

Evangelical Charity: A Year in Review (2025-2026)

"We love because He first loved us." (1 John 4:19) We love our brothers and sisters in need by ministering to their material needs as well as responding to their spiritual thirst for God. As outlined in *Unleash the Gospel*, our service to the poor and marginalized is a clear witness to Jesus our Lord, not just humanist philanthropy. All our Catholic charitable works are an authentic expression of our Catholic faith. In the pages that follow, you will note the partnerships, committees, and programs of our Evangelical Charity ministry from the past year. If you see something of interest, please contact Cindy to see how you can get involved! *"Let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven."* (Matthew 5:16)

St. Irenaeus Evangelical Charity Program and Committee Summaries 2025-2026

Evangelical Charity Commission – to put Catholic Social Teaching into action through charity in areas of human need (both in the parish and beyond), and by working toward justice in the promotion and coordination of action to eliminate the causes of human need in our society; incorporating person-to-person engagement, works of mercy, accompaniment, and evangelization. **Members** – Rich Bosler, Leigh Ann Grubbs, Kathleen Larkin, Dee Macker, Florie Mojica, Cindy Monaghan, Dale Proulx, Debbie Pruent, Gordy Sherry, Roxanne Springer, Colleen Steyer, Marilyn St. James, Nan St. Peter, Chris Wogan

Back to School Blessings – We collected school uniforms and toiletries for families served by CCRT; school supplies for families served by Catholic Charities' La Casa Amiga; and new shoes for children served through Micah 6 Community.

Blood Drives – We hosted four successful blood drives this year: collected 125 units—helping to potentially save 375 lives!

Christmas Blessings – We adopted 152 individuals through Jail and Outreach, Grace Centers of Hope, La Casa Amiga, Gianna House, our parish, and community (Adopt-a-Family); and helped collect and deliver 500 gifts to local agencies for those in need (Giving Tree). We filled 40 Cozy Christmas baskets for CCRT; and also 'adopted out' several 'rooms' providing kitchen, bath, and bedroom gifts for CCRT clients for Christmas. We prepared snack bags and toiletry kits to add to Christmas bags for 150 residents of Phoenix Center Apartments in Pontiac; delivered cookies and gifts to our homebound; and delivered extra needed boots, socks, and toiletries for women and children at the Safe Tonight (New Birth) Shelter.

Easter Blessings – We filled 167 Easter baskets with candy, toys, games, Bibles, prayer books and Jesus! We gave 162 to children served by CCRT, and five to grandchildren of a neighbor in need.



Emergency Shelter – We helped feed, clothe, and accompany homeless women and children at a temporary emergency shelter in Pontiac hosted at New Birth International Church. We provided lunches, dinners, toiletries, prayer books and devotionals, and fun activities for children. When the shelter closed, we were able to help with security deposits and first month's rent for four families; a car repair; one car purchase; and several gas, grocery, and Uber gift cards.

First Friday Communion Service at Danish Village – We led a monthly communion service at Danish Village, providing refreshments and fellowship afterward.

Grace Centers of Hope Meals – We began a new outreach of preparing and serving lunch monthly at the Women and Children's Center.

HOPE Shelter – We cooked and served meals to 80 homeless guests at the Hope Adult Shelter and delivered to Hope Recuperative Care Center for a week in October, and a week in March; and hosted two summer cookouts for guests.

Manna Meal – We prepared and served soup, sandwiches, snacks, and other food to approximately 100 disadvantaged adults onsite at this soup kitchen in downtown Detroit July - January.

Mother's Day Blessings – Parishioners filled 47 Mother's Day gift bags with new items for mothers-in-need and their new babies, and greeted moms and delivered the gifts at a reception at Catholic Charities of Southeast Michigan's La Casa Amiga in Pontiac. We also provided 46 camperships for at-risk 8–12-year-olds to attend La Casa Amiga's Summer Camp.

Needlework Ministry – We created prayer blankets for those in the hospital; prayer shawls for the Ignatian Spirituality Project; and winter accessories, blankets, and baby items for those in need.

New Year's Day Meals on Wheels for OPC – We coordinated drivers and delivered meals and puzzle books to area homebound.

Outreach to Seniors – We wrote notes, delivered small gifts, and blessed our friends at Danish Village, Grace, and The Springs of Rochester Hills in small ways throughout the year. We provided gardening tools, gloves, watering cans, garden flags, and garden-related devotionals to residents of Danish Village who are tending garden beds this summer.

Parish Support Services – We facilitated the parish response of support, hospitality, resources, and condolence for people in need through our Bereavement and Good Samaritan Ministries, and Prayer Warriors. We mailed out Care Notes, handed out Bereavement Bags, greeted families at the Mass of Remembrance, and hosted numerous funeral luncheons... We called, wrote notes, delivered gifts, drove homebound parishioners to Mass and doctor appointments, and prepared meals as needed on a temporary basis.

Recycling Program – Parishioners donated hundreds of eyeglasses, hearing aids, cell phones, and tablets to benefit the *Lion's Club* and *Cell Phones for Soldiers* who repurpose these items to help those in need.

Rosary Makers for the Missions – We made and distributed over 20,391 mission rosaries this year—most went overseas.

Social Services – We helped many neighbors and parish families in need with utility payments, groceries, car and mortgage payments, rent, utility shut-off prevention, tows, car repairs, new tires, a new oven, car insurance, driver's license renewal, clothing, and budgeting and counseling referrals.

Social Justice – We educated parishioners about homelessness, human trafficking, mail order abortion pills, ecological justice, and care for creation... encouraged parishioners to contact representatives to make our Catholic voices heard... Celebrated the annual Season of Creation in September/October with the theme of *Peace with Creation*, and encouraged parishioners to examine lifestyle choices related to caring for creation.

Works of Mercy – We made CarePax for the homeless; tied fleece blankets and packed Bereavement Bags; made sandwiches and packed lunch bags and toiletry kits for Elli's House; packed backpacks and made meals for CCRT's



Getting Ahead Program; packed non-perishable lunches for Jail and Outreach Ministry and CCRT; packed full-size toiletry tote bags for families served at Matchan Nutrition Center's soup kitchen; packed travel size toiletry kits for CCRT, Matchan, and Jail and Outreach; made rosaries for the jail; packed SnackPax for Song and Spirit; made bracelets with love notes for children staying in the family shelter; packed backpacks with toiletries and food for St. Damien of Molokai's street ministry; and included personal notes or scripture in every project. We collected toiletries and winter accessories for CCRT; baby items for ICU Birth Choice; new shoes and socks for the Center for the Works of Mercy's foot washing for the homeless; and snacks and juice boxes for The Power Company Kids Club.

Gospel of Life – to enliven the parish response to the universal respect and dignity appropriate to all human life.

Leader – Nan St. Peter

- Incorporated 'Respect Life' theme: "*Life: Our Sign of Hope*" into bulletin articles for the month of October
- Celebrated a *Mass of Giving Thanks to God for the Gift of Human Life* for members of our community on the anniversary of Roe v. Wade—including an overnight Adoration led by the Knights of Columbus, a Pro-Life Rosary, Mass, breakfast reception, collection of baby items for ICU Birth Choice, and *Nine days for Life Novena*
- Attended fundraisers to support Crossroads Care Center and Right to Life—LIFESPAN
- Handed out Mother's Day carnations and Father's Day candy bars, and sold Christmas cards to benefit Right to Life—LIFESPAN

Special Needs Ministry – to promote fellowship and spirituality through creative expression, prayer, music, skits, and crafts among those with special needs. Leaders – Rayanne Gardner, Chris Wogan, and Marilyn St. James

- Dedicated team of 13 planned nine monthly events from October to June, focusing on various scriptures
- Hosted an off-site bowling event in January, and finished the year with a cookout in June
- Increased attendance—average number of special needs adults attending each event was 25, with about 14 parents and/or caregivers
- Promoted our ministry throughout our Family of Parishes, and to group homes, churches, and families in the surrounding community; successfully welcomed new group homes and individuals; one new attendee's mother is starting a special needs ministry at her parish across town

Senior Fellowship – to promote fellowship and spirituality among parishioners 55 years and up through social activities, outreach projects, and a sharing of common interests. Leader – Dee Macker



- Published a quarterly newsletter to keep seniors in our parish connected; membership finished at 155 strong
- August membership drive brought in 12 new members
- Hosted an August tailgate for 50 people after morning Mass
- Hosted five dinners—highlights included entertainment by David Thomas and Red Barn Revival; a speaker from the Michigan Dementia Association; and a presentation by St. Irenaeus Youth Group coordinator, Melanie Avila
- Hosted a free movie in October, “Jesus”
- Coordinated three luncheons which included Christmas Bingo and 20/20 Express games
- Continued monthly *Lunch Bunch* gatherings at various restaurants in the area to allow for closer socialization... (25-40 attendees at each)
- Took field trips to Blessed Solanus Casey Center and The Parade Company in Detroit
- Helped pack up CCRT collections of toiletries, hats, scarves, gloves, and school uniforms
- Led the Stations of the Cross one Friday during Lent for 60 attendees
- Launched the option of online payments for our events through the St. Irenaeus website

Parish Health Ministry – to enhance the quality of life for parishioners by integrating our Catholic faith with healing through health education, counseling, and programs. Leader – Denise Munaco

- Offered blood pressure screening at Sunday Socials
- Refilled first aid kits in the church, parish hall, and office hallway buildings; updated Youth Group first aid kits
- Hosted a Flu/Pneumonia Clinic in October; provided a CPR/AED/Narcan Review for our ushers in November
- Provided a complete Thanksgiving Dinner for a parish family in need
- Hosted *Advent by Candlelight* for parish women and friends in December
- Provided 90 radon test kits to parishioners in February
- Made prayer blankets with women and children at the emergency shelter in Pontiac in March
- Wrote monthly physical and mental health education articles for the bulletin

Family of Parishes Evangelical Charity Initiatives 2025-2026

Mental Health Ministry – The Rochester Area Catholic Family of Parishes Mental Health Ministry responds to mental health needs by providing spiritual support, awareness, education, and resources.

- Hosted *Back to School Blessings* at all three parishes, with the theme of “*Together for Good Mental Health*”... this included a blessing by the pastors for youth starting a new school year... St. Irenaeus had about 140 attendees for ice cream, bracelets, and a short message with mental wellness tips; St. Andrews had a Backpack Blessing with pizza; St. Mary of the Hills invited everyone from Mass to have ice cream and peruse tables set with tools for the school year (prayer rocks made out of clay; seniors wrote lunch box notes; parent blessings; mental health relaxation cards, etc.)
- Hosted a *Mental Health First Aid* course in January at St. Mary’s for 11 participants, and our facilitators presented another 8-hour training at St. John Vianney for 25 people
- Hosted three drop-in Caregiver Support Groups (for individuals caring for those with physical, emotional, or mental illness) for the FOP and our community (November, January, and April) at St. Irenaeus
- Hosted a *Student/Parent Mental Wellness* event at St. Mary’s in January for over 100 people—middle schoolers plus their trusted adult—with speakers, activities at 13 hands-on stations, pizza, and take-aways
- Hosted a *Taize Prayer Service* in support of Mental Health Awareness at St. Mary’s in February (40+ attended)
- Hosted a station at a Notre Dame Prep Mental Health Awareness Fair in April, sharing prayer ropes and breath prayers
- Developed two new workshops, consolidating ‘best of programs’ based on our previous longer courses... presented *Supporting Recovery* in July (11 attended), and a *Mental Health Action Hero Workshop* in May (28 attended), at SMOTH
- Invited Deputy Kyle Hayes from Oakland County Sheriff’s Office to share about the Crisis Response Unit, which we shared with our parishes
- Continued to update a list of mental health resources and counselors to post on our website, share as a handout, and provide to parish staff; continued to share business cards with 988 suicide prevention line
- Published articles with a range of topics from mental illness to mental wellness to share in bulletins and on webpage
- Responded to direct requests for help with loved ones by providing education, referrals, and resources

Walking with Moms in Need – The Rochester Area Catholic Family of Parishes WWMIN ministry responds to needs of mothers by providing accompaniment, spiritual and social support, education, tangible items, physical help, and resources.

- Monitored phone line daily to ensure all moms in need in our area find the help they need
- Worked to grow in our understanding of how best to serve women who need our assistance; prayerfully discern how God is leading us; and respond to the best of our ability to women we encounter
- Met monthly to view and discuss the "Into Life" program produced by the Sisters of Life about their ministry to women facing unplanned pregnancies; gained a deeper understanding of the challenges facing women and the pressures that make choosing life for their babies so difficult; and learned many valuable insights that will help us to better accompany women in the future
- Hosted a monthly intercessory prayer meeting to lift up the women we have served, those who might reach out to us, and those we may never have a chance to serve; ensuring we keep God at the center of all we do
- Played a highly supportive role in the Knights of Columbus' inaugural "Blessed Mothers Mixer" in May, celebrating women who had been served by area pregnancy centers, Mary's Mantle, and WWMIN over the past year... helped research and identify items to be purchased for layettes and gifts to be given to each mother, assembled the layettes, donated desserts, helped with decorations and setup, worked the event as greeters and food service volunteers, and shared with the guests what WWMIN is all about
- Explored the idea of sponsoring *Embrace Grace Love Boxes* for clients at Crossroads Care Center which would include a book, onesie, journal, love note, and invitation to join a 12-week support group at a local church for new and expectant single mothers as a tool to introduce our churches and our ministry to clients who identify as Catholic... still discerning whether we will use part of a \$5,000 grant from CCSEM's WWMIN toward sponsoring the *Embrace Grace Love Boxes*, or creating 'boxes' of our own
- Served (and continue to accompany offering spiritual support, friendship, and keeping tabs on needs that emerge) two moms with limited incomes who gave birth in 2025; both were married but needed help in meeting the needs of their new babies; one couple was living in a hotel until their daughter was born... Partnered with other churches and organizations to help a single mother of an 8-year-old from outside our area where there were no WWMIN or SVDP ministries with car repairs and her son's soccer fees... Gave referrals to a woman who came to us looking for help with legal services... Partnered with the St. John Fisher WWMIN group to help find a home in the Rochester area for a mother of two who had lost her apartment... Came alongside and have continued to 'walk with' a mother of three small children (ages 4, 3 and 1) since she found she was pregnant with triplets... Hosted her baby shower with items donated through our signup... created signups for coordinating dinner donations every other day as well as daily help in the home to share with our FOP, Crossroads Care Center, Project Hope, Our Lady of the Lakes WWMIN team, and other churches.... helped set up her house to accommodate the three new babies and volunteer traffic... continue to provide material, emotional, and prayer support

Catholic Widowed Club of Rochester – The Rochester Area Catholic Family of Parishes Widowed Club responds to social needs of widows and widowers in our area.

- Met monthly at St. Irenaeus to plan new events before heading to lunch; met monthly for Euchre at St. Andrews; met monthly for breakfast out
- Planned *dozens* of field trips; tours; lunches and dinners out; road trips; and museum, theater, music, putt-putt, art, and other outings
- Membership is 77 strong



Bereavement Ministry – The Rochester Area Catholic Family of Parishes Bereavement Ministry responds to the spiritual and emotional needs of our parishioners who are mourning the loss of a loved one.

- Facilitated four Grief Support groups across our FOP, across the calendar, at different times of day to minister to those mourning the loss of a loved one
 - September and February – 8 weeks - *Grieving: A Spiritual Process for Catholics* (St. Andrews)
 - October – 7 weeks - *Grieving: A Spiritual Process for Catholics* (St. Irenaeus)
 - April – 6 weeks - *Understanding Your Grief* (St. Mary of the Hills)
- Hosted *Navigating Grief during the Holidays* workshops—one daytime (St. Irenaeus), one evening (St. Mary's)

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