

TOGETHER

a monthly bulletin insert from the archdiocese



ARCHDIOCESE
of DUBUQUE

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JUBILEE 2025

Reconcile – Renew – Reawaken

Recognizing the Jubilee of Volunteerism with a Focus on Ministry to Persons with Disabilities

By Cassie Bird

This month we are recognizing the Jubilee of Volunteerism with a focus on Ministry to Persons with Disabilities. In the Archdiocese of Dubuque, efforts are being taken all across the Archdiocese to further this ministry.

Lynne Chapman, Adult Faith Programs and Disability Inclusion Manager for the Archdiocese says, “We currently have 98 Parish Advocates for Disability Inclusion across the archdiocese! There are a number of wonderful, active parish advocates. While some of these people are on staff at their parishes, they all volunteer their time and services to disability ministry.”

St. Joseph Parish – Marion

Amanda Weaver was one of the first Parish Advocates for Disability Inclusion in the Archdiocese. Amanda started volunteering as a Parish Advocate because her son is on the autism spectrum and she wanted to ensure that he, and others with disabilities, feel like they belong in Mass and are able to easily and fairly access the Sacraments.

“I want our parishioners with disabilities to know we value them and want them to

be active in parish life,” Amanda says. “We have people with physical, intellectual, and developmental disabilities serving in different roles during Masses such as lector, altar server, Eucharistic minister, ambassador, and choir.”

St. Joseph Parish is currently undergoing renovations on their church building, and the building committee worked closely with architects to develop a more accessible entry to the church. The parish is also drafting a statement on inclusion for the parish. Whenever they try to help others, they are also helping people with disabilities.

“For example, a group of parishioners has put together a program that provides backpacks full of Mass-related activities and fidgets for families to use during Mass,” Amanda explains. “While this isn’t specifically for people with disabilities, this is still a great service for a family who has a member experiencing a disability.”

“The fact we all have equal dignity and value is fundamental to our Catholic Faith. How productive we are or how many people we serve does not increase or decrease our self-worth,” Amanda says. “Everyone is worth our best effort.”

Amanda believes that Disability Inclusion exemplifies the Catholic faith, and reminds her to hold herself to the same standard. People with disabilities are not only to be served, but they are also called to serve and evangelize others.

“We shouldn’t limit our view of someone with disabilities as someone who has more needs. We should remember that they can also fill the needs others have.”

St. Patrick Parish - Clear Lake

St. Patrick Parish in Clear Lake provides transportation to Mass each weekend via a parish-owned bus designed for persons with disabilities. After a move to Iowa, and being installed as a deacon at St. Patrick in 2011, Deacon Darrel Courier made it a point to personally greet each person every time they arrived to Mass on that bus.

The following year, due to complications after a surgery, Deacon Darrel lost the use of both legs and his right arm. After this experience, he became acutely aware of what it means to be dependent on others. He also discovered the many barriers that prevent people with disabilities from participating in church activities.

Since becoming a Parish Advocate at St. Patrick, as well as a member of the Disability Inclusion Advisory Committee, Deacon Darrel has worked to recruit other deacons to serve in the role at their own parishes. In 2019, Deacon Darrel was at the parish when St. Patrick went through a renovation process. This renovation added two handicap-accessible restrooms and ramps that allow wheelchair access to the sacristy and sanctuary.

“Every person is a beloved child of God. Our church was instituted by Christ to

help us live well in this world so that we can be with Him in the next," Deacon Darrel says. "It is incumbent upon us to make sure that no one is excluded because of a disability."

Steve and Kelly Schnieders are a husband and wife team who volunteer to drive the bus to Mass each week for those with disabilities who need transportation to the church. They have been volunteering to help provide this service for nearly 15 years.

"I would encourage anyone/everyone to get involved in serving their parish and their communities with a Disability Inclusion effort," Steve says. "From our experience, people with disabilities like to be part of their communities and organizations like anyone else. Ministries like ours become a natural part of their schedules and get them into the communities they serve and are a part of. The excitement felt by these simple acts of inclusion is beyond description, ours and theirs!"

"We are truly grateful to have this opportunity to serve people," Kelly says. "They have taught us so much about what faith and love look like and I hope more people will get involved with this type of ministry. You will be amazed at how they will warm your heart: you will be changed forever!"



St. Patrick Parish Bus

Emmaus Pastorate (St. Patrick, Colesburg; St. Mark, Edgewood; St. Joseph, Elkader; St. Mary, Strawberry Point; Sacred Heart, Volga) Deacon Paul Dolan is a deacon in the five parishes of the Emmaus Pastorate at the five parishes. He says, "We are still in the infancy stages of developing our Disability Inclusion Ministry. For the past couple years, our committee has been identifying members in our communities, many of whom are not connected with any church. Teaming up with our parishioners they gather once a month for a 'birthday party' and fellowship."

After identifying the individuals, the next step is to bring them to worship with the entire congregation.

"Last September, we conducted a 'Parishioner Involvement and Opportunities' survey to find where

parishioners would offer to share their time and talent," Deacon Paul says.

"Through this survey, we have a list of volunteers who have offered to transport people as needed, usually medical appointments. Our Diversity and Inclusion committee is now planning to contact these people to see if they will help get people that we have identified at the gathering to see if they will come to Mass on Sundays. This will bring them to meet our entire congregation, not just the people who come to help with the 'birthday party.'"

Emmaus Pastorate was a recipient of the Embracing Inclusion Award in 2023. The pastorate comes together to host their monthly birthday party events, which are ecumenical, and they invite parishioners to attend, to volunteer, and to provide donations. Residents from local group homes are also invited. The events include lunch, live entertainment, and birthday cake. Three of the five parish locations take turns hosting these events. They also host a Christmas gathering. Due to the number of parishes in the pastorate, Fr. John Haugen and the staff at the pastorate rely heavily on the work of generous volunteers who give their time on committees and the five councils.

Staff meets twice a month to help focus them on their pastoral, liturgical, and business missions. All are invited, and many are volunteers who have jobs outside the pastorate, so those who can attend help spread the information to others. Council chairs are included in all their staff correspondence so that they can share it with their members.

"This elaborate arrangement is due to the brilliant mind of our pastor, Father John Haugen, who uses the archdiocese Manual for Parish Pastoral Councils as his playbook," Deacon Paul explains. "This empowers all parishioners to take ownership of how they share their time, talent and treasure with their parish."

Deacon Paul recognizes the importance and value of volunteers to help keep all five parishes running smoothly, in addition to the work that they do to further Disability Inclusion at the Emmaus Pastorate. He

sums it up by making a direct connection between volunteerism and the impact on a person's faith.

"The funny thing is," Deacon Paul says. "The more you offer your time and talent, the richer your faith becomes."

UPCOMING EVENTS

20th ANNUAL CATHOLIC MEN'S CONFERENCE
March 29, 2025
9:00 AM - 3:30 PM
 St. Pius X Catholic Church
 Cedar Rapids
 ARCHDIOCESE of DUBUQUE

For more information or to register, visit www.ArchMensConference.org

ARCHDIOCESE of DUBUQUE
CHRISM MASS
 ALL ARE INVITED TO ATTEND!
 Let us pray [that God] may bless and sanctify this oil, so that all who are outwardly anointed with it may be inwardly transformed and come to share in eternal salvation.
April 15, 2025 | 2:00 p.m.
 CATHEDRAL OF ST. RAPHAEL, DUBUQUE

REVIVAL IS COMING! | **EUCHARISTIC PILGRIMAGE**
 ARCHDIOCESE OF DUBUQUE | MAY 23-27, 2025

*The route through our archdiocese now includes the following stops:

FRI. MAY 23	DUBUQUE	Cathedral of St. Raphael
SAT. MAY 24	DYERSVILLE	Basilica of St. Francis Xavier
	NEW VIENNA	St. Boniface
	PETERSBURG	SS. Peter and Paul
SUN. MAY 25	CEDAR RAPIDS	Immaculate Conception
	JAMA	St. Patrick
	MARSHALSTOWN	St. Francis of Assisi
MON. MAY 26	No Archdiocesan events - Perpetual Pilgrims Day of Reflection	
TUES. MAY 27	AMES	St. Thomas Aquinas

*subject to change
dbqarch.org/eucharistic-pilgrimage