

# St. Theresa Catholic 2024 Annual Report



# Pastor Welcome



## **Vela damus (We set sail)**

Dear Family of God,

“May the Grace and Peace of God the Father, in whom we live and move and have our being, be with you.” It is around this time of the year that we present to you a synopsis of parish activities. In the light of this, I wish to express my sincere appreciation to all and sundry for your continuous support for me, Fr. Mike, the parish and school. Without your Time, Talent, and Treasure, we would not be where we are now. Your sacrifice, commitment and dedication are noted.

This year, we are privileged to have Fr. Mike Mahony as our associate pastor. He has brought renewed energy and zest to our parish. His enthusiasm and readiness to help is amazing. I am grateful to Bishop Joensen for responding to this pastoral initiative.

Similarly, I wish to register my thanks and gratitude to my staff, various ministries, finance and parish councils, committees, groups, and volunteers for their immense support to our Parish and School.

My caption for this year’s state of the parish is “vela damus.” This Latin expression means *we set sail* or *we are sailing*. There have been so many pastoral initiatives and projects going on around the parish to deepen our spiritual growth and enhance our physical space, hence, *vela damus*.

## **Building Maintenance**

Our parish has been in existence for almost 75 years. There are some equipment that need replacement and major overhauling. A typical example is our HVAC, lights and boiler system. These are part of the reason why the church is often cold or hot due to the outdated software system. Maintaining an old building is costly. In view of this, attention will be devoted to preparing parishioners for a major capital campaign to meet these infrastructural changes. I humbly ask you to be patient as we strategize to replace this old equipment to meet modern standards.

## **Parish numerical strength**

Our parish family has not seen much growth this year. Between January to September 11, 2024, we had a loss of 24 members called to eternity. May perpetual light shine upon them! Furthermore, we had 27 people who switched to other parishes in Iowa and out of state and outside the country. Factors like employment, family and personal issues are some of the reasons. However, there were 22 new families that joined the church from other parishes and out of state for similar reasons.

A careful look at our weekly bulletin and contribution for the Annual Diocesan Appeal (ADA) will reveal just 251 out of 930 of people participating. While I am grateful for your financial contribution, I would like to ask those on the periphery to prayerfully consider supporting the parish.

## **Looking ahead**

I have carefully and prayerfully examined feedback on the survey regarding the various pastoral suggestions sent in May 2024. Watch out for the following:

- 24-hour Eucharistic Adoration
- Catechesis 101
- First Saturday Mass

Like St. Thérèse, may we be a “small wildflower, simple and hidden but blooming where God has planted us.” May our Parish Community continue to be the citadel of hope and light for those in darkness.

Fr. Raphael Assamah

Dear Parishioners,

On behalf of Fr. Raphael, our finance council, and our trustees at St. Theresa Catholic Church, I'm pleased to introduce this financial report for the 2023-2024 fiscal year, ending June 30, 2024.



Despite an uncertain economy, inflation, and various local, national, and worldwide challenges, you have stepped up once again as witnesses to the generous nature of our God. In the words of St. Ignatius of Loyola, you have given without counting the cost! Here are just a few highlights that stand out:

- **514 HOUSEHOLDS CONTRIBUTED FINANCIALLY**
- **57 HOUSEHOLDS ARE GIVING RECURRING GIFTS ONLINE**
- **TOTAL PLATE GIFTS HAVE INCREASED 21%**
- **SCHOOL TUITION HAD 100% COLLECTION**
- **FOUNDATIONS AND FOUNDATION FUNDS TOTAL VALUE, AS OF 9-30-2024 = \$2,549,142**
  - **TOTAL CONTRIBUTIONS RECEIVED(13) IN PAST IN PAST 12-MONTHS = \$7,910**
  - **TOTAL DISTRIBUTIONS MADE IN PAST 12-MONTHS = \$66,462**

Our numbers continue to be strong. We had an increase in tithing, plate giving and number of contributors. We continue to assess where we allocate your generous donations. We received \$97,000 in Ignite money, which allowed us to invest in the playground area. We continue to try and budget for both the school and parish to enable the most programming and pay staff a just wage. With a combined staff of around 65, wages and benefits is our single greatest expense. The parish supported the school with \$368,069 which is about \$261,000 less than last year. We continue to be good stewards with our resources and make financial sound decisions.

The Finance Council continues with great leadership year in and year out. This past fiscal year in meetings it was discussed how to continue to improve. They have identified a few more subcommittees to get up and running. Look for these to come into focus over the next fiscal year.

At the end of the fiscal year we really started to invest in our property. We have made a lot of improvements and identified where more is needed. Look for more communication at the start of the calendar year as we explain what projects were done and what we are looking forward to doing.

If you haven't already signed up for recurring online giving, please visit our giving page today at <https://giving.parishsoft.com/app/giving/stgiving>

As we close out this year and look ahead to the next, I am forever grateful to each of you for your faithful witness. God is doing great things here at St. Theresa Catholic Church!

Gratefully in Christ,

Kenneth Seymour  
Parish Manager



# Parish Financials – Snapshot



| Income | Source | Expenses | Impact                                  |
|--------|--------|----------|---|
| 41%    | Parish | 25%      | Ministries and parish activities        |
| 59%    | School | 11%      | Operations, facilities, and maintenance |
|        |        | 5%       | Assessments and other expenses          |



# Income Statement General Operations

## ORDINARY INCOME

| <i>Account Name</i>      | <i>FY Actual</i>   | <i>FY Budget</i>   | <i>FY Difference</i> |
|--------------------------|--------------------|--------------------|----------------------|
| Tithing                  | \$1,081,720        | \$1,050,000        | \$31,720             |
| Plate and Other Donation | \$252,327          | \$149,700          | \$102,627            |
| Faith Formation Fees     | \$5,606            | \$11,000           | (\$5,394)            |
| School Tuition           | \$1,152,005        | \$1,239,387        | (\$87,382)           |
| Childcare                | \$597,897          | \$570,000          | \$27,897             |
| Lunchroom                | \$152,256          | \$135,000          | \$17,256             |
| Transportation           | \$28,092           | \$33,000           | (\$4,908)            |
| <b>Total Income</b>      | <b>\$3,269,903</b> | <b>\$3,188,087</b> | <b>\$81,816</b>      |

## ORDINARY EXPENSES

| <i>Account Name</i>         | <i>FY Actual</i>   | <i>FY Budget</i>   | <i>Difference</i> |
|-----------------------------|--------------------|--------------------|-------------------|
| Parish Administration       | \$459,352          | \$ 573,968         | \$114,616         |
| Parish Programming          | \$196,086          | \$143,120          | (\$52,966)        |
| Parish Building and Grounds | \$151,241          | \$155,670          | \$4,429           |
| Faith Formation             | \$124,120          | \$125,597          | \$1,477           |
| School Administration       | \$1,665,715        | \$1,627,955        | (\$37,760)        |
| Childcare                   | \$425,482          | \$419,140          | (\$6,342)         |
| School Building and Grounds | \$207,070          | \$134,800          | (\$72,270)        |
| <b>Total Expense</b>        | <b>\$3,229,066</b> | <b>\$3,180,250</b> | <b>(\$48,816)</b> |

|                             |                 |                |  |
|-----------------------------|-----------------|----------------|--|
| <b>Actual versus Budget</b> | <b>\$40,837</b> | <b>\$7,837</b> |  |
|-----------------------------|-----------------|----------------|--|



# Other Stewardship

## SPECIAL COLLECTIONS

Our parish is dedicated to supporting the Church, both on a diocesan level and worldwide, as well as aiding the needs of our local charities.

|                                |                  |
|--------------------------------|------------------|
| *Annual Diocesan Appeal        | \$138,897        |
| *Ignite!                       | \$195,140        |
| Holy Land Collection           | \$3,812          |
| Catholic Charities             | \$6,904          |
| Catholic Relief Services       | \$740            |
| Campaign For Human Development | \$1,140          |
| World Mission                  | \$2523           |
| Peter's Pence                  | \$1,362          |
| Rice Bowl                      | \$2,897          |
| Religious Retirement           | \$3,636          |
| Church in Africa               | \$1,370          |
| Archdiocese of Accra           | \$17,582         |
| Seminarians                    | \$4,522          |
| DMARC Food Pantry              | \$18,305         |
| Office Food Pantry             | \$14,030         |
| Personal Pantry                | \$1,058          |
| Building Fund                  | \$84,991         |
| Togo                           | \$17,055         |
| Pro-life                       | \$1,340          |
| St. Vincent de Paul Society    | \$4,116          |
| Emergency Shelter              | \$1,383          |
| Peace & Justice                | \$3,445          |
| Refugee Assistance             | \$2,559          |
| Community Outreach             | \$7,047          |
| <b>Total:</b>                  | <b>\$526,926</b> |













### ADA—Annual Diocesan Appeal

Goal: \$139,826  
 Outstanding Pledges: \$1,915  
 Remaining on goal: \$0  
 # of reg. families: 930+  
 No. of Donors: 252

### IGNITE

GOAL: \$1,450,000  
 Gifts/Pledges: \$873,314.61  
 No. of Donors: 269

# Ministry Impact

|   | DESCRIPTION                                   | DETAILS   |
|---|---|---|
|    | Celebration of the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass | Average Sunday Mass attendance: <b>237</b><br>Daily Mass attendance: <b>47 AM/21 PM</b><br>No. of Masses Celebrated: <b>581</b>   |
|    | Eucharistic Adoration                         | Hours committed: <b>175</b>   |
|    | Prayer Chain                                  | Parishioners Participating: <b>133</b>  |
|    | Funerals                                      | <b>29</b> individuals were laid to rest and their families were supported through funerals  |
|  | Other Sacraments                              | Weddings: <b>3</b><br>Baptisms: <b>26</b><br>First Eucharist: <b>40</b><br>Confirmations: <b>27</b>   |
|  | New Members                                   | <b>36 households</b> were welcomed as new members of our parish in 2023   |
|  | Liturgical Ministries                         | Eucharistic Ministers: <b>77</b> , Lectors: <b>32</b> , Sacristans: <b>8</b> , Altar Servers: <b>59</b><br>Adult Choir: <b>13</b> , Musicians/Cantors: <b>20</b><br>Ushers: <b>76</b> , Greeters: <b>48</b> |
|  | Clean-Up Crew                                 | <b>525 hours</b> were given by volunteers to help our parishioners and make the parish grounds clean and tidy   |
|  | Home Visits                                   | <b>725 visits</b> were spent assisting our neighbors through evangelization, prayer, and outreach   |
|  | Youth Faith Formation                         | Grade School Participants: <b>42</b><br>Middle School Participants: <b>30</b><br>High School Participants: <b>44</b>  |

# Ministry Moments



## Baptized in 2024

Aileen Guaman Espinoza, Geovany Guaman Espinoza, Hayes Halfpap, Penelope Pagliai, Catherine Downey, Ginnie Biddlecome, Aurora Brookhart, Calvin Casber, Hudson Miller, Annie Reed, Blake Masters, Jameson Masters, Emmett Ullerich, Asher Bermone, Ismael Bermone, Oumar Bermone, Aminata Bermone, Andrew Phares, David Palma, Reagan Hogan, Thomas Hogan, Mariano Garcia, Callen Schneider, Cohyn Lowe, Vincent Sloan, Elias Marschel

## 2024 First Eucharist

Asher Bermone, Ismael Bermone, Oumar Bermone, Aminata Bermone, Billie Collins, Andrew Phares, David Palma, Reagan Hogan, Thomas Hogan, Mariano Garcia, Cora Connolly, Grayson Cook, Hudson Cook, Ruby Dawood, Jackson Dempsey, Mason Dempsey, Maverick Doty, Millie Erickson, Rebekah Flege, Misty Galloway, Andrew Hogan, Lydia Kruse, Suzette McClavy, Eamon McConville, Benjamin McNab, Rowan McTaggart, Sophia Morton, Noah Nedved, Maria Mia Nguyen, Nhi Nguyen, Annette Quiner, Reagan Satterstrom, Austin Shineflew, Violet Sims, Maleeke Staley, Emerson Stiffler, Alejandro Trinidad, Thomas Tyrrell, Merdith Van Pelt, Carson Yule



## Confirmed in 2024

Oumar Bermone, Aminata Bermone, Billie Collins, Andrew Phares, Gianni Carra, Rowan Collins, Hannah Cotran, Meghan Cunningham, Isabel DeJoode, Faith Duong, Thomas Hogan, Reagan Hogan, Sophia Ingamells, MaryAnne Kimani, Carson Klein, Caitlin Larkin, Lucas Larson, Elizabeth Melcher, Owen Neal, Benjamin Olsen, Danny Pietig, Jackson Smith, Jordan Smith, Quentin Steinbach, Lyna Tran, Mary Tyrrell, Jocelin Vargas, Zuhry Vargas

## Married couples in 2024

Buti Kuku & Martha Beshey, Derek Nicholson & Jean Mullen, Brady Girkin & Mary Kellis





# St. Theresa Catholic Councils

## Pastoral Council

New members joined the Executive Council. Welcome Joy Nobles, and Mary McConville! The St. Theresa's feast day celebration was organized and held. The new parish theme of "Pray, Serve, Celebrate Together" was implemented and promoted.

The Pastoral Council took on the responsibilities of the previously established Visioning Committee. These responsibilities include supporting Strategic Pastoral Priority Projects developed by the Visioning Committee and those initiated by Fr. Raphael. Additionally, the Pastoral Council will work with Fr. Raphael and Fr. Mike to continue developing the pastoral vision for the parish. The following projects are currently underway:

- Revitalize Greeter Ministry
- Organize Meal Train Service
- Foster Senior & Student Connections
- Promote Eucharistic Adoration
- Facilitate youth participation in liturgical roles
- Introduce types of prayer
- Hold Faith, Fun, Food Event
- Form a Communications Committee
- Assess Current Membership Data
- Revamp Time & Talent Survey Form

Plans for the Coming Year:

The General Pastoral Council has moved from bi-monthly meetings to quarterly meetings. The Executive Pastoral Council will continue to meet every month. An ongoing effort is being made to centralize Pastoral Council files and reports. Additionally, standardizing and automating the reporting for committees is being developed to provide a clear and consistent format for communicating with the Pastoral Council and the Parish. The current Pastoral Priority Projects will be evaluated to determine if projects need to be completed, continued, or postponed. As projects wrap up, new projects will be brought forward to continue working toward the parish vision.

## Strategic Visioning

The St. Theresa Parish Strategic Pastoral Plan was released at the Pastoral Council General Meeting, November 9, 2023. The ad hoc Pastoral Strategic Visioning Committee (SVC)\* developed it based on input from assessment of pastoral activity, a parish-wide survey and three listening sessions. Four highest priority areas for year one were: Welcome, Worship, Faith Formation and Communication. The parish-wide Action Step Forum August 31 yielded more than 30 action steps to address those priority areas, and the SVC narrowed it down to 10 for the Year 1 plan.

With the release of the initial plan, Executive Pastoral Council assumed responsibility for the ongoing strategic pastoral visioning, planning and oversight. Although SVC stopped meeting as of December, 2023, four members continued to assist the Council directly through June, 2024.

The pastoral project accountability process got underway in March, with the Council assigning projects to one of three Focus Groups\*. Projects provide a project plan at the beginning and a simple status report each month. A project is complete after a final report is made at a Council meeting.

## **Pastoral Council Focus Groups for Strategic Pastoral Projects**

**Focus Group Pray- Andrew Gross** project roster: Promote Eucharistic Adoration, led by Kim Fix-Schmidt & Josie Miethke; Altar Server Revitalization, led by Josh Tyrell; and Introduce Types of Prayer, led by Jim Egger.

**Focus Group Serve -Pat Trout** project roster: Form Communications Committee, led by Mary McConville; Revamp Time & Talent Survey Form, led by Anne Dols; and Assess Current Membership Data, led by Kenneth Seymour.

**Focus Group Celebrate- Lindsay Amadeo** project roster: Revitalize Greeter Ministry, led by Amy Williams; Organize Meal Train Service, led by Erin Evans & Angela Wolfe; Foster Senior and Student Connections, led by Peggy Carpenter & Erin Evans; and Hold Faith, Food, Fun Evening, led by Megs Howes.

\*The Strategic Visioning Committee was formed by Father Raphael in 2022 and included Andrew Gross, Pat Trout, Tricia Pietig, Deacon David Schmidt, Mary McConville, Bob Lawler, Kenneth Seymour, Jeff Carpenter, Amy Williams, and Kim Fix-Schmidt.

# St. Theresa Faith Formation

## **Adult Faith Formation**

Adult Faith Formation this past year has included the following studies on the Gospel of John, the Passion of Christ, comparing the OT tabernacle and rites to the NT tabernacle and rites, and the six main contemplative orders. There were two parish-wide studies on the Eucharist guest speaker Father PJ McManus and a Eucharistic retreat with Fr. Luke Spannagel. Two seasonal retreats were offered as well as monthly educational lunch and learns. Four adults and six teens were welcomed into the Church through RCIA.

This coming year we will again have two retreats with Fr. Mike Mahoney and John Gaffney, a parish-wide study on the autobiography of St. Therese and educational lunch and learns with topics such as dementia friends, five wishes, nutrition and more. Studies will be offered on The Chosen Season 4, the Book of Revelation, and Praying with the Bible.

Hopefully, the parish will begin the Alpha program in January. OCIA is beginning with a new addition of opening up inquiry to parishioners, especially parents who are not of the same faith but have children in faith formation.

The Faith Formation Council continues to meet, alternating months with the Pastoral Council. This council is an advisory board to the Faith Formation team. Last year 11 people sat on the council. This year we have 14 members to help us make decisions, evaluate what has been done and what needs to change, and give suggestions of new avenues to take. This council consists of school parents, Wednesday Faith Formation (WFF) parents, and parishioners interested in parish faith opportunities.

Worship Committee – 10  
Baptismal Prep Program – 6  
RCIA – 27

## **Children's Faith Formation**

St. Theresa Parish offers several Children's Faith Formation programs to serve parish and school children grow in faith.

Children's Liturgy of the Word is held during 10:30 a.m. Sunday Mass throughout the school year. Scripture and discussion are shared on the children's level of understanding to fulfill the Church's call to offer liturgy that is accessible to youth. A dozen children, on average, participate weekly. Teen catechists are vital to this program and are advancing to lead the sessions, with adults as assistants.

Wednesday Faith Formation included family events this past year such as the Advent gathering that focused on being a refugee, just as The Holy Family were refugees. We also enjoyed praying the Stations of Light followed by an Easter party. This coming year we add Catechesis of the Good Shepherd for our 3-6 year olds. We are grateful to our catechists who give of themselves to teach our children the Faith!

Each class from the school and parish religious education programs had the opportunity to serve in ministry roles during Sunday and Holy Day Masses. The students demonstrated Christian stewardship as they shared their gifts of hospitality, lecturing, cantoring and more. Our parish can be proud of our young servant-leaders and looks forward to another year of student ministers.

St. Theresa Parish has embarked on a three-year process to enhance parent and family faith formation, along with 12 other diocesan parishes. We are excited to begin utilizing the fully-funded and professionally supported “project designed to explore how to strengthen faith transmission at home in the first two decades of life, and create parish communities that intentionally accompany and support parents and the whole family.” Watch for updates. To share ideas, contact Jane Ann Becicka at [jbecicka@stsdsm.com](mailto:jbecicka@stsdsm.com) or call the parish office.

*On a Mission from God* was the theme of this summer’s Vacation Bible School. Eighty children and 29 volunteers and staff learned about life as a missionary through the examples of St. Paul, St. Frances Cabrini and St. Damien of Molokai. Each of us were challenged to become missionaries in our own communities. Next year’s VBS will emphasize St. Theresa as we celebrate the 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of our parish.

## **Youth Ministry**

St. Theresa Youth Ministry welcomes all youth in grades 6-12 and their families to join us in growing faith and strengthening parish community bonds. Our programs offer opportunities for faith formation, service, and social engagement. This past year has been remarkable, with our middle and high school faith formation programs diving into prayer, service, and hosting impactful speakers.

Our faith journey was enriched through unique experiences like the National Catholic Youth Conference (NCYC) for our high school youth and adult chaperones. We also engaged in impactful service experiences such as Connection Cafe, Faith in Action, and middle & high school mission trips working with organizations like Habitat for Humanity and DMARC and Des Moines Refugee Support.

Looking ahead, our goals for the future are ambitious and exciting. We aim to promote and prepare for NCYC in November 2025 through fundraising and raising awareness of this fantastic retreat experience. We also plan to offer unique services and social opportunities to involve youth and their families, fostering a sense of anticipation and excitement for what's to come.

# Parish Ministries

## **St. Theresa Altar and Rosary Society (STARS)**

The STARS mission statement calls for us to unite all women of St. Theresa Parish through prayer, faith enhancement, hospitality and service.



We started this year with a recruitment Sunday, inviting the women of the parish to register as interested members of STARS. We now have 70 registered members that are invited to all STARS activities and kept up to date with quarterly emails. This has led to increased involvement and new participants. The parish website includes a STARS membership link for those interested in joining. Next year our membership drive will include establishing a Leadership Selection Committee.

STARS is active in the following ways and will continue in a similar manner next year:

- **Prayer and Faith Enhancement** focuses on honoring the Blessed Virgin Mary and serving the needs associated with the altar and liturgy:
  1. The recitation of an outdoor Rosary every two weeks in the months of May-October
  2. A monthly meeting November-April
  3. Leading the Rosary once a month at Holy Hour Adoration
  4. Holding a May Crowning celebration
  5. The purchase and preparation of Baptismal Boxes
  6. The maintenance of altar clothes
- **Service** includes work to benefit the whole parish:
  1. Hosting coffee and donuts after Sunday Masses
  2. Serving funeral dinners
  3. Maintenance of tablecloths and centerpieces for funeral dinners
  4. Planting a Marion Garden in front of the Holy Family Statue
  5. Hosting the annual Christmas Bazaar
- **Hospitality** to welcome and engage women:
  1. An annual Christmas Tea
  2. Church Ladies Coffee the first Saturday of each month
  3. Easter Vigil Reception
  4. Hosting anniversary, farewell, and welcoming receptions for our clergy

In September we are adding a Women of the Parish Business Brunch, to provide the opportunity to discuss future activities and support from STARS. These meetings will be held on an as-needed-basis throughout the year.

## **Knight of Columbus**

The Knights of Columbus Council 5389 has had a robust year in both activities and faith. We have a membership of 150 men. The Knights have demonstrated time and again the willingness to serve both in our parish and our community. Our service is focused on four pillars: Faith, Family, Community and Life. For Faith, we served over 3,600 hours in areas of church facilities, religious vocations, sacramental gifts and other miscellaneous activities. Recently, the Knights provided extensive service in replacing the kneelers in the church. For Family, we spent over 624 hours in food for families, family formation programs, family prayer night and other miscellaneous activities. For Community, we provided over 1,240 hours of service in coats for kids, physical and intellectual disability, and other various youth activities. For Life, we provided over 112 hours for Special Olympics, pregnancy support, and other miscellaneous activities. Our members reach far and wide both here at our parish and in our community. As members of St. Theresa parish, Knights and their families serve as lectors, ushers, cantors, extra ordinary ministers, and members of various parish boards and committees.

Through the efforts of the Knights and the generous support of the parish community, we have done an amazing job at raising money for causes both in our parish, our community, and our world. Our biggest fund raiser is our Lenten Fish Fry, which our parish supports enthusiastically. This year we raised a record \$7,900. Our second biggest fund raiser is our annual CIPD drive (Tootsie Rolls), which brought in \$4,100. In total, we raised \$14,050 this year. We strive to be good stewards of these funds and disburse funds quickly so that the recipients benefit from the donations as soon as possible. Our charitable donations are disbursed based on our four pillars of focus: Faith, Family, Community and Life. For Faith, we donated \$4,040 to our seminarians, Christ our Life, and miscellaneous faith programs. We supported five Seminarians with gifts this year, including Adam Hanten, a parishioner of St. Theresa. For Family, we donated \$3,800 to

Meals from the Heartland, Keep Christ in Christmas and St. Theresa Catholic School. For Community, we donated \$1,100 to Coats for Kids, Iowa K of C Helping Hands, and Iowa K of C Disaster Relief. For Life, we donated \$5,110 to InnerVisions, Mary's Helping Hands, Easter Seals, Adventures in Social Development, and Special Olympics. This coming year we will continue to raise funds to help many of the same programs. We will continue to look for ways to offer faith programming for all men of the parish to help reach our potential to answer God's call to be men of faith.

## **Togo Sister Parish Committee**

The Togo Mission Committee was created by a number of parishioners from St. Theresa (Des Moines) 20 years ago to support the wellbeing of disadvantaged and orphaned children of Nyassivé, Togo, providing scholarships to these children in need, supporting their schools, providing funding for volunteer teachers in their schools, and supporting the medical clinic in Nyassivé. Our second objective is the support of St. Theresa of the Child Jesus Catholic Church in Nyassivé. We believe our shared Christian faith in Jesus Christ will aid our mission. Our abundance and shared faith with Togo St. Theresa parish provides the valued gift of education to the children of Nyassivé and surrounding villages.

For the 2023-2024 school year we provided scholarships for 272 students ranging from kindergarten to high school. The amount sent last fall (which includes other expenses such as salary for two additional teachers, school supplies, and operating costs) was \$11,776. This year's school year budget has come in at about \$12,000, which will be sent September 2024.

We set a goal to help the community implement an acceptable feeding program for the Jr. High students to keep them there all day and increase the passing rate. It has been a difficult process so far but we are making progress.

## **Peace and Justice/Social Justice**

*Who we are and what we do . . . .*

Peace and Justice was established under the Social Concerns umbrella at St. Theresa based on Catholic Social Teaching from Vatican II. In that teaching we are called to reach out and to build relationships of love and justice.

In May of 2008 a small dedicated group met and formed Peace and Justice. Its purpose was to provide ongoing awareness of education through prayer and reflection on P&J issues. We have evolved through the years in numbers and mission.

Currently we have 11 members and focus on four areas - Fair Trade, First Fruits, Justice Education, and support for the Catholic Campaign for Human Development (CCHD).

FIRST FRUITS – P&J is responsible for distribution of funds donated from the purple First Fruits Envelope (except St. Vincent DePaul) as follows:

- P&J funds are allocated to works of Justice in the parish and community
- Refugee Assistance funds are sent to Fr. Ambrose to assist refugees in resettlement.
- Pro-Life funds are used in the community based on promotion of Pro-Life initiatives.
- Community Outreach funds support works of charity in the parish and community,
- Emergency Shelter funds go toward transportation costs at Catholic Charities Emergency Family Shelter.

EDUCATION – whenever the opportunity arises, P&J will do education about Justice as defined by Catholic Social teaching in the parish and the community at large.

CCHD SUPPORT – The Catholic Campaign for Human Development's domestic and anti-poverty program helps low-income people participate in decisions that affect their lives, families and communities and nurtures solidarity between people living in poverty and their neighbors. This is a national program and 25% of what is collected comes back to the Diocese to support local organizations. P&J offers a match up to \$1000 annually in support of CCHD.

In the pursuit of Justice and Peace, Pope Paul the VI taught that if you want peace, work for Justice. In that spirit our mission will continue in 2024-2025 fiscal year to promote Justice by focusing on the four Pillars of our mission – Fair Trade,

Justice Education, First Fruits, and promotion of CCHD. Our purpose is to take our Faith into the community and the community into our Faith.

If you have a heart for this work and would like further information, please contact Kathy O'Neill (515-865-1590). We welcome new members.

## **Fair Trade**

Your purchase makes a difference!

Through Fair Trade and farmer ownership, a cooperative of over 85,000 cocoa farmers in Ghana receives fair premiums for their cocoa beans and a dividend on sales. This allows them to fund projects like wells and schools in their communities.

Farmers and workers in South Africa gain steady employment and skills through Fair Trade where other job opportunities are scarce.

Rural women in Bangladesh receive fair wages, freedom from exploitation, access to healthcare and education for their children through Fair Trade. And the story goes on.....

Fair Trade at St. Theresa is administered by the Peace and Justice committee. **This has been an ongoing committed and coordinated labor of love and faith.** The kiosk in the back of the church (hand crafted by Verg Deering) is stocked with FT coffee, tea, nuts, chocolates, olive oil and other items as they are available. With the help of Fr. Raphael, our sales have been enhanced with his sales skills. When available, we offer baskets from Ghana, soups, jellies and other items. On different occasions we promote special items as they become available. At the bazar in December, we host a Work of Human Hands sales (Fair Trade) and sell a large variety of items purchased from Fair Trade vendors. All this for the purpose of promoting and selling products of farmers and artisans around the world who are working for a fair wage – a hand up not a hand out.

Our goals and plans for FY 24-26 = Sell more Fair-Trade items and make the parish further aware of this work of Justice= Why we do this and what it accomplishes.

We sell Fair Trade items at our cost – there is no intent to make a profit on sales.

Look for increased sales and more information on Fair Trade – together we can make an impact on the work of JUSTICE.

## **Emergency Shelter Outreach**

How does your parish feed those in shelter in our city? The P & J committee coordinates these three volunteer activities:

Three local shelters:

- Catholic Charities Emergency Family Shelter \*\* evening meal for 10 families every 4<sup>th</sup> Friday of the month. Totaling approximately 360 meals yearly.
- Central Iowa Shelter Meal - served the 8<sup>th</sup> of each month. EACH month it takes 68 volunteers to organize, prepare and serve 250-300 meals. That equates to approximately 3,000 to 3,600 meals served each year.  
\*\* food rescue from A & E dairy every Monday for shelter guests. Volunteers weekly: 6.

Approximately: 225 pounds of milk and assorted dairy products/monthly. Yearly: 2,700 pounds.

Catholic Charities meals on the 4<sup>th</sup> Friday of the month: Jo Downey 515 205-2178

CISS – to help make a salad, serve or milk rescue: Celeste Egger 515 480-8358

Milk rescue to volunteer: Jim Egger – 515 491-0797



### **Central Iowa Shelter and Services 2024**

St. Theresa P & J continues to coordinate the monthly meal to CISS on the 8<sup>th</sup> of the month. This year we have a growing list of volunteers. The P & J coordinates regularly with Pastor, Parish Manager, Church Secretary, School Kitchen Manager for times and location of intake.

- Intake workers total 14 volunteers that rotate monthly duties.
- Servers: 55 people have volunteered to be on a list to volunteer to serve. Eight volunteers are needed each month to serve the 250 people that eat nightly at the shelter.
- Side meal providers are called/texted/emailed each month by four volunteers to meet the need for side dishes to serve with the monthly meal.
- Donations: the entrée is purchased with donations provided to the “homeless meal” fund. Two volunteers remain in contact with Hy-Vee, who deliver entrées to the shelter every month.

On a regular basis education, updates and follow-up is provided to the parish.

### **Catholic Charities Emergency Family Shelter**

Volunteer, Jo Downey, continues to coordinate the 12 monthly meals to the shelter on the 4<sup>th</sup> Friday of the month. Meal providers are asked to prepare a meal for 10 families of up to 34 people. The volunteers provide a balanced meal and coordinate with the shelter staff the week of the meal for the guests’ food allergies/dietary restrictions, meal count and dinner drop-off time.

The parish has provided this monthly meal for 30 years.

### **Monthly DMARC Food Pantry Collection**

The Des Moines Area Religious Council (DMARC) is made up of over 125 member congregations in the Des Moines area, to which St. Theresa belongs. DMARC’s Food Pantries distributes food through 14 pantry sites and 29 mobile sites in the greater Des Moines area.

The DMARC Food Pantry Network assisted 28,047 unique individuals in July 2024, becoming **the highest monthly total in the nearly 50-year history of the network**. Changes over the last several years in Iowa with SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program), Child Care Assistance, and the Summer EBT Program (nutrition benefits to low-income children) have resulted in record-breaking numbers coming to DMARC’s network of food pantries for food assistance. Only through the support of their member congregations, can DMARC continue to serve these increased numbers of people in need.

As a DMARC member congregation, St Theresa hosts a non-perishable food collection every 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday. The monthly collection includes an average of 150 to 175 food items that is given to the St Theresa Food Pantry. Baskets are set out on each side of the altar for monetary donations that DMARC will use to purchase fresh foods (meat, dairy, produce) to serve the greater Des Moines community. **In FY 24, \$20,305 was raised through our 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday collections, making St Theresa Church a leading DMARC member congregation donor.**

Last September, St. Theresa Peace & Justice offered a matching challenge to our parish and matched \$2,000 in cash donations. In November, we hosted a “reverse collection” to help provide specific holiday foods. St Theresa Peace & Justice will again sponsor a matching challenge in November AND December to increase cash donations for DMARC to meet the higher demands for food assistance during the holidays.

For more information on the monthly food collection, call/text Joan at 515-321-4386.

### **Angel Tree**

Angel Tree is a national program coordinated by Prison Fellowship to provide gifts for children who have parents in prison. St. Theresa has been participating with the program for about 20 years. Kay Cross has served as the coordinator of Angel Tree since 2015. The program usually gets started early in November when we receive the names of prisoner’s

families who are eligible for the program. Eligibility is determined by Prison Fellowship and is open to all who are in good standing with the organization as well as the prison.

We have been requesting 75 children in Des Moines and the surrounding area. Each child, under the age of 18, will receive two gifts that include a personal message from the parent. One gift is a needed item such as clothing, shoes, etc. And the second gift is a fun gift that the child will enjoy.

Upon receipt, the lists are formatted into call sheets by a volunteer. One sheet for each family that are distributed to volunteers who attempt to contact the caregivers and get gift ideas and sizes for each child. If there are other children residing in the home and are under the age of 18, we will also provide two gifts for these children also.

If we are unable to make contact with the caregiver, a letter will be sent to the home address.

Once contact is made and the caller knows how many children need gifts, they will fill out gift tags to be attached to the gifts when they are returned to the church for delivery.

When the completed forms are turned in, the gift ideas (with child's code, age, size and color preferences) are entered into Sign-up Genius . Once data is available, parishioners can access the list and pick the Angels that they wish to buy gifts for. This method is preferable to selecting tags from a tree as we know who is buying which gifts and can contact them if the gift is not turned in for delivery.

Ideally, all calls are made before Thanksgiving, so Sign-up Genius is available to all by the end of November. The list will be updated as often as the data is turned in.

Each family is assigned a numerical code (1,2,3....) and each child is assigned a letter (A,B,C...) and gifts are numbered 1(necessity) or 2 (fun). Returned gifts will have the gift code (14 C 1) securely attached to the package so when the gifts are sorted, the Angel Tags can be placed on the appropriate gifts.

Traditionally, the Angel Tree project is kicked off the first weekend in December, with announcements in the preceding and current weekend bulletins, the Friday e-mail and from the pulpit.

For those who wish to support the project, but do not wish to shop, baskets will be on the altar and entrances both weekends in December. Online giving is also available.

The monetary funds will be used by "Secret Santas" to buy any remaining gifts on Sign-Up Genius. Funds also will be used to buy supplies, postage stamps and other minor expenses. After all the gifts have been purchased and delivered, the remaining money will be shared between St. Theresa School for their Angels and to provide scholarships for Angel Tree summer camp in Central Iowa.

The second weekend of December, the wrapped gifts (with the gift code (14 C 1) securely attached to the package) will be returned to the altar at all the Masses. At the end of each Mass, Father will say a blessing over the gifts for the givers and the recipients and their families.

After the Sunday 4:30 p.m. Mass, volunteers will carry the gifts down to the East Meeting Room for safekeeping.

On Monday or Tuesday, volunteers will gather to sort the gifts according to families. Once each family's gifts are accounted for, the gifts will be bagged and tagged for delivery according to area zip codes. Each bag will have delivery instructions and family contact info as well as a thank-you card that is addressed and stamped for the children to send to their parents in prison. Wednesday, from 3-6 p.m., the delivery volunteers can pick up their bags for delivery. Bags are organized according to zip code for ease of delivery. It is best to call ahead and set up a time that works best for all involved.

This past year (2023), in addition to those who purchased gifts and/or made donations, 47 volunteers stepped forward to make Angel Tree a success.

Callers..... 9

Sorters.....10

Santa Shoppers.....4

Announcements & Publicity.....5

Organization, Forms and Sign-up Genius.....3

Thank-you addressing.....2

Delivery.....14 cars = 7 individuals, 4 couples and 3 families.

## St. Theresa Food Pantry

The St. Theresa Food Pantry (STFP) has operated out of the church office since 2009. Our ongoing mission is to welcome the stranger and feed the hungry who come to our church needing help. Eligible families can come once a month for a three-day food supply and personal care items. The STFP is funded through private donations and grants and is run entirely by volunteers.

Food Pantry Projects completed in 2024 include: new rescue food pickup (Fareway), grant received to buy milk weekly, grant received to purchase two new cold storage units, STFP logo t-shirts for all volunteers, and a new window air conditioner.

Below are numbers for the fiscal year ending 6/30/24. We are blest by the parishioners who volunteer to work at the pantry and the parishioners who donate food, personal care items, and money. For more information about the STFP, contact Anita Holub at stdsmfoodpantry@gmail.com.

Grants Received \$7,600

Donations from parishioners and organizations \$7,462

Food Bank of Iowa food purchases \$4,971

Food & personal care purchases \$2,891

Equipment & building materials \$2,005

Supplies & volunteer appreciation \$2,284

Number of volunteers 34

Volunteer hours 2,988 (16% increase from 2023)

Families (households) served 2,929 (23% increase)

Individuals served 9,565 (24% increase)

School families served weekly 13

Pounds of food distributed\* 90,301 (14% increase)

\*received from Food Bank of Iowa, Aldi's, Kum & Go, Fareway, Hy Vee & parishioners

# St. Theresa Catholic School

St. Theresa Catholic School includes 34 staff members, including a Principal, a counselor, teachers, teacher associates, office staff, kitchen staff, and Maintenance Director. These adults form our students in their education, faith and health each day. They empower our students to be faith-filled leaders in all they do. These faith-filled staff serve 152 families and 247 students PK-8.

## Students

We have students from 10 different school districts attending St. Theresa. Our students and families of multiple different cultures speak 10 different languages. Our average class size is 24 students. Fifty-five percent of our families receive tuition assistance.



## **Curriculum Resources**

Our teachers taught new curriculums in our PK-5 classrooms to support literacy development. These programs include Really Great Reading (PK-2) and Wit & Wisdom (K-5). Wit & Wisdom will be added next year to our middle school English/Language Arts curriculum. We are providing more rigorous literacy learning for our students to promote increased academic growth.

Using Leader in Me, PK-8 grades, our teachers are connecting our Catholic faith and values to the habits in Leader in Me. Students are using the 7 Habits language in their classroom.

I Love U Guys! Standard Response Protocols to respond to safety situations that may arise in our building has helped provide common language for all staff. By doing practice drills, we are building muscle memory of what to do in an emergency situation. This gives our students and staff the skills to respond quickly with the knowledge of what to do in each situation.

## **School Safety**

The St. Theresa Gala was Saturday, April 13, 2024. Funds raised at this Glow Gala are being used for increasing the safety of our students and all on campus. We have installed an entry vestibule for visitors to enter through the office. They will only have access to the school from the main office. We put safety bolts on each classroom door. Doors can now be locked from the inside with the push of a button. We are currently getting quotes on reinforcing glass for doors and door sidelights. We will continue to evaluate our campus and make safety updates.

From other funds, we also put a barrier around the playground and added rubber mulch to keep children safe on the playground. We added a sidewalk along the playground, removing the rocks and adding a barrier to the east edge of the playground.

## **Extra-Curricular Opportunities**

Beginning in the fall of 2023, we awarded Sister Jude Fitzpatrick scholarship funds to help support students participating in extracurricular activities. These scholarships allow students to participate in activities their families may have otherwise not been able to afford. Scholarships are given out each trimester to allow the opportunity for students participating in different activities to apply for scholarship help.

St. Theresa and Catholic Schools allow students to participate in the CFL, Mock Trial, Cross Country, Volleyball, Basketball, Band, and Track.

## **Service**

In November, staff, students and parents helped clean up the school and church grounds as part of fall clean-up. It was a great way for our students to give back to the church and school. This also allowed parishioners to focus on homes of parishioners in need of clean-up help. In April of 2023, teachers did a spring clean-up of school grounds as part of our day of service and truly enjoyed the work and the outcome.

Our school finds many ways to support our community in light of food scarcity. Middle School students provide meals for Connection Cafe monthly. This is a great opportunity for our students to not only prepare food, but serve those in need. We also hold multiple food drives throughout the year to support our backpack buddy program and the St. Theresa Food Pantry. Students get excited about bringing in food, knowing it will go to someone in need.

## **St. Theresa Early Childhood Learning Center 2023**

St. Theresa Early Childhood Center (ECLC) is a fully licensed childcare (Iowa DHHS) located in the lower level of the St. Theresa Catholic parish office building. Established over 35 years ago, we offer year-round, full-time programs starting with two year olds/three year olds and a Pre-K through 12 years of age program. We offer a secure, safe and fun-loving environment at a reasonable rate for families of the parish, school and surrounding communities needing care for these ages while working full-time, year-round. In 2020 we opened the only two year old program in the Diocese of Des

Moines and have had great success with the program. Currently we have one spot available (14 total spots) in our 2yo FT program and two spots (19 total spots) available in our 3yo program. We increased the before/after school enrollment by 25% this year for those kids needing before and after school care. Summer camp enrollment was at 100% capacity again this year. A few of our continued safety/operational and educational items we have continued addressing this year are:

- We continue to expand on the Frog Street curriculum in our Early Childhood Programs. Frog Street offers developmental and social-emotional development and learning continuums that allow children to build on previously mastered skills to more readily achieve new skills in a seamless and continuous way through their Pre-K years. Our Pre-K teacher, Mrs. Mohrfeld, will be working with our management team of Maria Calhoun and LeAnn Hilchen to implement Iowa Early Learning Gold Standards (IELS) along with our curriculum. These standards describe the skills, behaviors, and knowledge that children from birth to age five should have before starting kindergarten. The IELS Gold Standards cover developmental areas such as social studies, communication, and mathematics.
- External drainage issues were addressed outside the main entrance to the childcare for safety issues. Parking areas and times have been addressed outside the main entrance with new concrete and french drains installed to address the proper draining of water and dirt to exterior areas beyond the front entrance.
- Bathroom remodels were completed over winter break with an additional door entrance into the bathroom via the 2yo room. This helps provide a safer and more visual access to the 2yo room for the students learning new potty training strategies
- We have implemented a new software system (Brightwheel) this summer for our families and staff to be able to communicate together on a child's daily activities and for families to be able to electronically follow the daily ins and outs of their children while in attendance. It also aligns with the Regionalization Plan for next July with the Diocese for budget and financial collections as we anticipate going to the region July 2025.
- We have maintained an independent budget responsibly for the childcare within the limits set forth by the childcare director/finance council/school and parish office administration. We hit our targets for collections and expenses for fiscal year 2024/2025.
- Licensing by the DHHS continues with no restrictions or citations noted.
- Staffing is at 100%.
- We continue to strive to be the very best at what we do and to maintain excellence in all the care we deliver to our families. We look forward to a successful 2024/2025 year.

## Take Action – Upcoming Events!

We are all called to be part of the community of faith. One way to answer this call is through ministries and events— and our parish provides these opportunities throughout the year. We invite you to take part in our ministries and events – make sure to save these dates! For more information on our ministries and events follow our website, Facebook page, bulletin, and Friday email notifications.

| <b>Event</b>  | <b>Mark Your Calendar</b>        |
|---|----------------------------------|
| Advent Retreat  | December 5, 9:30 a.m. – 12 p.m.  |
| STARS Bazaar & Bake Sale  | December 7, 9 a.m. - 3 p.m.      |
| Communal Penance  | December 11, 6:30 p.m.           |
| Advent Tea  | December 14, 2 p.m.              |
| Christmas Vigil Mass  | December 24, 4:30 p.m. & 11 p.m. |
| Christmas Day Mass  | December 25, 9:30 a.m.           |
| Solemnity of Mary   | January 1, 9:30 a.m.             |
| Mardi Gras Gathering  | March 4                          |
| Ash Wednesday   | March 5                          |
| Parish Lenten Event with Steve Angrisano                                  | March 9, 10                      |
| Knights of Columbus Fish Fry  | Every Friday, March 7-April 11   |
| Communal Penance  | April 2, 6:30 p.m.               |
| Easter  | April 20                         |
| School Gala   | April 26                         |
| First Communion   | May 3 & 4                        |
| Confirmation  | May 18                           |
| Pilgrimage to National Shrine/Museum of St. Therese – Darien, IL          | June 9                           |
| Closing 75 <sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration Mass with Bishop Joensen | June 28, 4:30 p.m.               |



**St. Theresa Catholic Church**  
**1230 Merle Hay Road, Des Moines, Iowa, 50311**  
**515-279-4654**

[www.sainttheresaiowa.org](http://www.sainttheresaiowa.org)

<https://www.facebook.com/StTheresaCatholicDesMoines>