



Early Childhood Ministry

Early Childhood Ministry serves St. Mary's youngest members, newborns to pre-K, and their caregivers. We work both with the Children's Ministry committee and St. Mary's Creative Playschool (SMCP) to make our church a welcoming place for young families. Early Childhood Ministry (ECM) oversees the following: upkeep of the Young Disciples Room, the Cry Room and the Nursery as well as the children's worship boxes. Recent new initiatives include Toddler Towne and our new infant nursery.

ECM meets with the Children's Ministry committee on the first Tuesday of each month. The Playschool Advisory Council meets the second Monday of each month. SMCP church representatives are developing many new fundraising activities to augment an increase in fees associated with rising costs of utilities and energy.

SMCP has just concluded our annual Christmas wreath sale and hosted a well attended "date night" for our playschool parents. Our current Chairperson of the advisory board Ms. Jenny Partch, is planning a Spring wine event with Wine Styles with our overarching goal in fundraising projected to be \$7500 dollars in the current year. Other events are being planned.

One ongoing concern and it may be significant, is that of the absence of a formal treasurer for the SMCP advisory board. This is a position of real importance is currently being filed on an ad hoc basis. The staff of the playschool is very capable and experienced, while our newest staff members in toddler towne and our nursery look to be a great addition to our suite of services for the youngest among us. We also welcome a new administrative assistant.

It's a pleasure to watch our participants make these many services possible across a range of need.

Numerous people are deserving of recognition for tireless effort on behalf of young persons in our midst. I am cautious about naming individuals as they include our parents, volunteer staff and advisory board. My personal thanksgiving is for the leadership of Ted Cole, and Director Miranda. But truly there are many, many hands in these efforts. We are blessed by each contribution of regard and care. I frequently think that the impact each of us has on a young person's life is a method to extend our effect years beyond our current place and time. For those participating, either as staff or volunteers across our many programs, I thank you so very much and wish you every success in the year ahead. Peace be with you.

Respectfully yours,

William Theuer,
Early Childhood Ministry ☪

Early Childhood Ministry



Education for Ministry (EfM) is a program of distance learning through the School of Theology of the University of the South located in Sewanee, TN. Students sign up one year at a time for this four-year program that covers the basics of a theological education in the Old and New Testaments, church history, liturgy, and theology. Here at St. Mary's students meet weekly on Tuesdays under the guidance of trained mentors. Maggie Wilkinson is the mentor for the day time seminar. Sara Gavit and Rashmika are the mentors for the evening seminar. The program grants a certificate at the completion of the four years and 18 Continuing Education Units for each year's work. The Education for Ministry program began in 1872 with a vision of enrolling a few hundred students. Within a few years it developed into a program reaching several thousand students with groups around the globe.

In addition to EfM groups throughout the USA, EfM can be found in [Germany](#), [Great Britain](#), [New Zealand](#), [Australia](#), [Canada](#), [the Bahamas](#), [Hong Kong](#), [Italy](#), and [Switzerland](#). Over 70,000 persons have participated in the program, and in the United States more than 22,000 have completed the full four years. The 2006 USA enrollment reached more than 8,000. More than eighty dioceses of the Episcopal Church as well as other denominations have contractual arrangements with EfM.

Our Call to Minister in the World

We each face the difficult and often subtle task of interpreting the richness of the church's faith in a complex and confusing world. We need a theological education which supports our faith and also teaches us to live and express that faith in day-to-day events.

The EfM program does not evaluate or recommend individuals for ordination. Many people think that one must be ordained in order to be "a minister." The fact is that we are all called to minister to each other. This is nothing less than the exercise of continuing the ministry of Jesus. He taught us to love one another and to

do unto others as we would have them do unto us. These are incorporated into our initiation into PEO as we are called to continue to live these commandments in our own time and in our own place through worship, service to others, and by proclamation of God's Word to all people.

The EfM program is preparation for the ministry to which we all are called. It is that vocation for which we pray at the end of the Eucharist: "And now, Father, send us out to do the work you have given us to do, to love and serve you as faithful witnesses of Christ our Lord."

Participants in the EfM program study the entire sweep of the Christian tradition from the earliest period when it wasn't even called Christianity to the present. Participants study the history of the bible, when it was written, by whom and why. They study the history and various interpretations of the many expressions of Christianity and ethics through studying bible commentaries, various authors and famous theologians.

The traditional content is not studied in a vacuum. Students belong to small "communities of learning" in which the events of each person's life may be examined in the light of the materials being studied. Here in Anchorage we have a daytime class and an evening class that both meet for 3 hours each week at St. Mary's Episcopal church. In our seminars, we frequently ask the question, "how does this apply to me?" or "what did I learn from my lesson about the world we live in now?"

While the course materials provide substantial academic content, the focus of the program is on life as ministry and understanding that ministry.

EfM teaches how to think theologically. It deepens one's faith and understanding of our Christian and Judaic heritage and provides a new confidence to be Christ's minister in the world.

Enrollment for next year is now open. New classes start in September 2012. The cost is \$350.00/year.

For more information on the program please contact Sara, Rashmika or Maggie and check out the following web site: <http://www.sewanee.edu/EFM/index.htm>

Maggie Wilkinson ☞



EfM



Fellowship In Serving Humanity

Fellowship In Serving Humanity

The mission of F.I.S.H. is to deliver a three-day emergency food supply to people in need in Anchorage. The generosity of many individuals, churches, and community organizations provides the food that stocks our pantry's shelves and feeds the needy. The St. Mary's community is a major supporter through both volunteers and donations. Additionally, St. Mary's provides peanut butter, a staple of the food pantry. The upstairs is now finished as a youth lounge complete with a TV and couches. F.I.S.H. maintains a corner of the upstairs for storage of bulk food donations and purchases. F.I.S.H. continues to provide a home for storing the supplies for "Helping Hands."

F.I.S.H. is a non-profit organization (501 (c) (3)), run by a 7-member Board of Directors. (We currently have 2 open seats on the board) We have no paid staff. All activities are carried out by volunteers. Our only expenses are food, agency fees and utilities. We make deliveries Monday, Wednesday, and Friday of each week; we added one Saturday a month beginning in September 2010 and a second Saturday in March 2011. During 2011, F.I.S.H. provided 129,510 meals to 14,930 hungry folks, thanks to the hard work of our corps of 75 volunteers who take calls

from clients, pack the groceries, re-pack bulk items, shop, deliver the food, and manage the pantry. (You too can do this!)

To provide those meals last year, F.I.S.H. expended about \$42,000 for food. We make good use of donations from churches and individuals and we "shop" regularly at the Food Bank of Alaska, which is essentially a warehouse for food pantries like FISH. Our big fund-raiser each year is a Golf Tournament, in its twentieth year in 2012. Ron Pollock, Bob Bradley, and Chuck Eddy are the energy behind this fund-raiser. In 2011, the Golf Tournament earned \$19,000.

The Golf Tournament, as well as other F.I.S.H. events, are highlighted on our website, www.fishcharity.org F.I.S.H. participates each year in the PFD Pick-Click-Give program and received \$4,475 for 2011. F.I.S.H. also receives funds from the CROP walk each fall.

F.I.S.H. partners with a number of churches in Anchorage. These include St. Mary's Episcopal, Amazing Grace Lutheran, Gloria Dei Lutheran, Anchor Park Methodist, Turnagain Methodist, St. John Methodist, First Presbyterian, First American Baptist, and Muldoon Community Assembly. We added 2 new partners in 2011: St. Innocent's Cathedral and First Congregational Church. These churches contribute either a staple to the pantry (baby food, pasta or tuna fish), hold food and fund drives, and/or recruit volunteers. Switchboard Alaska donates its telephone answering ser-

vice to help hungry folks get in touch with F.I.S.H. And Beltrami & Associates PC has been our volunteer accounting firm for many years. Many, many thanks to such public-spirited businesses.

Many individuals also donate substantially to F.I.S.H. Among these community-spirited folks are the members of the Nat'l Association of Letter Carriers; the letter carriers provided two tons of food for the F.I.S.H. Pantry from their annual Stamp Out Hunger campaign in May. The St. Mary's Youth Group took on the daunting task of organizing this mountain of food for easy retrieval by the FISH packers (and they also put Christmas surprises in the deliveries the week before the holiday.) St. John United Methodist Church also conducts two large food drives for F.I.S.H. each year. Needless to say, F.I.S.H. could not carry out its mission without the support of these wonderful businesses, churches, organizations, and individuals. Thank You!

FISH always NEEDS new volunteers. Our volunteer corps is volatile, as people leave for the winter (or summer), or take new jobs out of state, or retire. We must be constantly recruiting new volunteers. It takes 4 people to make sure a single family receives food on each of our service days; that's 50 volunteers each month. The need is ever present. Please contact **Raissa D'Antonio, 229-9299**, to learn more.

Raissa D'Antonio, President ☞

Flower Committee

The Flower committee has 8 talented volunteers who faithfully and artistically arrange the flowers every week for both Sanctuaries. These volunteers are: Margaret Sharrow, Anna Noel Jarrett, Glenda Kruger, Pat Koch, Teddy Arnold, Marcia Natrass, Winnie Nowak, and Jann Sherrill. Some of us work in pairs and some of us work by ourselves. Each volunteer or team has a week in the month to do flowers. The biggest change for us this year was the loss of Mary Ellen Harris. She and her talent are sorely missed. We all wish her well in her new endeavors in the lower 48. Our loss is their gain.

Our biggest challenge is remembering when to do flowers as the seasons change. There are no flowers in Advent and Lent. During the summer there are no flowers in the chapel. Since the Church calendar changes each year, we are constantly reminding each other about when we do flowers and when we don't. Sometimes we mess up and forget.

This committee is loyal, steadfast, and independent. They can be counted on to do their best and let me know when they need someone to do flowers for them. I couldn't ask for better or more dedicated people! My thanks to all of these talented ladies who bless us with beautiful, artistic flower arrangements to the Glory of the Lord each and every week.

Jann Sherrill ☪

Flower Committee

Garden Committee

We can always use more gardeners this coming summer, so if you are at all interested in joining us in digging, planting, and watering, watch for our sign-up sheet which we will post in late March. Don't worry if you plan to travel at some time. Most of our gardeners do take time off so it's a big help to have alternates. We like to have teams of two or three per garden bed, and that makes the work much more fun! Don't worry if you know nothing about gardening in the far north—we have master gardeners who can answer all your questions.

One final request—we are still in need of perennials and small shrubs (roses, dwarf lilacs, etc.) which all make excellent memorials. If you'd like to remember someone in this way, be sure to let us know.

The Garden Committee members are Mary Shier, Jo Ann Banta, Ruth Fahl and Tay Thomas. ☪

Garden Committee



Lay Readers

Trainings for new lay readers and lectors were held in February and September, 2011 and will be scheduled again in the spring of 2012. New readers/lectors are always welcome and any one interested should contact the church office. Trainings are usually held on two consecutive Sunday afternoons, but could be held at other time if that would fit more people's schedules. For efficiency we try to get a small group organized for trainings, but individuals can be trained. It is important that participants attend both training days.

Lay readers read the lessons, psalms, and prayers and serve communion. Lectors read the same materials, but do not serve communion. Both are responsible for making sure attendance is written in the appropriate book in the sacristy and seeing that the offering is organized and locked away after each service.

Lay readers/lectors may specify at which service(s) they prefer to serve and Ruby Jo Bixler, our scheduler, does her best to meet those preferences. Lay readers/lectors are asked to let Ruby Jo know ahead of time (before the last week of the month), Sundays they are not going to be available. Occasionally, something comes up after the schedule is published, and a reader finds they cannot serve their assigned service. It is the lay reader's/lector's job to find a substitute. Some have been requesting the church office to send out an e-mail to all readers asking for a sub, and some send out their own e-mails. It is nice if the office is notified of the substitute so their name can be printed in the Sunday bulletin.

St. Mary's has a small supply of the appropriate robes for lay readers, but many prefer to order their own through catalogs available in the church office. Pronunciation guides are available and we urge lectors and lay readers to purchase them.

Victoria G. Ault ☪

Men's Study Group

Mission/Purpose: St. Mary's Men's [Wednesday night] Study Group has existed since the 1990s. Its purpose is to read, study, and discuss recent books of common interest, both religious and non-religious. Since 1999 the group has taken a 2-4 day Labor Day weekend outing. These outings have been quite varied; for example, back-packing trips, Prince William Sound boating trips, or Mat-Su cabin overnights.

Meetings: The group meets three times a month. The first Wednesday of the month we meet for dinner and fellowship at the Greek Corner restaurant at 6:30 p.m., and the 2nd and 4th Wednesday of the month we meet at the Title Wave Book store at 6:30 p.m. for our book discussions. More recently we have added a Movie with pizza at one of the members' homes, provided it takes place on the 5th Wednesday of the month!

Officers/Leadership: There are no elected officers. Charlie Fahl and Eric Wohlforth serve as Contacts.

Membership: Most of the active members are middle age to your seniors. Most members are also partially or fully retired; many have adult children. Greek Corner get-togethers have had a few as four men and as many as eleven. Title Wave meetings are usually attended in person by 3-6 members and one or two call-ins.

The following books were read, studied, and discussed by the Group in 2011:

- * The Happiness Hypothesis: Finding Modern Truth in Ancient Wisdom, by Jonathan Haidt
- * What the Dog Saw and Other Adventures, by Malcolm Gladwell
- * The Big Short: Inside the Doomsday Machine, by Michael Lewis
- * Aftershock: The Next Economy and America's Future, by Robert Reich
- * Speaking Christian: Why Christian Words Have Lost Their Meaning and Power—and How They Can Be Restored, by Marcus Borg
- * America Grace: How Religion Divides and Unites Us, by Robert Putnam and Dave Campbell
- * Boomerang: Travels in the New Third World, by Michael Lewis [Current selection; next selection will be chosen at the Greek Corner get-together on

January 4.] The following books are some possibilities for 2012. All Group members are encouraged to participate in the selection of books.

- * How to Stop Worshiping Christ and Start Following Jesus, by Robin Meyers
- * Twelve Steps To A Compassionate Life, by Karen Armstrong
- * Eruptions That Shook The World, by Clive Oppenheimer
- * Republic, Lost: How Money Corrupts Congress—and a Plan to Stop It, by Lawrence Lessig.

2012 Goals/Objectives: More Members!! Meeting attendance has slipped in the last year due in part to retirement conflicts.

Charlie Fahl ☪



Men's Study Group

Meier Lake

Meier Lake is a conference center owned by the Diocese of Alaska. It is available for rent by the day, weekend, week or longer. It is by a small lake, has two lodges and cabins. It can be used for retreats, camp or family gatherings.

The board meets once a month, usually at Holy Spirit, Eagle River. Board members represent each church in Wasilla, Palmer, Eagle River and Anchorage. St. Mary's has two representatives: Liz Rockwell and Marty Quimby. Terms are for two-years with Quimby up for re-election in January.

With a huge thank you to Neil Thomas of St. Mary's. Meier Lake Conference Center now has a truck. However, it cannot have a plow attached. At this time, plowing is being done by volunteers.

Financial problems continue as the buildings are old. The utilities are being paid and the loans are being re-paid slowly, including back pay for the manager. In December a large insurance bill was due. The financial situation continues to be precarious.

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The board would like all parishes to put a line item in the budget donations to the center, donations would help ease the financial situation.

Candidate Statement: I would like to continue my service as a board member to Meier Lake Conference Center. I have served on the board for several years. It is gratifying to see the improvements and changes that have happened over the years.

Martha Quimby ☪





Pastoral Care Ministry

Pastoral Care Ministry

Vestry Pastoral Care Ministry coordinates with Rev. Sara Gavit, St. Mary's Pastoral Care Minister, to provide pastoral care in the following areas: Hospital Visitation, Lay Eucharistic Visitors, Healing Prayer, Prayer Chain, Care Teams, Stephen Ministers and now Coffee Pals.

We are fortunate to have Margaret Sharrow coordinating our Hospital Visitors. Her compassion and dedication has been a vital part of our Hospital Visitors program for many years. Hospital Visitors not only visit St. Mary's parishioners who are hospitalized, but also patients from our community and areas throughout Alaska that are hospitalized here in Anchorage hospitals.

Our Lay Eucharistic Visitors take communion each week to parishioners who are hospitalized, living in care facilities or may be living at home and unable to attend church.

On Sunday, members of Healing Prayer provide prayers for parishioners during communion. Cathy Kincaid has conscientiously led the Prayer Chain for several years.

The Care Team is coordinated by our faithful and hard-working Karol Libbey. The Care Team has been busy this last year providing food, transportation and other services to parishioners who are in need of assistance.

Our Stephen Ministry program has been serving the people of St. Mary's for over 20 years. We are proud of all the dedicated and competent Stephen Ministers that have made this program successful.

We are now introducing a new ministry that will complement Stephen Ministry called "Coffee Pals." Coffee Pals is a lay pastoral care ministry created to provide a listening ear and short-term support for those experiencing a difficult time in their lives. Karol Libbey is coordinating this ministry with the assistance of Margaret Sharrow, the Pastoral Care Committee and Rev. Sara Gavit. Pastoral Care Coffee Pals and Stephen Ministry are now presenting a series of Coffee Pals training sessions on the 3rd Monday of the month. On October 17th the topic was "Forgiveness" led by Rev. Bob Thwing & Kitki Amrita, on Nov. 21st it was "Listening Skills" with Margaret Sharrow, and on January 16th it will be "Boundaries" with Nancy Burke.

During Lent this last year, Pastoral Care presented a series of classes on "Effective Listening and Communication Skills." These sessions included information on listening skills, confidentiality, boundaries, depression, loss and grief. The classes were open to the congregation because we felt that the skills presented in these sessions were not only important in training Coffee Pals but are beneficial in all relationships.

Pastoral Care has been blessed to have an enthusiastic Pastoral Care Committee that has worked diligently together to build up and sustain our Pastoral Care program. We also deeply appreciate all the dedicated volunteers working in the different ministries that make all the many accomplishments possible.

Jeannie Ryan, Vestry Pastoral Care ☩