Really Present... in Christ and to each other

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Return Service Requested.

Co-Editors
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Web News: www.stapostle.org

Sacramental Celebrations for July 05–June 06

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Baptisms</th>
<th>ConfIRMations</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Infants</td>
<td>173</td>
<td>Children: 91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adults</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Adults: 13</td>
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<tr>
<td>First Eucharist</td>
<td></td>
<td>Marriages: 40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children</td>
<td>229</td>
<td>Funerals: 41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adults</td>
<td>9</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Rite of Christian Initiation (RCIA)

In 2005-2006, 28 adults participated in the RCIA process. Two adults and two children were baptized, confirmed and received Eucharist at the Easter Vigil. Seven adults were received into the Full Communion of the Catholic Church on Good Shepherd Sunday. Twelve adult Catholics were confirmed on Pentecost (one was also confirmed in Feb.). Six people participated in Inquiry and entered the Catechumenate through the Rite of Welcome & Acceptance.

Spirituality

The year began with a new name. In order to more accurately reflect the scope of our offerings, the name of the program was changed from C.A.R.E. (Continuing Adult Religious Education) to S.T.A.F.F.S. (St. Thomas the Apostle Faith Formation & Spirituality). The following recaps some of this past year’s opportunities for spiritual growth at St. Thomas:

Gatherings small faith communities continued to meet regularly. The Soul Searchers monthly discussion group focused on the writings of Karl Rahner. 3-day retreats were held at the Carmelite Center in Darien, one for men and one for women.

Marriage Enrichment hosted an outing to a Second City comedy revue, an evening for married couples featuring Diocesan Family Ministry Director Dr. Jim Healy, and a Mass & Candlelight Dinner. On the eve of her feast day in July, a celebration of St. Mary Magdala was held.

In Nov. ’05 and Feb. ’06, internationally-known scholar and storyteller Jack Shea opened up the spiritual horizons of over 100 people in day-long explorations of the Scriptures of Advent “Renewing Our Spirits” and Lent “Remembering What Really Matters.”

On Dec. 3, an intergenerational “Pilgrimage to Bethlehem” took place at the Carmelite Center in Darien. Eighty-plus parishioners, from children to grandparents, participated in an afternoon of story-telling, singing and prayer with nearly life-sized Nativity figures.

In Jan., Fr. Charles led us on a 2-part exploration of the meaning of “The Mass: Heart of Jesus, Heart of the Church.”

Sr. Jean Ford, OSE, led an evening of reflection and visioning on the role of religious sisters in the Church, past, present and future.

Lent brought to us the powerful parish mission, “Just A Closer Walk with Thee,” presented by the Dominican team of Fr. Jim Marchionda and Sr. Ann Willits. Preaching at weekend liturgies and daily Mass (including one at All Saints Academy), was complemented by stimulating discussion and a rousing closing concert.

Education

Educational opportunities in 2005-2006 included many Bible Study options, all of which were well-attended. Examples include: A 3-part series on the basics of the Bible, “The Book – and How It Got That Way,” covering its his-
Really Present...in Christ and to each other.

**Outreach and Social Justice**

Outreach and Social Justice includes 19 ministries that involve our Parish on a local, national and international level. New this year, spawned by the Katrina disaster, was the Katrina Task Force. Some highlights are outlined below.

**Katrina Task Force**

The St. Thomas monetary response to the Katrina hurricane was extremely generous. But we also recognized that the families devastated by the disaster needed much more on an ongoing basis. The Katrina Task Force Ministry was born. We have forged a faith based relationship with the St. Thomas the Apostle Parish community in Long Beach Mississippi. That relationship will endure. Support provided thus far has included:

- Three trips by St. Thomas parishioners to initiate and nurture the relationship and to work in the community included: Rosaries and Christmas ornaments and CDs; Keyboard and amps, along with 400 Gathering Hymnals and choir music books were provided so liturgy could again be celebrated with music; “Thinking of You” cards from our parishioners and our religious education children. These were most warmly appreciated.
- Nearly $8,000 in gift cards; over $31,000 in donations.

**Bread of Life**

St. Thomas parish contributed $145,600 that Bread of Life distributed to local, national and international organizations that foster our Catholic social teachings. A recap of the year’s donations can be found on the Bread of Life bulletin board near the Resource Center.

**Care With God’s Creation**

This new ministry engaged in the following projects emphasizing how we use and share the goods of Earth and live in harmony with God’s creation: Performed a “green audit” with the help of an outside organization to assess the environmental needs of the parish building; hosted a Sierra Club presentation, Electric Power Generation in the Universe story in relation to our own lives and spirituality; conducted a gym shoe recycling collection, re-used to resurface runners the Universe story in relation to our own lives and spirituality; conducted a discussion series based on the book, An Amazing Journey, which presented the theme, “Believing in Me, You Will Have Eternal Life,” and went on the explore the three Letters of John in the New Testament, New Wine – seven St. Thomas parishioners conducted the 2nd year of a 3-year lay ministry formation program offered by the Diocese of Joliet. They are part of a group of 18 people representing 7 area parishes.

**DuPage P.A.D.S.**

The DuPage P.A.D.S. organization is committed to providing safe and hospitable shelter, support services, and advocacy to people who are homeless in DuPage County. The first Sunday of every month from October through May, the St. Thomas P.A.D.S. volunteers served at the overnight shelter in downtown Naperville. Suppies were purchased and meals were prepared through the generosity of the many St. Thomas volunteers involved in this ministry. We served up to 45 guests each night, providing men, women, and families with dinner, breakfast, and a bag lunch as well as a safe environment to spend the night.

**Habitat for Humanity**

During the weeks of June 10-17 and 17-25, 2006, a total of 28 volunteers traveled to Tutwiler, Miss. Volunteers worked side by side with future homeowners on three homes in various stages of construction, installing electrical and heating systems, outdoor siding, insulation, drywall, as well as other needed projects. As a result three families very much in need will soon realize their dream of affordable, decent homes. Volunteers developed relationships with local residents and with each other as they prayed, worked, and experienced the local culture in one of the most economically poor areas in the U.S.

**Hesed House PADS**

All the ministries at St. Thomas are involved with Hesed House PADS at least once during the year. A few ministries are chosen each month to donate food for 150 homeless guests (dinner, breakfast and lunch) the first Thursday of each month (excluding July and August). Volunteers pick the food up at St. Thomas and deliver it to Hesed House Aurora and serve it. Other volunteers come during the night to monitor, make lunches, breakfast and clean-up.

**Jobs Network**

Continues to meet every Friday morning for networking and support. Once a month a speaker is brought in to help energize and give direction to those seeking employment. Volunteers have offered the Six Sigma course which would cost about $1,000 a person if taken elsewhere.

**Justice & Peace**

Among other activities, Justice & Peace organized the “Offering of Letters” in conjunction with Bread for the World. 666 letters were and allowed the parents an opportunity to “shop” for the children in their family.
sent to our Senators supporting the Millennium Development objective of cutting in half extreme poverty by 2015. It is achievable with the right investment.

**Pax Christi**

Ministry members become educated about violence in many areas... elderly, domestic, war and the death penalty... and bring the awareness to others through bulletin articles, videos, and distribution of the Pax Christi Newspaper.

**Prison Ministry**

Our very dedicated volunteers (more than 30 of them!) continued to provide spiritual and relational support to inmates at the DuPage County jail with meditation sessions and to youth at the Illinois Youth Center with weekly meetings, birthday celebrations, and a Christmas party with gifts provided by St. Thomas parishioners.

**Pro-Life Ministry**

We again presented a loving, positive, and informational pro-life message to freshman in the QUEST program. Our objective is to tell our teens the truth about abortion. Thanks to the St. Thomas message to freshman in the QUEST program. Our objective is to tell our teens the truth about abortion. Thanks to the St. Thomas parishioners.

**Racial Justice**

Our parish was provided with many racial justice awareness and solidarity opportunities.

Approximately 35 people attended a workshop entitled “Eucharist at the Heart of Racial Justice”. The Annual Diversity Potluck Dinner was held, with approximately 125 attending. Entertainment was provided by Mimirba (a Hispanic youth ensemble from Chicago) and Philippines dancers from our area.

During the Black History Month celebration at St. Thomas, the Reverend Andre Allen (Second Baptist Church of Wheaton) was invited to participate in a Sunday liturgy along with musicians from his church.

Racial Justice members attended the Black History Month celebration at Gayles Memorial Church in Aurora with St. Thomas musicians. Frequent bulletin articles were submitted to increase parishioner awareness of racial justice issues.

**S.T.E.P.**

The third annual S.T.E.P (Steps Toward Eliminating Poverty) program was held at St. Thomas in partnership with two other parishes and with Word of Life Lutheran Church. The STEP pro-

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**Financial Report**

**2005-2006 Fiscal Year**

Fluctuations in unrestricted revenues and unexpected expenditures caused St. Thomas the Apostle to finish the fiscal year with a small deficit of nearly $9,000, the first deficit in at least a decade, on June 30, 2006. While contributions to the Sunday collection increased by more than $45,000 compared to a year ago, this major source of revenue fell nonetheless more than $23,000 short of the expected income of $1,768,000.

The collection for Christmas 2005 also fell short, attributed to the fact that the holiday occurred on a Sunday this year, but the collection for Easter Sunday 2006 was very generous, so that the two major religious holidays combined for nearly $10,000 more than budgeted. Along with better than expected income from earned interest and memorial gifts, the general unrestricted revenues from collections and other sources were about $2,900 more than anticipated.

Shortfalls compared to budget were experienced in our revenues from ministry activities such as counseling, adult enrichment, social activities and the Celebration of Arts, as well as from religious education tuitions. However, due largely to unanticipated fund-raising for the youth ministry’s Ecuador mission trip, Youth Ministry revenue exceeded budget by more than $28,000, leaving the parish total unrestricted revenue at $2,129,390, or $4,800 more than anticipated.

Additionally, another $276,623 of restricted funds were donated by individuals directly to our Outreach activities such as the Care Pantry, Hurricane relief, support for the parish in Haiti, adopt-a-child, St. Vincent DePaul and other activities. Those donations yielded another 12% above the general parish revenues, bringing the total of all revenues to more than $2.4 million.

Parish expenses were hit especially hard by the external forces of the economy, particularly health care premium increases that were more than expected and impacted every department, and the costs of natural gas at more than $12,000 above the estimated budget for the rectory and church buildings. Also impacting expenses unusually were the Holy Week emergency replacement of a coil for the church air conditioner unit, at $14,000, and higher costs associated with the departures of three employees, along with religious education textbooks, and the $20,000 in increased expenses due to the Youth Ministry mission trip.

Over all parish unrestricted expenses were $44,200 more than anticipated, leaving the $9,000 deficit instead of the $30,600 surplus that had been expected by year end.

Having taken $28,000 in July (2005) from our Capital Reserve savings to make parking lot renovation payments, we were blessed to be able to return $14,000 to the Reserve Fund this June from cash on hand balances.

Ending the past fiscal year with an average of $33,551 per信徒, the 2006-07 Budget:

**Revenue - 2006-07 Budget**

- Religious Education & Youth Ministry: 6%
- Holiday & Holyday Collections: 7%
- Sunday Collections: 83%
- Other Stipends and Fees: 3%
- Other Interest & Income: 1%

**Expenses- 2006-07 Budget**

- Administration & Gen Office: 17%
- Diocesan Agencies: 5%
- Maintenance, Improvements & Utilities: 12%
- Rectory: 1%
- Other Ministries: 11%
- Outreach & Pastoral Care: 16%
program includes prayer, a walk, education, advocacy opportunity, and a cultural awareness experience.

**St. Vincent de Paul**

There are some 30 volunteers committed to helping those in need. Approximately five home visits were done per week, interviewing families in need of one-time emergency help with utilities or rent. Once the information provided is verified, financial help is provided. Over $70,000 was distributed to 196 families.

**Transitional Housing**

This last year we added a third family to our Transitional Housing program. We have two families in our Transitional Housing program...moms with small children. Our trained St. Thomas mentors work closely with the family for up to two years.

**Pastoral Care**

Ministers of Care to the Seriously Ill provide support, prayer and Eucharist to our parishioners and loved ones facing a serious illness or during time of bereavement. Upon request, weekday visits seven days a week at Edward Hospital and also provide Ministers of Care continue to expand their mission as they pro-

**Youth Formation**

The family is the first model of faith formation where your child/children reflect the Word, Compassion and Mission of Jesus. In everyday family life your children observe what it means to be a follower of Jesus. The St. Thomas Religious Education Programs strive to complement and add a community dimension to the spiritual growth being fostered within your family life.

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**ST. THOMAS THE APOSTLE PARISH • Finance Report**

Fiscal Year End - June 30, 2006 • Submitted August 1, 2006

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## REVENUE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Actual 2005</th>
<th>Actual 2006</th>
<th>Budget 2006-07</th>
<th>Budget %</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sunday Collections</td>
<td>$1,699,372</td>
<td>$1,749,660</td>
<td>$1,768,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Holiday &amp; Holyday Collections</td>
<td>$150,357</td>
<td>$164,435</td>
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<td>Religious Education &amp; Youth</td>
<td>$150,162</td>
<td>$143,913</td>
<td>$141,150</td>
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<td>Tuition &amp; Fees</td>
<td>$38,145</td>
<td>$37,343</td>
<td>$61,300</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other Stipends and Fees</td>
<td>$22,975</td>
<td>$39,039</td>
<td>$5,800</td>
<td>1%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total Revenue</td>
<td>$2,081,211</td>
<td>$2,129,390</td>
<td>$2,133,250</td>
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## EXPENSES

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<tr>
<th>Source</th>
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<th>Actual 2006</th>
<th>Budget 2006-07</th>
<th>Budget %</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Administration &amp; General Office (1)</td>
<td>$379,891</td>
<td>$351,067</td>
<td>$362,710</td>
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<td>Diocesan Agencies Support by Parish</td>
<td>$99,460</td>
<td>$113,061</td>
<td>$114,478</td>
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<tr>
<td>Maintenance, Improvements, &amp; Utilities</td>
<td>$283,739</td>
<td>$257,800</td>
<td>$250,472</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rectory</td>
<td>$23,417</td>
<td>$19,444</td>
<td>$18,300</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total Expenses</strong></td>
<td>$2,065,921</td>
<td>$2,138,182</td>
<td>$2,108,068</td>
<td>100%</td>
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## Operating Surplus / (Deficit)

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<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Actual 2005</th>
<th>Actual 2006</th>
<th>Budget 2006-07</th>
<th>Budget %</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Operating Surplus / (Deficit)</td>
<td>$15,290</td>
<td>$(8,792)</td>
<td>$25,182</td>
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## Contribution to Capital Reserve Fund

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<th>Source</th>
<th>Actual 2005</th>
<th>Actual 2006</th>
<th>Budget 2006-07</th>
<th>Budget %</th>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td>Contribution to Capital Reserve Fund</td>
<td>$30,000</td>
<td>$14,000</td>
<td>$25,000</td>
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## Total Net Surplus / (Deficit)

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<th>Source</th>
<th>Actual 2005</th>
<th>Actual 2006</th>
<th>Budget 2006-07</th>
<th>Budget %</th>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td>Total Net Surplus / (Deficit)</td>
<td>$(14,710)</td>
<td>$(22,792)</td>
<td>$182</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
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**Footnotes**

(1) Includes expenditures for technology, communications, record management, evening & Saturday reception, stewardship activities, and tuition subsidies

(2) Includes "Bread of Life." The "Bread of Life" 2006-07 budget is $140,000.

(3) Restricted outreach donations of $276,623 and restricted outreach expenses of $278,788 are not included in this total.

(4) As a sponsoring parish, St. Thomas has agreed to co-sponsor a capital campaign to fund the purchase of All Saints Catholic Academy. The parish has guaranteed a minimum of $3,000,000 toward this purchase. The parish's share of the annual principal payment due is $200,000/yr for 15 years (14 years remain).

The budgeted principal amount shown represents the difference between the principal amount due less estimated capital campaign payments received by June 2007. Additionally, interest payments of $100,000/yr are due in each of the first 3 years only (2 years remain).
Junior High Youth Ministry
420 registered youth - 6th, 7th & 8th grades
Over 125 adult volunteers assisting in R.E. classes and youth ministry programs.

Grade-level events offered this year: 6th grade Passover Seder, 7th grade "Walk Through the Mass", 8th grade "Life Skills" presentation, all grade Reconciliation Prayer Service, Shoe-box Christmas for the Needy Project.

Youth Ministry opportunities offered outside of the classroom:
- Magic Waters
- S.T.E.P. (Hunger Awareness)
- Odyssey Fun World Lock-In
- Pumpkin Sale Fundraiser
- Harvest Sunday
- Care Pantry Christmas Party
- Puppet Ministry
- Christmas Program
- Seekers (Youth Group)
- Bible Study
- Grandparent Program

Human Sexuality Program - "Growing Up Sexually"
(Offered to 6th graders and parents)

Parenting Skills Workshop Classes:"Let's Talk Teens" "Parent to Parent" (New Program)

Elementary Education
A total 897 Religious Education students (Pre-K – 5th grade) met during three different sessions; Tuesdays at Brookdale School or Saturdays at All Saints Catholic Academy. This year was our first year at All Saints.

It is our volunteers that bring the children to Jesus. The elementary level had a wonderful group of 156 adults and 26 junior high and high school youth who shared our faith at every class. In addition, there were more volunteers who so generously filled in as substitutes when needed.

Catechists attended monthly formation meetings this past year to be prepared to teach our children. Our first Catechist Meeting in August was partnered with Samaritan Interfaith with a topic on “Building Resilient Kids”. Several of our catechists continued their faith formation through additional avenues such as; the Diocesan program, “New Wine”; “Catechist” magazine, “Sacraments Strengthening and Expressing Our Faith”; St. Thomas’ Wednesday morning Scripture Study, “Companions in Christ” and through the video series, “Echoes of Faith”: “Getting Started as A Catechist” and “Prayer and Spirituality”.

Parenting Opportunities
Some parents took advantage of a parenting program while their children attended Religious Education. “Let’s Talk Parenting: 10 Bible Characters Every Family Should Meet” is geared to parents of elementary children.

“Kids Kare” Programs
Children continued to participate in bringing food on the 1st Sunday of the month to church for the St. Thomas Care Pantry.

We had two special outreach projects this year: “Undy Sunday” and a Vitamin Collection. As always, St. Thomas’ families were so generous! “Undy Sunday” is a program sponsored by Catholic Charities. Students were asked to do a chore or earn money to buy new underwear, packaged in any size and color. Items brought to church were delivered to Catholic Charities and those brought to R.E. class were distributed to the PADS sites (Homeless Shelters).

We also collected vitamins. Vitamins brought to church went on St. Thomas’ Medical Trip to Duchiay, Haiti. Vitamins brought to R.E. class went to Quito, Equator. In addition, we had some students design cards and write out cards that were mailed to victims of Hurricane Katrina from St. Thomas the Apostle Parish in Long Beach, Mississippi. Also, Christmas supplies were collected and used for St. Thomas’ Care Pantry Christmas Party.

The Children’s Safe Touch Program was implemented this year. Our grade level coordinators reviewed the material ahead of time and agreed that this program, Talking About Touching, was an excellent way to help children to learn to recognize and respond appropriately and assertively to improper (sexual) touch. The instruction was gentle and helped children to learn about these unpleasant realities in a positive way. Parents also had the opportunity to view the video, “What Do I Say Now?” which won an Emmy Award. It gave great tips on how to listen to your child and how to talk to your children about awkward topics.

Sacramental Preparation
We had 227 children who prepared to make their First Communion during seven different masses this year. Children participated in the liturgies by attending the entrance procession, as readers, song leaders or gift bearers. Watching these children receive Jesus so joyfully reminded many of us adults what a gift Eucharist is for us.

Family Reconciliation Services were held in March on two Saturday afternoons with approximately 150 families participating. With eight priests in attendance each Saturday, we were able to give quality time to children making their First Reconciliation.

Scripture Safari, our Vacation Bible School, was held in June this year instead of July, closing out our year. 188 children attended along with approximately 80 youth helpers and 35 adults leading these children on a fabulous week, “A Safari Celebration of Family”. They learned about God, Jesus, the Holy Spirit, Mary and our Christian Family. Children voices filled our parish, with our Safari songs; singing them not only at church but also at swim meets and softball games. Our week ended with the 4:30 Saturday Mass with the children participating, wearing their red, yellow and orange tie-dyed shirts which represented the Holy Spirit.

Finally, for the first time this past May we have had the Pre-K – 8th grade registration forms put on our St. Thomas’ web site allowing parishioners to download forms and bring them into the R.E. Office.

Worship Commission

Sacramental Celebrations
- Baptism: Infants & Youth 167, Adults 2
- First Eucharist: Youth 153, Adults 2
- Confirmation: Youth 94, Adults 7
- Marriages: 44 (1 in Spanish)
- Funerals: 38 (2 in Spanish)

Liturgical Ministers
The liturgies at St. Thomas involve a number of generous, prayerful servants. Below is a sampling of the number of parishioners who help make liturgy and worship thrive at St. Thomas:

Music Ministers – 264 (Adults 149 & Youth 115)
Eucharistic Ministers 162
Host Greeters 132
Lectors 73
Altar Servers 49
Bread Bakers 26
Liturgy Planning Teams 16
Worship Commission 10
Worship Environment Committee 8 (seasonal volunteers +15)

The Liturgy Office works closely with the heads of liturgical ministries to provide training, coordination, support, and ongoing spiritual enrichment.
Really Present
This past year our parish focus was Really Present which overlapped with the universal Church’s celebration of the Year of the Eucharist and built on our faith community’s efforts to help people deepen their relationship with Jesus and strengthen their baptismal commitment to be Christ for others. This theme was threaded throughout our liturgical celebrations, faith formation events, and other parish gatherings.
An original logo was created by Jo Anderson and Angie Tuttle to help capture the multiple layers of meaning in the term really present.

Environment
The Worship Environment Team created a large version of the Really Present logo and entry way banners that were used throughout the year. They acquired a new, more prominent set of Advent candles and redesigned the crèche display. They maintained the Memorial Shrine (in the Narthex) to honor active and deceased members of the military who are related to parishioners. In every season they continued to enhance the environment of the entire Assembly area so that emphasis was given to the sacredness of all gathered for worship. They strived to provide an inviting, beautiful and simple environment for worship throughout the year.

Music
Special music was selected to enhance our Really Present focus. Songs that were introduced this year included: Present Among Us (“Jesus Christ present among us. Here in this place bread of wine and grace…”); Litany of Thanksgiving (“For your guiding presence, O Lord, for your promise to always be there…”); Make of Our Hands a Throne (“Make of our hands a throne to hold the bread of heaven, make of our hearts a home to hold the very wine of life…”); and Open the Eyes of My Heart, Lord.

John Angotti
One of our biggest new ventures was to explore and then confirm a relationship with musician John Angotti. This past year John celebrated Epiphany, the first Sunday of Lent, Holy Week, and Trinity Sunday with us. We worked out an arrangement with John for him to be a regular visiting artist with us once a month for the next two years. In addition to leading the music at our Sunday evening Teen Mass and being involved in other weekend liturgies, John will also participate in inter generational catechetical events, concerts, retreats, and workshops both at our parish and in our local area. This coming year at St. Thomas, John will be involved in several catechetical days, and our celebration of World Youth Day, Advent Reconciliation and Advent Lesson & Carols, Christmas Eve Masses, A Rock and Roll Christmas Concert, Epiphany Masses, Ash Wednesday & 1st Sunday of Lent Liturgies, a St. Patrick’s Party, Triduum and Easter Sunday liturgies, Pentecost liturgies and a Pentecost Concert. Wow, we’re in for a special year! John’s presence with us is made possible by a small number of parish families who have made a commitment above and beyond their parish stewardship offering so that our annual operating budget will not be affected.

Liturgical of the Word with Children
From September until May, children (ages 4 through 3rd grade) have the opportunity to hear the Sunday readings at their level of understanding during the 9:00 and 10:45 a.m. masses. Approximately 300 children attend, thereby allowing them to participate more fully in the Sunday Liturgy. A team of 80 adults and youth helpers make this ministry happen. Additionally, five times a year we offer this for children in grades 4 and 5.

Parish Mission
We hosted a parish mission in March entitled, Just a Closer Walk with Thee, with presenters Fr. Jim Marchionda, O.P. and Sr. Ann Willits, O.P. Our adult and youth music ministers were heavily involved in all of the sessions. Fr. Jim & Sr. Ann inspired us through powerful preaching, music, inter generational prayer, reconciliation, eucharist, faith sharing and conversation. They helped us to profess enthusiastically that God is good all the time and all the time God is good! We used several of Fr. Jim’s compositions including I Am Here, which fit beautifully with our focus on Really Present.

Newman Singers
In January we hosted Joe Mattingly and 28 members of the Newman Singers from the University of Iowa. They sang at all six of our weekend liturgies plus they held a concert on Sunday afternoon. They always lift our spirits.

Healing
Three “Healing Mass” weekends were scheduled during the year to continue our St. Thomas tradition of praying with those in need of physical, emotional, spiritual, or relational healing. The songs Healing Balm and There is a Balm in Gilead were added to our parish and choir repertoire to be used particularly on these occasions.

Peace Masses
Four "Peace Masses" were celebrated this past year at weekend liturgies in collaboration with our St. Thomas Pax Christi Ministry. In August 2005, the peace mass focused on nuclear disarmament on the 60th anniversary of the bombing of Hiroshima. In the Fall the focus was on Capital Punishment. On Jan. 1, we celebrated "World Peace Day" with an address and a prayer from members of the Jewish, Islamic, and Baha’i faiths, and in the Spring the focus was on domestic violence.

Ecumenism
In addition to the Jan. 1st Peace Mass, other ecumenical events included a joint concert at St. Thomas with our Adult Choir and the Inspiration Choir from Gayles Missionary Baptist Church in Aurora. We also participated in their Black History Month celebration in February. At St. Thomas in February, we invited Rev. Allen and music ministers from the Second Baptist Church in Wheaton to join us at a liturgy. In May, Fr. Joel and members of our Choir participated in their 99th anniversary celebration in Wheaton.

Hispanic, African-American, Asian-American Cultural Awareness
We continue to work with the Hispanic, African-American, and Asian-American Cultural Awareness Committees to build on and broaden our multi cultural liturgical experiences. In addition to the two Black History Month events mentioned above we invited Rev. Theresa Dear from the DuPage AME Church in Lisle to speak at a February liturgy. We also programmed more spirituals and gospel based music during the month. In October (Hispanic Awareness Month) we featured more Hispanic liturgical music including Spanish and English acclamations. We celebrated three bi-lingual masses during the year with a Spanish speaking guest priest and a fiesta following. In October we celebrated a Misa de las Américas, on December 12, Our Lady of Guadalupe, and in May a Misa de Mayo (with 12 first communicants from Hispanic families). In October the Holy Cross Marimba Choir (a Latino youth ensemble from Chicago) joined us at liturgy and then performed at the Diversity Dinner following. In December we celebrated a Simbang Gabi Mass at a Sat. 4:30 P.M. liturgy with a Filipino choir, Filipino priest and many members of the Filipino-American Community. The Filipino dance group also performed at our Diversity Dinner.

Haiti Twinning
We celebrated two liturgies to raise our awareness about the situation in Haiti and to deepen our relationship with the members of our twin parish. These liturgies featured witness talks, Haitian music and prayers, video, and handouts. A sending blessing was prayed for each mission team prior to their departure.
Mission Appeal
In August 2005 we were graced with the presence of two religious women from the Little Sisters of the Poor. They told us about their special work with the elderly throughout the world and we were generous in our support of their mission.

Outreach
Our Junior High music makers (the Joyful Jammers) participated in the opening prayer for the annual STEP walk that originated at St. Thomas last year. The Joyful Jammers also provided seasonal music at the Care Pantry Christmas Party. Many of our music makers (young and old) contributed money to help our friends at St. Thomas the Apostle in Mississippi recover from hurricane Katrina. Within a month after the storm we were able to completely replace their new hymnals and provide them some equipment. Later we purchased a new keyboard, drums, and replaced many of their choral scores. The response and generosity of our music ministers was amazing.

STA Mississippi Choir Visit
On Pentecost weekend, we hosted 23 parishioners from St. Thomas in Miss. It was a welcomed get away for them and a joy for us. We had a wonderful visit which included a day in Chicago and a picnic at the Gospel Fest. What a surprise to hear both of our parishes mentioned before thousands from the main stage in Millennium Park! The next day we joined forces for the 10:45 a.m. Pentecost Liturgy. We hope to visit them at their parish in the near future.

All Saints Catholic Academy Dedication
Our Liturgy Office and STA Music Ministry participated in the ASCA dedication Mass in October. It was a fitting celebration with Bishop Imesch, a large choir with members from the three sponsoring parishes, and a lively eucharistic assembly that filled the gymnasium. We pulled out all the stops.

Fr. Charles Life and New Life
In November we celebrated Fr. Charles Gemskie’s 75th birthday with a special Mass, and in June we celebrated his birth into new life with beautiful and touching wake and funeral liturgies.

Liturgy Preparation
The Liturgy Office continues to provide very personal assistance to those who are planning the funeral of a loved one and to couples who are preparing their wedding liturgies. We also have a special group of people who meet to prepare the major liturgical seasons and feasts. Another group meets regularly with the priests and deacons to break open the scriptures and reflect on how our liturgies can help us to connect faith and life.

Welcome Card
The Worship Commission created a welcome card to serve as an expression of our hospitality towards all who come to St. Thomas. It provides an easy reference for our contact information and our mass and confession schedule. The card also serves as a vehicle for feedback, questions, and an indication of needs. Each card that is submitted will receive follow up by an appropriate staff member.

Administration Commission:
In addition to the Finance Committee report elsewhere, the Administration Commission includes the following major committees: The Buildings and Grounds Committee, faced with a shortage of funding for new projects, reviewed the Master Plan and drafted an emergency backup plan for replacing the movable walls of Meeting Rooms 1-5 in the event they become inoperable prior to the implementation of the Master Plan. A major coil in the church air-conditioning unit was replaced just in time for Easter services, thanks to the Capital Reserve Fund. The new receptionist station, a multi-camera security system and the beginning of the Gathering Place Café for daily fellowship were also implemented. The Marketing Communications Committee published two issues of St. Thomas Today with a new design, featuring major articles on the opening of All Saints Catholic Academy, Ministers of Care, our response to Hurricane Katrina, and young adults serving in ministries. The parish website was greatly improved through the cooperative efforts of Marc Holm on technology and Susan Francesconi on content development and updates. The Technology Committee assisted in recommendations for a new high-speed Risograph duplicator and updated workstations, along with input on website issues.

Really Present...in Christ and to each other

St. Thomas the Apostle Catholic Parish
1500 Brookdale Road
Naperville, Illinois 60563-2129

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED