom” handing on the faith.

Resolute, Tina knows, “whatever happens, God will handle,” and she senses that it is *in* community that God’s work takes place. It is what the Pope calls a *caravan of solidarity*, tenderly revealing



our mutual need to love and serve each other. Tina implores, “we need to pull together” through difficulties and recognize that “everything is from God.”

JOURNEYING *together*

Looking for

Missing Pieces

Just as missing puzzle pieces prevent the complete picture, so it is within the community when members of the Body of Christ are missing.

We need one another! The community is incomplete without all the gifts and talents endowed by God to fulfill the mission.

Pope Francis writes of the “social aspect of the Gospel”

which calls everyone to engage beyond the “purely spiritual.”

“True faith in the incarnate Son of God is inseparable from self-giving, from membership in the community, from service, from reconciliation with others. The Son of God, by becoming flesh, summoned us to the revolution of tenderness.” (EG 74-75)

Bob Knapik & Lanie Kirby A GENUINE EXPERIENCE OF FRATERNITY

When **Bob and Lanie** joined Good Shepherd Parish in March 2020, COVID-19's rampage was underway changing the landscape of community as we knew it.

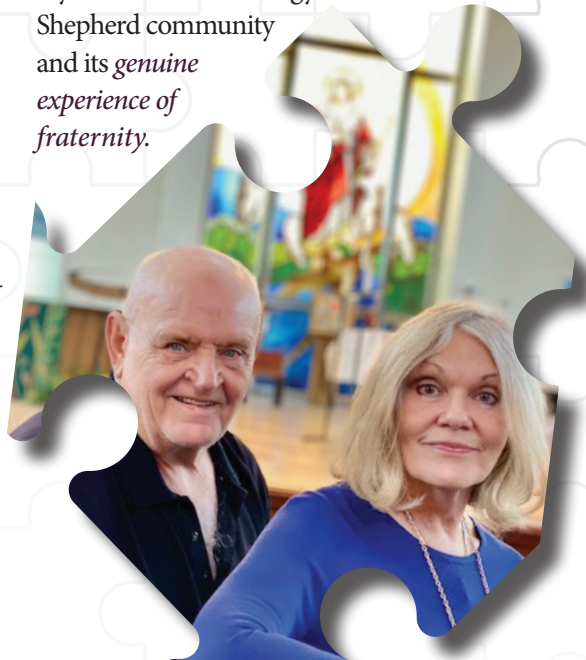
“We were trying to find a place to be of service,” Lanie says recalling the impacts of the shutdown. Having been very active in another parish in Sacramento, the Elk Grove residents sought a local option. An ad in the Elk Grove Citizen seeking volunteers for the St. Vincent de Paul Council caught their eye.

“That was our first entrée into the vibrant and active Good Shepherd Parish,” Lanie recounts while highlighting the good work taking place. They proceeded to the Works of Mercy ministry and continue to explore “all the different outreaches that are available.”

Bob reflects on a time decades ago when he admits he wasn't focused or involved. A convicting sermon helped him to see “it's my turn to help spread love and care to other people” and to be the face of Jesus.

“To be a part of something bigger than yourself, and to be present,” Lanie pauses and posits further. “It's a beautiful thing to

get out of your own head and see the possibilities of missionary discipleship,” she says content in the energy of the Good Shepherd community and its *genuine experience of fraternity.*



By their Fruits

YOU WILL KNOW THEM

Highlighting the good work and “fruits” of our parish ministries and parishioners.



UNITY IN OUR DIVERSITY

St. Josephine Bakhita Black
Catholic Ministry
inspiring the community



© Artist Jen Norton

Three years ago, [St. Josephine Bakhita Black Catholic Ministry](#) formed in February of 2019 to recognize Black History Month and “to highlight African American and African contributions to Christianity,” says ministry lead Valerie Ramos.

“I gathered a couple of folks and asked if they wanted to put a table display together in the narthex,” she recalls thrilled with the interest and support. “Beautiful icons and artwork,” she continues, still heartened by that initial opportunity to share and celebrate Black Catholic history and culture, and inspired to foster fellowship and community.

Valerie formalized the group and discovered “something special happening” as members enjoyed being together, talking about events or books, and discussing the hope of becoming leaders and educators for the larger parish community.

That year, Black History Month concluded with a film showing of “Bakhita” in the parish center with more than 300 in attendance.

While COVID-19 interfered, it didn’t stop the ministry from their Zoom meetings and future planning to facilitate greater inclusivity and awareness. Last November, for Black Catholic History

Month, the ministry hosted a special prayer service for racial healing. The service – aptly titled *Healing Waters* – reflected on

the scourge and divisiveness of racism while including hopeful scripture readings, insights and a new Gospel choir, *Voices of Praise*. Prior to the event, listening circles invited participants to share and dialogue with reference to Bishop Soto’s 2021 pastoral letter, [“It is Right and Just: Journeying from Racism to Communion in Christ.”](#)

“I’m finding that Black parishioners are feeling a connectedness in a way that they hadn’t before,” Valerie shares optimistic that the ministry offers a way to counter any feelings of isolation. “It’s bringing people deeper into parish life,” she believes.

St. Josephine Bakhita Black Catholic Ministry widened its reach and welcomed members from neighbor parishes St. Maria Goretti and St. Joseph. It is one of three formalized Black Catholic ministries in the Sacramento Diocese.

Valerie sees the fruits as many and not reserved to the previous events. More Black Catholics are getting involved in parish leadership roles, there is a heightened awareness and exposure among all parishioners, and there is a growing, inclusive ministry membership which is “not only Black folks but all kinds of people... everybody,” Valerie says.

“We want people to be interested and to learn and to feel connected,” Valerie assures noting that “it only makes us better and stronger if we learn about each other.”

One of the central tenets underscoring missionary discipleship lies in inviting people – *welcoming people* – to share and learn and grow in Christ. St. Josephine Bakhita Black Catholic Ministry represents the essence of community, united in its diversity, celebrated in the bonds of Christian love.



Voices of Praise Gospel Choir



MADE ANEW
GOD MAKES ALL THINGS NEW
Rev 22:1

MY WHOLE LIFE HAS CHANGED

I found me

For MaryAnn Gray, rediscovering her Catholic faith and engaging in the Good Shepherd Parish community has been nothing less than life-changing. Hers is a story of loss, heartache and renewal. Moreover, MaryAnn’s experience gives powerful testimony to the importance of a welcoming community.

MaryAnn easily recalls her pre-Vatican II Catholic upbringing and her vivid Italian heritage. She also describes a far-away memory of falling in love and eloping. Dennis wasn’t Catholic and her parish priest delivered shocking news upon their return.

“He told us we weren’t really married,” MaryAnn recounts. “I never went back to church again,” she sighs.

That was 1962. Life and children followed and tragically, 22 years of severe disability for Dennis and loving caregiving from MaryAnn. When Dennis passed away in 2020, MaryAnn found herself coping with a range of emotions including fear, loneliness, guilt, and anger. Unpacking the decades, she searched for some semblance of peace.

“God was smiling on me and holding me up,” MaryAnn confides as she shares evidence of “love thy neighbor” in action. Neighbors in her subdivision – *parishioners at Good Shepherd* – encouraged MaryAnn to call the office. She connected with Monica Goodale and soon all the pieces began falling into place.

“I’ve made wonderful, wonderful friends,” MaryAnn says especially grateful to Monica Small who listens faithfully, offering counsel and spiritual guidance. MaryAnn is certain God put her in her life.

MaryAnn signed up to participate in the [Catholics Returning Home](#) series and immersed herself into learning about and rekindling her faith. She joined a rosary group, a

Bible study and the Columbiettes. She volunteered to help with events, washing dishes, setting up, greeting, smiling.

“I feel very made anew,” MaryAnn offers unable to pause her joy even for a minute. “I can’t stop smiling,” she beams marveling at how “my whole life has changed... I found me!” And she found her faith.

MaryAnn visits the church often to pray. “I sit in the front left so that Jesus is looking at me,” she says of her preferred location, ever so slightly within the gaze of Jesus on the crucifix.

“The love from people welcoming me,” MaryAnn begins, pondering before saying, “well it meant a lot.”

Real peace lives with MaryAnn, no mere semblance.

“I used to pray that God would help me understand” all that unfolded, MaryAnn shares relating the pastoral care offered by Fr. Julius.

“He said, ‘instead pray for peace,’” MaryAnn says. “That’s what I do, and peace came.”



Monica Small and MaryAnn Gray



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Awaken TO MISSIONARY DISCIPLESHIP

A COMMUNITY of Believers

Awakening to missionary discipleship entails a growing understanding of the interrelatedness of persons within the Church community and within the larger society.

Disciples **ENCOUNTER** Jesus Christ and deepen their relationships with God in fulfillment of their destiny in God. Believers also **ACCOMPANY** each other, and others who do not yet know the fullness of faith, nurturing and strengthening the gifts of faith, hope and love.

In our faith **COMMUNITY**, believers recognize their mutual dependence on each other to grow in faith, challenge each other, embrace discipleship and

respond to God's abundant generosity with love and service.

The Church, the community of those who have been brought together by the Risen Christ and who have set out to follow him, is "the sign and the safeguard of the transcendent dimension of the human person." (Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church, 49.)

Missionary disciples invite people to the community; to the Body of Christ.

***Serve one another through love...
bear one another's burdens, and so
you will fulfill the law of Christ.***

Galatians 5:13, 6:2

Interlocking Pieces

By no small miracle at all,
we share time on this earth together.
Out of all the generations of mankind,
we are here together
in this age, in this century, on this day,
at this moment.

☩ Holy Spirit, you gift us with a
multifaceted and inviting harmony
that lives within community.

It is here that you re-create and
transform each of us.

It is here that you bring us to each other to
participate, contribute, serve, love and grow.

We are interlocking pieces
of the whole of your creation.

We are meaning and purpose,
pain and suffering, love and joy.