

**So, let's not get tired of doing what is good.  
At just the right time  
we will reap a harvest of blessing if we don't give up.  
Galatians 6:9**

It is that time of year when we reflect on the past year and look forward to the coming year. We have a lot to celebrate, and we have a lot of plans for the future.

Looking back on 2023, it is amazing to think of all the love and effort we all give to make St. Mary Magdalene the faithful and active community we know and love. Doing a rough calculation, it is estimated that 4000-5000 volunteer hours were given this past year. A lot of this time is done in the background, we don't see it happening, but these volunteers quietly go about their work because of their love of God and their love of our Christian community.

The next time you visit our church building, consider the following:

- Even before you enter the church, you see well manicured lawns and beautiful gardens maintained by our garden volunteers, or freshly ploughed sidewalks and driveways depending on the time of year.
- Walking into the church you'll notice that volunteers have done the housekeeping: vacuuming, dusting, and general straightening up.
- During our choral services, you'll hear the choir and other musicians play and sing beautiful music which they have practiced and prepared for worship.
- For communion services the Altar Guild will have prepared and will clean up the altar.
- Lay assistants will help Fr. Richard lead services by reading lessons and praying thoughtful Prayers of the People which they have prepared throughout the week.
- If you can't make it to a worship service, you can join us on our You Tube channel. The livestream technicians volunteer their time and expertise.
- You may pick up the booklet on the history of our church windows which is part of our church historian's ongoing research.
- After 10:30 am service, you may enjoy the food and fellowship of the coffee-time volunteers.
- Throughout the week, if you drop by the church,
  - you may see lots of teenagers coming and going from their music lessons and drop-in of the Harmony Lounge.
  - You may see teenagers coming and going from their youth group meetings where they participate in Christian learning and fellowship.
  - You may see our faithful Green Group discussing and planning activities to support the just and proper use of God's creation.
  - You may find the Men's Group meeting and supporting each other in Christian brotherhood.
  - Periodically you'll find a group of hardworking women and men preparing refreshments and meals for community groups.
  - You may see our leadership team, Parish Advisory Council, guiding and advising the priest and wardens in the spiritual and operational work of the parish.
- All of these activities (sorry if some have been overlooked) are able to take place with the leadership and support of the priest, wardens and treasurer.
- Of course, all of this is possible because of the wonderful gifts God has given to each one of us and due to the many, many people that offer prayers for our parish and for the good works we all do for the furthering of God's kingdom here on earth.

In closing, consider the words of Saint Paul, ***"Therefore, my dear brothers and sisters, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labour in the Lord is not in vain."*** 1 Corinthians 15:58