



# St. Peter's Current

1405 Highway 13, PO Box 50679, Mendota, MN, 55150 [www.stpetersmendota.org](http://www.stpetersmendota.org)  
December 2020



Dear Beloved in Christ,

With all my heart, I pray many Christmas blessings on you and all those dear to you. I will be especially mindful of you at the altar, during all the Christmas Masses of the Octave.

As I sit down to write this article, I am looking at a beautiful image of Mary and the Child Jesus that hangs in my office. Both are draped in simple, faded clothing—humble in appearance and unassuming. The child sleeps carefree and soundly on his mother's heart—and the mother, with her face glancing heavenward, conveys with her eyes a peace that is not of this world, a grateful, hopeful look that says “No matter how hidden or mysterious your ways, Lord—I will always trust You!”

The hardships of traveling the great distance to Bethlehem while being nine months pregnant. Tired and worn out, the additional trial of finding no room in the inns. Forced to share lodging with animals. And the time arrives to give birth. At the most inconvenient time and in the most inconvenient circumstances, Jesus is born. “No matter how hidden or mysterious your ways, Lord—I will always trust You!”

The joy of Christmas—Jesus comes and is found in the inconvenient and unexpected. Just about everyone is waiting for things to “return to normal” these days, including me. But while we pray for this, are we open to the unexpected ways of God? Is our heart open to Jesus coming to us now in what is hard and inconvenient? May our hearts chime together with Mary's: “No matter how hidden and mysterious your ways, Lord—I will always trust You!” Come Lord Jesus! Come Lord Jesus!—and when You come, let me find You, let me see You, that I may love You and rejoice in You.

My sincere love and prayers,

Fr. Steven



## What's Been Happening During the Pandemic at St. Peter's

It was right before St. Patrick's day when the world shifted, and we saw our "norm" start to change. Here at St. Peter's, we could no longer attend Mass, events were cancelled, we were uncertain of how long this would last, and what it would mean for our parish. As the days, weeks, and months have gone by, we can see that God has been guiding us and leading us down a new path for our parish. With the help of David Dunst, Kelly Garrett, and Seth Marek and some generous parishioners, we now have the ability to stream Sunday Mass online. We've added additional Mass times and Father Steven offers daily reflections Wednesday through Saturday, which are posted online. Several of our ministries began communicating via Zoom, rather than meeting in person. We created a new sandwich lunch ministry to help the homeless in our community. We witnessed several groups of parishioners in the summer months gathering in the parking lot and the lawn to have social distancing coffee together. During the lockdown we reached out to over 400 elderly parishioners from a team of 15 callers once a week to check in and see if St. Peter's could help in anyway. We held a car parade to celebrate Father Steven and Deacon Tim and to thank them for all they do. Father and Deacon hosted drive-thru blessings for all our parishioners. Our faith formation team has been so creative reaching out to our youth through zoom, YouTube and OOF-da (Opening Our Faith) boxes. Our Fall Festival moved online as did the Christmas sale. Alpha decreased it's numbers this year to work with social distancing, and it is going as strong as ever. Through this life changing event of COVID-19, we have been able to adapt as a parish, rely on one another, and let the Lord lead us. Through it all, we are still able to carry out the mission of this parish:

**"St. Peter's is here to bring the good news of the Gospel to all, so that every person can have a personal, life changing, life giving relationship with Jesus Christ."**

### Sandwich Lunch Ministry

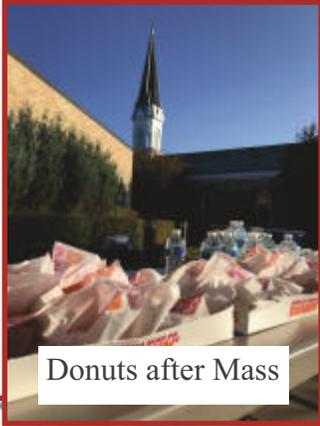
Last spring we began collecting bag lunches for Sharing & Caring Hands to help them through the closure of many restaurants and churches, which were their main sources of food donations. Thanks to the generosity of St. Peter's parishioners and friends, we collected over 750 lunches over several weeks. Because of its popularity, and the continued need at Sharing & Caring Hands, we have made this a permanent monthly ministry here at St. Peter's. Once a month, donations of a variety of bag lunch items such as sandwiches, chips, fruit, and cookies are dropped off curbside at St. Peter's and then delivered by volunteers to the shelter.

We will continue to collect on the third Tuesday of every month. If you are interested in donating items for lunches, please contact Nancy Stanton at 651-686-9009 or at [nanrr1@yahoo.com](mailto:nanrr1@yahoo.com). Each donor is asked to bring 20-40 of one or more of the following: individual bags of chips, wrapped cookies bananas, oranges, Cuties or individual fruit cups.

Sandwiches are as follows: turkey, ham, or PB&J. No condiments, please. Each sandwich must be in an individual bag. The sandwiches are easiest to store and transport if you stack the bagged sandwiches inside your empty bread bag!



# Life at St. Peter's this past 9 months



Donuts after Mass



Boxed Lunches Outside of Historic Church



Advent Blessing Bags



Outdoor Scavenger Hunt



Outdoor Movie Night



Drive Thru Blessings



Handing out Dilly Bars after Mass



Prepping Christmas sale



Using Pool Noodles to Keep 6 ft apart at Perissos!



Small Group Confirmation 2020



Spring Clean-Up

## Faith Formation

Our faith formation team has come up with a creative way to handle the off-site teaching of our faith. Kathy Raible and Elizabeth McCanna came up with a program for our children in grades 1-8 called OOF-da or Opening Our Faith, with a little Minnesota humor at the end of it. Their main goal is to help parents share their faith with their children as an entire family experience, rather than individual lessons.

It's founded on a box subscription concept. Once a month, families drive thru after Mass to pick up their boxes. The boxes contain everything they need for that month of family catechesis. Each month has a theme that contains lessons, activities, videos and prayers for the families to do each week. It has turned into a wonderful way for families to come together and share their faith. Beth Halbert, our Pre-School faith coordinator, has joined Kathy and Elizabeth and is creating activities specially geared for the pre-school and kindergarten age that are included with the OOF-da monthly box. Karen Cronin, our Catechesis of the Good Shepherd leader, has been hard at work doing videos and sending out information and activities for the kids in her program. Elizabeth McCanna has the Perissos program and Confirmation students up and running with Zoom meetings, videos, and activities. Kathy Raible continues to prepare our younger children for the Sacraments of Reconciliation and First Holy Communion through the use of homeschool lessons and Zoom meetings. They have all risen to the occasion and have come up with creative ways to reach out to our young parishioners and their families to encourage the continuation of their faith journeys at home.



Packing Oof-da Boxes for the faith formation kids.



Elizabeth's daughter helping put together Swag Bags for Perissos

## Fall Festival and Christmas Sale 2020



Our fundraising efforts have not disappointed us, even though we are in the midst of a pandemic! We still had our Fall Festival, but we moved most of it online. People seemed to have adapted quickly to the change. Our silent auction, which turned into an online auction, brought in about \$21,000—the most it has ever made! People were so generous, and there seemed to be joy in the air in having things feel “normal” for a bit. We introduced the drive-in movie to the delight of about 140 people, and it was determined that we will have it again next year. The festival's net income this year was \$32,967.82! Thank you to all who volunteered and participated. We have decided to move next year's Festival to September 18 and 19, 2021 so save the dates!

For our Christmas sale this year, we used the same online program and it was wonderful! All of our items were donated by parishioners or their family and friends. People were so thrilled with the sale and the idea of reusing items rather than buying new. The joy that the sale brought to everyone was great. Because of the generosity of people who donated items and the people who purchased the items, we were able to make over \$4,000 for the operating budget of our parish! Thank you all! We are already accepting Christmas items for next year's sale. So as you begin to decorate, anything you don't want, St. Peter's will happily accept! Items can be dropped off now through next November outside of the parish office or in the coatroom after Mass. Thank you!



Volunteers setting up the Gathering Space with Christmas sale items

## Live Stream Mass



Kelly Garrett sits with her family while livestreaming the Mass. Thank you, Kelly!

One of the many blessings that has come from this pandemic is our ability to livestream the Mass every Sunday. We were able to reach everyone during the shutdown who had been coming to Mass regularly, and we also connected to our parishioners who are homebound and have not been able to come to St. Peter's for some time. They are now enjoying being able to celebrate Mass with their fellow parishioners online. This addition to the parish has been so beneficial for so many reasons, and we are so grateful to David Dunst, Kelly Garret, and Seth Marek for sharing their technology skills and for the parishioners who donated the equipment we are using. Thank you! The Sunday 10 am Mass livestream is available through our website at [www.stpetersmendota.org](http://www.stpetersmendota.org) and on our Facebook page.

## Zoom Meetings!

By now I'm sure most of the parish is familiar with Zoom meetings. Whether you were introduced to it through work, family, or friends, it is now a part of people's normal vocabulary. St. Peter's jumped on the Zoom bandwagon, too. Bible study was able to continue on through Zoom, Perissos, our young adult groups, and even staff meetings continued to happen with Zoom. It might not be everyone's favorite way of communicating, but it is useful and is serving its purpose during this challenging time. Even our Archbishop Hebda joined in on Zoom!



Virtual Perissos



Virtual Peer Ministry



Archdiocesan Meeting

## St. Peter's New Webpage

Even before the pandemic happened, St. Peter's had been working to update our website and make it more current. We would love for you to "stop" by and see the changes and updates. Not only can you find out the basics of our parish, info on faith formation, Mass times, sacraments, upcoming events, etc., you are now able to hear Father Steven and Deacon Tim's homilies, Father Steven's Daily Reflections, the Prayer of the Heart Workshops, and the Lenten Series. So please take a moment to visit our site. If you notice anything you think we should add, please let us know. We are always looking for ways to improve. You can check out our website at [www.stpetersmendota.org](http://www.stpetersmendota.org) If you have any questions, please contact Rita Holien at 651-452-4550 or at [rhohlen@stpetersmendota.org](mailto:rhohlen@stpetersmendota.org).

## A Note to Our New Parishioners

welcome  
to our church family

To our dear new parishioners, we want you to know that we would have liked to welcome you to our parish with open arms and a big hug! We look forward to doing that and getting to know you better in the near future. In the past, we would normally host a meet and greet every third month with Father Steven and Deacon Tim. Once each year, in January, we would hold a new parishioner dinner, but we have put those on hold

with the pandemic. As soon as we are able, we will set up a gathering for you all. We are so grateful to have you join our parish especially under these changing times. In the meantime, if you feel that you have a calling to serve at our parish, we have several opportunities. We are always looking for people to volunteer in our liturgical ministries (Eucharistic ministers, lectors, ushers, and Sacristans). Our outreach programs, such as Sharing and Caring Hands, are always in need of volunteers. All of this information about our ministries can also be found on our website at [www.stpetersmendota.org](http://www.stpetersmendota.org) or you can call or email Anne O'Keefe at 651-905-4308 or [aokeefe@stpetersmendota.org](mailto:aokeefe@stpetersmendota.org). If for some reason you didn't get a new parishioner folder, they are located in our parish Gathering Space or one can be sent to you with more information about our parish. Again, we are so grateful for you and special prayers for you and your family during this time.

## Appreciation Drive Thru

The Appreciation Drive Thru for Father Steven and Deacon Tim back in Late March organized by long time parishioner, Laurie Reding, is a perfect example of how the parishioners at St. Peter's got creative and came together during the pandemic. We are grateful for Father Steven, Deacon Tim, and all our parishioners!



# Peter Guzulaitis, our new Director of Parish Operations

Before the pandemic began, St. Peter's was in the process of hiring a new Director of Parish Operations. The good Lord placed Peter in our parish at just the right time. Not long after he was hired, we went into lockdown. He was given the challenge of running our parish during that time. He has proven to be a great fit, and we are happy to have him here! We asked Peter a few questions, so that you could get to know him better.

**Where did you grow up?** My father worked for IBM, and we moved around quite a bit when I was a child. I was born in Denver and lived in New York, St. Louis, Maryland, and Rhode Island before moving to Minnesota in 1991 at the age of 27.

**Children?** I have a son, Stephen, who is 23. He lives, works, and goes to school in Duluth. My daughter, Julia, is 20. She is currently attending Mankato State University.

**What did you want to be when you were a kid?** The typical kid things, you know like Director of Operations at St. Peter's! Just kidding, I did not have a particular plan as a child.

**What is your favorite Bible passage?** "Jesus said. . . I came so that they might have life and have it more abundantly" (John 10:10). God has certainly blessed me with an abundant life and invites me to share this with others.

**What is your favorite religious book, not including the Bible?** Jesus/Now by Leslie Brandt. It is a book of short meditations, that I have had since the 1980's which always enriches my prayer life.

**What is your favorite nonreligious book?** Whatever book is currently being read on my Kindle. I read fiction and non-fiction.

**What is your favorite food(s)?** I like many different cuisines from Asian, Mexican, Italian, and of course, American. It is hard to pick a favorite

**What is your favorite place to eat?** I like to eat at home with family and friends gathered around. Those are the best meals.

**Where did you work before St. Peter's?** I have worked for the church since 1986 in a variety of capacities. I came to St. Peter's from St. Wenceslaus in New Prague. Before that I worked at St. Edward's in Bloomington. I feel very blessed to have served at these parishes and am looking forward to serving at St.

Peter's. Thankfully, I have been abundantly blessed throughout my career.

**If you could live anywhere, where would it be?** I would like to live near a large body of water, either at a lake or by the ocean. The water calms me and awakens in me the wonders of God's creation.

**Do you have a favorite pastime?** Photography. While I have so much to learn, I like the melding of technical with the artistic when taking a picture. I especially like getting out in nature and photographing trees, plants, and wildlife.

**Vikings or Packers?** I will root for the Vikings, but my football allegiance goes to the Patriots. Living in Rhode Island, I cheered for them when they were awful and have very much enjoyed their success.

**If you could tell each person at St. Peter's one thing, what would it be?** Pope Francis calls parishes our "field hospitals" for believers. This is a parish where all can find a spiritual home. A place where we are nourished through the Eucharist and healed through reconciliation, so that we can bring the good news of Jesus to other people in our lives.

**What do you see for the future of our Parish?** I am looking forward to the day when the debt for the construction of the Church and Heritage Center is paid off. Hopefully, through the combined efforts of all parishioners, we can eliminate the debt in the next capital campaign in three years or less. This will free up planning for future and help the parish better serve the needs of our parishioners.

**Feel free to add anything about yourself!** Thanks! I am new to this wonderful parish and want to get to know as many of you as I can. Please feel free to stop in at the parish office and say hello. I want to thank Fr. Steven Hoffman and the other members of the staff for welcoming me to the staff.



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### Mission Statement

**St. Peter's is here to bring the good news of the Gospel to all, so that every person can have a personal, life changing, life giving relationship with Jesus Christ.**

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## Winter Events

**Immaculate Conception**

**Tuesday, December 8**

**Masses at 7 am, 9 am, and 6:30 pm**

**Holy Hour of Adoration and Intercession with**

**Our Lady**

**Wednesday, December 9 at 6:30 pm**

**Advent Penance Service**

**Thursday, December 17 at 6:30pm**

**Christmas Eve and Vigil Mass**

**Thursday, December 24**

**3pm, 5pm, and 8pm**

**Christmas Mass**

**Friday, December 25, 8am and 10am**

**Solemnity of Mary,  
the Mother of God**

**Thursday, December 31 at 4pm**

**Friday, January 1 at 10am**

**Father Steven's Daily Reflections (Wednesday-Saturday), available on YouTube**

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Thank you to Streamworks and its president,  
parishioner Tony Zirnhelt, for their mailing services!

If you are receiving this and you no longer consider yourself a parishioner, please contact the parish office at 651-452-4550 to remove your name from our database.