

# The Spirit

*Tidings for the parish community of Saint Elizabeth*

## *4 Parishioners, 4 Journeys, 1 Powerful Faith*

*Saint Elizabeth parishioners share how their faith has evolved since the pandemic hit last Lent*

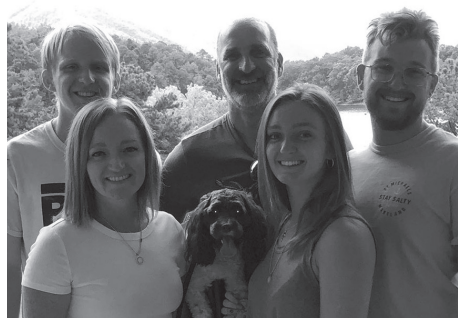
Lent 2020 seems like a lifetime ago. Since then, the world has experienced the frightening twists of COVID-19, whether from illness, political unrest, depression, financial instability, or loss – loss of a loved one, job, or once-in-a-lifetime experience.

So – where has God been in all of this?

It's a question as old as time – Jesus, after all, cried out “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” So, don't feel guilty if you have had moments of doubt.

The spiritual poem, *Footprints*, which mysteriously has no author, offers a comforting explanation from the Lord, “My precious child, I love you and would never leave you. During your times of trial and suffering, when you see only one set of footprints in the sand, it was then that I carried you.” As we prepare for Easter, remember that He loves us and is there for us always, even in a pandemic.

Four parishioners, each at a different stage in their lives, recently took the time to share their personal journeys of faith during the last year.



*Monica Dougherty –  
“I have built a more personal relationship with Jesus.”*

Monica Dougherty and her husband Terry have been parishioners since Saint Elizabeth Church was founded. Their children went through Saint Elizabeth Parish School and they have participated in various ministries over the years. Being isolated during the COVID lockdowns has been a real challenge for this active family. “Since the start of the pandemic, my faith has remained steady but the way I practice my faith has greatly changed. I have spent much more time this year in personal prayer and reflection which has helped alleviate some of the stress. I have started reading a daily reflection book which has helped guide and inspire my faith; in fact, I feel like my relationship with Jesus has become more personal,” explained Monica.

The Dougherty family participates in Mass online but Monica longs for the personal connections. “I really miss being around people who share my heart and

my beliefs,” she added. “I look forward to being able to safely return to Mass, when I'll be, once again, singing with joy.”



*Marie Laboranti –  
“I found myself clinging to my faith and yearning for God.”*

Marie Laboranti is a mother and grandmother. She moved to the area five years ago after her husband died, to be closer to her family.

“It took me some time to adjust to the reality of COVID,” Marie noted. “I felt torn between listening to my doctor's advice to stay home and, on the other hand, losing the camaraderie of friends.”

Fortunately, Marie was lifted by Saint Elizabeth's various online services, and many friends and parishioners who checked in on her regularly. “Instead of feeling disconnected, my faith has deepened,” said Marie. “I was suddenly looking for Facebook posts from our parish and able to focus faithfully and more frequently to live streaming Mass – with the option of re-listening to homilies when needed.” (continues on page 6)

# Twenty-Fifth Anniversary Capital Campaign is in full swing!

The last few months have been extraordinary in many ways for our parish, including steady progress in the twenty-fifth anniversary capital campaign. Thanks to the efforts of nearly 40 dedicated and industrious volunteers, there have been some great developments!

First, the significant step of determining a theme and logo that would best express the significance of the campaign was completed:

## *Moving Forward in Faith – Extending God’s Light*



Indeed, in its first twenty years, Saint Elizabeth Church has built a foundation of Catholic stewardship that is grounded in faith with a commitment to live as good stewards, caring for the people entrusted to us. As we look ahead to the milestone of our twenty-fifth anniversary and what the next 25 years hold in store for our parish, we are now asked to *move forward*. This campaign will allow us to sustain and grow our ministries, responsibly maintain our campus, and secure our finances for the years ahead. Our participation in this campaign, and in the good works of our parish, enable us to *extend God’s light* in our world. The cam-

paign team is thankful to continue the legacy of dedicated volunteers who founded and grew this faith community to what it is today and have faith in the direction and impact the parish will have in the years to come.

Second, as a part of the campaign kick-off, the team and Father Mullin had hoped to invite parishioners to in-person gatherings. As health conditions changed however, plans creatively shifted and virtual receptions on Zoom were developed. The initial Zoom receptions have been a great experience for all involved and while it has looked a lot different than originally anticipated, it has allowed for intimate conversations and fellowship among parishioners. Father Mullin also shared his thoughts about the campaign and thanked all who participated through a video recording which resonated with many of the attendees. At each reception parishioners have offered their thoughts on the significance of the parish in their lives while asking questions about the campaign. The combination of reflections and inquiries allowed everyone to enjoy a chance to socialize and reconnect during an otherwise isolating time.

There has been tremendous momentum growing early in this campaign, and as of this writing, generous parishioners have already pledged over \$2.5 Million!

Throughout the spring, parishioners will continue to have the opportunity to learn about the campaign’s goals and funding priorities, while also being asked to make their own discernment of a pledge.

Continue to watch the parish bulletin or check our website for the latest details.

~ Kathy Caliendo &  
Lindsey Ranstrom  
*On behalf of the Twenty-Fifth  
Anniversary Capital  
Campaign Committee*

## The Spirit Staff

*Editor-in-Chief*  
Lisa Barbadora

*Director of Communications*  
Deacon Barry Midwood

*Contributors*  
Lisa Barbadora  
Kathy Caliendo  
Lindsey Ranstrom  
Elizabeth Kazanjian  
Julia Krumenacker  
Sara Richardson  
Elisa Sheronas

*Photographs*  
Mary Damian

*Layout and Graphics*  
Julie Sellers

# Family Spirits: Family Life During a Pandemic

It is hard to believe that it was in March 2020 that life as usual began to change for many of our parish families. After a year of living with the Covid-19 restrictions placed on all of us, *The Spirit Newsletter* staff invited two families to reflect on the last year and their experiences. They highlight the challenges many Saint Elizabeth parishioners have faced. Through the difficult months, these families found comfort in their faith, in prayer, and in the parish community.

## The Hellgoth Family



*The Hellgoth's discover unexpected "family" time*

Last spring, John and Marie Hellgoth were enjoying their first year as "empty nesters," with their sons both away from home. Nineteen year old Chris was in his sophomore year at Georgia Tech, and Nick, 21, was finishing his senior year at Purdue University. When lockdowns began in March, Nick was studying abroad in Germany and the family had to figure out how to get him home amid changing travel restrictions. Chris moved out of his dorm room at school, leaving everything behind. Once settled at home, the whole family needed to find space to work and study remotely. Nick was fortunate to be able to continue his international studies online, but that meant he was up late at night working on "German time."

While isolation from neighbors and friends was difficult for Marie and John, they found the unexpected time they had to share with Chris

and Nick a positive result of life during a pandemic. Family dinners and long in-depth conversations without the distractions of sports, activities and commutes meant they learned about one another in a way that hadn't been possible when the family was busy running from one activity to another during the boys' high school years. Marie reflects that she and John aren't sure how they maintained that pace for so many years; life seems simpler these days.

The time they would have spent commuting in the morning is spent exercising, meditating and praying. Though Marie says she struggles with the uncertainty around Coronavirus, finding more time to be prayerful has been a source of strength. She and John plan to prepare during Lent for the upcoming Easter season by taking advantage of at least one of the online Lenten programs found on the parish website.

## The Howard and Cindrich Family



*The Howard/Cindrich Family finds comfort and support from the parish community*

For the Howard and Cindrich family, the isolation caused by the Coronavirus has challenged them in many ways. Joe and Georgann care for her parents, George and Dorothy, who are in their 90's. Their daughter, Sarah, 27, also lives at home with them.

When Covid-19 closures began, Hannah, 24, returned home from her practicum at St. Jude's Chil-

dren's Hospital, delaying her graduation and internships. Sarah's job with Aramark at Exton Elementary closed in March, leading to the loss of her job and her routine. This was made more difficult by the additional loss of time with Special Olympics friends and Best Buddies activities.

Georgann and Joe faced additional struggles with medical issues throughout the year. When Dorothy needed to be hospitalized multiple times, the family was unable to visit her as she healed. In April, Joe's mother died while hospitalized, and only his sister was able to be present. Compounding the grief was the inability to hold a funeral service due to the pandemic. Late in the year, the whole family tested positive for Covid-19 with the exception of Sarah. She was able to avoid exposure by quarantining away from the family; fortunately, everyone recovered with no lasting effects.

Georgann said, "Our Saint Elizabeth Parish family has been a source of comfort and support for all of us during this challenging year. Father Mullin was able to visit my mom during her hospital stay and update us while we were physically isolated from her." Daily prayer and healthy habits have helped keep Georgann ready to face the challenges of life during Coronavirus.

These stories are only two glimpses of the many ways the families of Saint Elizabeth Parish have confronted the changes Covid-19 has brought into our lives this year. May all of our families continue to find strength in their faith and may we continue to support each other in prayer throughout these pandemic times.

~ Elizabeth Kazanjian

## Sacraments of Initiation to be celebrated at the Easter Vigil Mass

One Sunday, Paul Hannagan attended Mass at Saint Elizabeth with his family and when his wife and daughter stepped out of the pew to receive Holy Communion, he had a lightbulb moment. “I asked myself, why am I not joining my family for the most important part of the Mass?” He continues, “That led me to reach out when RCIA classes started and to begin my journey to the Catholic Faith.”

Paul joined the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults program (RCIA) in September 2020. He will be received into the full communion of the Catholic Church with the Sacraments of Confirmation and Holy Eucharist at this year’s Easter Vigil Mass.

Paul lived and grew up in the United Kingdom and was baptized in the Church of England. “Growing up in England, all schools had a short church service called ‘Assembly’ to start the day,” Paul explained. “I attended a Church of England school for the equivalent of middle and high school. Since it was a church school, we had more religious education than most and attended full church services each week during Lent.”

Paul met his wife Maggie while attending a wedding in the small village of Belmullet, Ireland. Maggie was visiting the village with her father, tracing their family history. “I tell people I’m a souvenir from Maggie’s trip to Europe!” he said. After Paul and Maggie were married in 1986, he moved to the United States. Their family have been parishioners of Saint Elizabeth Parish since our founding in 2000.

Paul says, “The best part of the RCIA program is learning about Catholicism from the Catholic perspective. So much of Catholic teaching is misunderstood by non-Catholics. For example, I found learning about the Sacrament of Reconciliation to be very interesting and inspiring. My non-Catholic perspective was that it is a sacrament about punishing the sinful and in reality I’ve come to realize it is a joyful sacrament to bring us closer to God.”



*Paul Hannigan & Deacon Kevin Mead*

When someone is interested in pursuing the Catholic Faith, the first step is to have an informal meeting with Deacon Kevin Mead, who coordinates the RCIA program for the parish. Kevin explains, “It helps to gain an understanding of someone’s religious background and experiences. Some individuals have been active members of another faith community, and others may have little or no religious identity.”

After the initial inquiry and discussion individuals may decide to attend weekly sessions, currently held on Monday evenings, from

September through the Easter Season. Those who have been baptized in another Christian faith community, as Paul was, will receive Confirmation and the Holy Eucharist to complete the Sacraments of Initiation. Those not previously baptized receive all three Sacraments of Initiation (Baptism, Confirmation and Holy Eucharist) at the Easter Vigil Mass.

We asked Deacon Kevin what happens when someone is interested in the Catholic Faith but are not quite ready to take the next step to receive the Sacraments of Initiation at Easter. He responded, “Everyone is welcome to come learn what it means to be Catholic. The RCIA program includes discussions about what the Catholic Church teaches, what Catholics believe, and what it means to live out our Catholic Faith. It is not a requirement that all participants become Catholic. Everyone is there for a reason and hopefully those who attend will gain a deeper understanding of God’s individual call to them.” He concluded, “When I first met Paul, I quickly sensed his recognition of the existence and importance of God in his life. He lives out the Catholic values of a strong family life and helping others. Our parish should be very proud to welcome him as a member of the Church at this year’s Easter Vigil.”

Anyone interested in learning about the RCIA program can e-mail Deacon Kevin at [kmead@stelizabethparish.org](mailto:kmead@stelizabethparish.org), or call the Parish Ministry Center at 610-321-1200.

~ Sara Richardson

## School Spirits: Saint Elizabeth Parish School Sustains Faith and Learning During Challenging Times

As Saint Elizabeth Parish School entered the new year, classroom dynamics still looked much different than in years past. However, the fundamental spirit of Catholic school education remains present, now more than ever.

“This is a time when people’s spirits have actually been re-built,” noted Principal Dr. Diane Greco. “Despite all the challenges of the pandemic, what will never get lost in Catholic school education is our deep investment in community. All of us (parents, students and staff) have had to bond together and agree to the virus mitigation strategies in order to keep our school operational and to sustain our ability to educate and learn. As we have faced adversity together, that bond has grown stronger.”

This year, *Catholic Schools Week* was carried out in mid-February and included all the long-established activities like student appreciation day, faculty-staff appreciation day, student pizza bingo, a book fair and, unique this year, a virtual open house tour. Under the leadership of the National Junior Honor Society and the Student Council, students carried out the customary service component by collecting donated items and making blessing bags, which were distributed to local food pantries. While the format of this annual celebration



*Pictured is the 2021 Catholic Schools Week Logo which highlights the theme: Catholic Schools: Faith, Excellence, Service*

was significantly changed, students were still able to engage in these time-honored pursuits under the theme: *Catholic Schools: Faith, Excellence, Service.*

“One of the reasons we celebrate this week publicly and invite families to visit our school each year is to remind people of the many reasons Catholic education matters,” said Dr. Greco. “It is a time to see how our faith connects to everything in life. The values of civic service, self-discipline and respect for others shine through in the opportunities we provide to our students. We teach them not simply to understand their religion, but to think for themselves, which is faith in action.”

“Educating the whole child is

more important now than ever,” continued Dr. Greco. “We are still able to engage in the arts, physical education and balance faith in our daily lives. Because we have worked together, we have been able to keep going, remaining a springboard for many young lives.”

“This year may look a lot different, but all the important pillars of Catholic school education remain in place,” she added. “In fact, because we are such a strong, deeply-invested community, we have been able to work together to give our students everything they needed to continue their education effectively. As a school, we have bonded significantly. The pandemic has helped us to see all the positive things we have. The students are truly happy to be here. They feel safe and cared for, and as a result, their cooperation and level of responsibility have grown. The staff has had to adjust to changing times, so we have grown as well. We have faced these difficult times together, and everyone has risen to the challenge with a great new sense of camaraderie.”

~ Julia Krumenacker

## 4 Parishioners, 4 Journeys, 1 Powerful Faith (cont'd from cover)

Instead of feeling less faith-filled, Marie felt more. “My faith has always been my strength and joy, and I find myself clinging to it even more. I yearn now more than ever to feel God’s closeness. Without Him, I don’t believe we would be at peace during these difficult times.”



Melinda Arcara -  
“I know God is always with us,  
inside the church or out.”

Jeff and Melinda Arcara have been active members of Saint Elizabeth Parish for years. Like most of us, the Arcara family experienced deep sadness from the COVID-19 lockdowns - especially being separated from the parish during Lent last year. “It was the first time in 17 years that we did not spend Easter at my Mother’s house,” said Melinda. “Watching Mass on an iPad was not how I wanted to spend that holiest of weeks. We felt an emptiness and missed the feeling of love and community when everyone prays The Lord’s Prayer together.”

On Mother’s Day, while feeling low and missing her 90-year-old mother, Melinda had an epiphany. “We went out for a walk as a family. My son led the way, my daughter followed, then Jeff. I trailed, quietly thanking God for the three blessings walking in front of me, and my heart filled. It reminded me that God is al-

ways with us - in church or out - even in the woods behind my house.”

Since those early days of the pandemic, the family has started attending Mass again in person. Melinda said, “I am thankful for the safe environment that has been created. I have never felt that attending Mass put my family at risk. The pews are spaced, and parishioners take caution to social distance. I’m glad to be back; Mass on TV is just not the same.”

“When we returned to the church, I realized how much I missed being around faith-filled people,” Melinda added. “In the midst of COVID and the unrest all over the news, church is a source of comfort, even hope. At Mass we can release feelings of fear and anger and leave them in God’s hands.”



Lindsay Jones -  
“I learned that when I can’t receive  
Holy Communion,  
I can still be connected to God.”

Bishop Shanahan Freshman Lindsay Jones graduated from Saint Elizabeth Parish School during the height of the pandemic. Lindsay is the youngest of five brothers and sisters and her parents are active parishioners.

Like her other teenage classmates, Lindsay struggled with missing out on many traditional

experiences including spring sports season and final goodbye celebrations with friends who were about to set off for high school, to name just a few.

“It was a difficult time, and I felt sad with each event lost, but eventually I realized that I had my health and my family. I started praying for at-risk people like my grandmother and put my trust in God,” said Lindsay. “The pandemic taught me to trust God more completely.”

Young people have been uniquely impacted by the lock-downs that started last Lent - the tangible experience of going to Mass has proven to be particularly important to the spiritual development of adolescents.

Lindsay said, “From a young age, I began to attend Mass with my family. The Eucharist helps me on my faith journey so it was an adjustment when we couldn’t go to church anymore. It took some time to get used to Livestream Mass. However, as the weeks went by I got better at participating in a ‘broadcast’ celebration, it became easier to feel His grace and re-connect with God.”

She continued, “I realized that we can deepen our relationship with Him even when we can’t be physically at Mass, if we listen intently, pray and focus on the Word. Now that I am finally back to in person, I have a greater appreciation of Mass and receiving the Eucharist.”

As we prepare to celebrate Jesus’ sacrifice and love for us at Easter, consider the twists and turns of Monica, Marie, Melinda, and Lindsay’s faith journeys. And, when you have a moment of doubt, remember this: “it was then that I carried you.”

~ Lisa Barbadora

## Welcome to our New Communications Team

The Saint Elizabeth family now has two new members on the parish staff. Eve Hill and Kathleen Brady are working together to support essential and effective communications for the church and the parish school. Although they each focus on a unique part of the parish operations (church and school), you will find them sharing ideas and even an office in the Saint Elizabeth Education Center. Eve is on site on Monday, Wednesday and Friday and Kathleen is present on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday.

**Eve Hill**, Parish Communications Coordinator, supports all of the promotion and awareness initiatives for the various ministries and organizations at Saint Elizabeth. She maintains the parish website, updates the social media accounts and creates the Parish Digest (electronic bulletin) each week. She also manages the scheduling and training of the volunteers who operate the video system in church. You may even find her behind a camera during a live-stream broadcast.

Eve came to our parish from St. Maximillian Kolbe in West Chester where she worked in the Religious Education office. Previously she was a floral designer and worked in computer support. Eve said, "I use my organization skills, technology background and creative nature every day. The combination of my previous three positions have prepared me well for this one!"

Eve and her husband, Kevin were married at Saint Joseph Church in Downingtown in March, 2002. They have two children, Moira



*Eve Hill & Kathleen Brady bring their professional communication skills to Saint Elizabeth Parish*

(17) and Owen (12). Eve concludes, "I'm excited to be working at such an amazing and vibrant parish."

**Kathleen Brady**, Coordinator of Communications and Advancement for Saint Elizabeth Parish School, supports all of the promotion and awareness initiatives for Saint Elizabeth Parish School. She also maintains the school website and social media accounts. Kathleen takes a lead role with Saint Elizabeth Parish School media relations and creates the school Weekly Communications Digest.

Most recently, Kathleen was working at home, raising her daughter and doing free-lance design, calligraphy and photography. She earned a B.A. in English with a minor in Communications from Cabrini University, and previously worked full time in Catholic education development, rebranding, marketing and fundraising. "I am passionate about Catholic Education. Aside from its reputation for academic excellence, Catholic education instills

strong spiritual and moral values today, ensuring a principled society, and our congregation of tomorrow," explains Kathleen. "I hope this fervor matched with my experience in development, photography, design, and writing helps to tell the story of the children attending our parish school, while portraying the many innovations in the classroom, projects and success stories we have to share."

Kathleen has been a parishioner at Saint Elizabeth for 6 years and her daughter, Ciara, attends Kindergarten at the parish school.

Communication nurtures community, so we are fortunate and are sure to benefit as a parish family from the enthusiastic work of our communications team. Be sure to check out our website as these two communications professionals keep us informed about everything that is happening at our parish and parish school.

~ Elisa Sheronas

## Dates of Interest

### **Stations of the Cross & Benediction**

Fridays, 7:00 PM  
March 5 & 19

### *Youth Ministry Stations of the Cross*

Friday, March 12, 7:00 PM  
Living Stations of the Cross  
Friday, March 26, 1:30 PM (school)  
& 7:00 PM (parish)

### **Sacrament of Penance/Reconciliation**

Saturdays, 9:00-10:00 AM, church  
Lenten Wednesdays, March 3, 10, 17,  
24, 6:30-7:00 PM, church  
[NB: no confessions on Holy Saturday,  
April 3]

### **Communal Reconciliation Service with Individual Confessions**

Tuesday, March 23, 7:00 PM  
Extended Confessions: Saturday,  
March 27, 9:00-11:00 AM

### **Holy Week Services**

Palm Sunday, March 27-28  
Mass at 5:30 PM, 8:00 AM,  
9:30 AM, 11:30 AM

### *Holy Thursday, April 1*

Mass of the Lord's Supper at 7:30 PM  
Adoration until Midnight

### *Good Friday, April 2*

Solemn Passion Service at 3:00 PM  
Veneration of the Cross Prayer Service  
at 7:00 PM

### *Holy Saturday, April 3*

Blessing of Easter Foods at 11:00 AM  
Easter Vigil Liturgy at 8:00 PM

### *Easter Sunday, April 4*

Mass at 8:00 AM, 9:30 AM & 11:30 AM

### **Sacrament of Confirmation**

Saturday, April 24, Mass at 10:00 AM  
and 1:00 PM

### **Holy Day of the Ascension of the Lord**

Thursday, May 13  
Mass at 7:30 AM, 12:00 PM, 7:00 PM

### **Memorial Day**

Monday, May 31, Mass at 9:00 AM

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Rev. Thomas M. Mullin, Pastor  
P.O. Box 695  
Uwchlan, PA 19480-0695  
Phone: 610-321-1200  
Fax: 610-646-6513  
E-mail:  
steuucc@stelizabethparish.org  
Web site: stelizabethparish.org

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