

January, 2024

Dear Friends,

Thank you for whatever you did for Capuchin Community Services over the holidays. May God bless you for your goodness! Thousands of households turned to us for help at the House of Peace and St. Ben's Community Meal. We share some photos of our ministry in the enclosed newsletter.

But guests continue to seek help in providing for their families. In these winter months, we are challenged by cold, winter weather and rising costs for basic needs of life. Our shelter program is open at St. Ben's and we'll be starting our Hygiene Bag Drive soon to provide basic articles for the bodily care of our guests. These two activities occupy a lot of our time over these winter months. If you can help in any way, thank you!

A lovely woman was talking with me one day and said to me, "*Taking care of the poor is what you Capuchins are known for!*" While her words were very kind, they are only true because of the support and contributions you make to Capuchin Community Services. Without you, our service and our ministries are not possible. Thank you for what you do for St. Ben's Ministries and the House of Peace. May this new year bring you blessings beyond your imagination!

Peace and all good,



Fr. Mike Bertram, OFM Capuchin
Ministry Director



▲ Fr. Mike explains the meal service at St. Ben's.

P.S. Our overflow warming center is open any night the temps are 25 degrees or less. Your generous gift will help us to keep our doors open.

Ministry sites

St. Ben's Community Meal
930 W State St Milwaukee WI 53233
414 271 0135

House of Peace
1702 W Walnut St Milwaukee WI 53205
414 933 1300

Thank You for supporting Capuchin Community Services!

Capuchin Caring

Friars, staff and volunteers, partners in ministry!



▲ *Cindy manages the Clothes Closet at the House of Peace. She also helped distribute turkeys to our guests.*



▲ *Fr. Henryk, (center) greets mom (L) and son (R) as they volunteered on Thanksgiving Day to serve the guests at St. Ben's Meal.*



▲ *Guests stream into St. Ben's Community Meal hall on Thanksgiving Day to enjoy the feast.*



▲ *A volunteer picks up a holiday food box to give away.*

Our Mission: *Inspired by the gospel of Jesus and the example of Francis of Assisi, the Capuchin friars of the Province of Saint Joseph, together with our partners in ministry, prayerfully build sister-brotherhood in the world. We attend simply and directly to spiritual and other basic human needs, especially those of people experiencing poverty and disenfranchisement, promoting justice for all.*



Laundry & Showers Are Important To Guests

Guests value opportunity to get clean & fed

St. Ben's Community Meal has always been known for the eponymous evening meal. Over the years Capuchin Community Services has added wrap-around services. They include several private showers and a laundry.

Johnnie is homeless and said, "I often sleep near the jail, police stations and other areas where I can be warm and safe. I came today to get a shower and do my laundry. If St. Ben's didn't offer laundry then I would have to go to a laundromat."

He continued, "As someone living on the street, I can tell you what others out there say, St. Ben's is a good place to go to get all kinds of help. Being able to do your grooming, laundry and get a good meal is great."

Dana had just finished his shower and was waiting for his laundry to be done. "I've been living on the street for a while. It's hard and cold out there now. I have nowhere safe to sleep." "Mostly I sleep in hallways, stairwells and unlocked cars." Dana does seasonal work. He

explained, "I work landscaping, snow removal and light construction. Without St. Ben's help, I don't know how I could do it."



▲ L to R: Courtney is on staff, Mike is a volunteer and Johnnie is a guest.

Dana added, "I've been to other agencies, sometimes you can get some hygiene supplies or a shower but no one provides free laundry service. It's very unique to find a completely free laundromat. I will stay for dinner before heading out again. You know what's the best? I feel like a human being again!"

Lydia has been homeless for more than a decade. "I

moved to Wisconsin from the south 8 years ago. I've been homeless all that time. I camp out in a tent under the bridges downtown throughout the year."

Lydia is deaf

and can read lips. Like the other guests, Lydia came to do laundry, get a shower and have a meal. "The laundry was already full so I will have to come another day but I did get a shower." Lydia smiled and resumed her seat waiting for the meal to begin.



◀ L to R: Mike volunteers several times per week and often helps the guests with their laundry. Dana is a guest who said that without the free laundry he would have no where else to go to get his clothing clean.

▶ Lydia got to St. Ben's just a little after all of the laundry slots were filled. She made plans to return another day.



WORKS OF MERCY

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

House of Peace & St. Ben's Community Meal

Saint Ben's Community Meal needs volunteers to serve on the floor on Sundays, Tuesdays and Wednesdays. The House of Peace needs volunteers to help with the holiday drives, October through December. These & other opportunities are posted online:

House of Peace -

ofmcap.cc/HouseOfPeaceVolunteers



St. Ben's Community Meal -

ofmcap.cc/StBensVolunteer



Questions? Contact:

Nicole Fair, Volunteer Coordinator
Phone: 414-933-1300, x1123

Email: ccsvol@thecapuchins.org

IN-KIND DONATIONS

House of Peace & St. Ben's Community Meal

The House of Peace: Donations are accepted from 1:00 pm to 3:30 pm, Monday through Friday. To deliver, please ring the doorbell then return to your vehicle. Staff will assist with unloading and provide a receipt.

Saint Ben's Meal: Donations are accepted from 9:00 am to 11:00 am, Monday through Friday. To deliver, please ring the large doorbell next to the Meal Hall doors, and then return to your vehicle. Staff will assist with unloading and provide a receipt.

Called & Sent Forth

by Fr. Michael Bertram, OFM Capuchin
Ministry Director



Happy New Year, everyone! I hope that your holidays were great times of happiness both for you and for family and friends with you for the season's celebrations.

There is a very favorite Christmas song of mine sung by Josh Groban that expresses our experience of reflecting on a year just completed and awaiting what will come in the new

year ahead. The song is entitled "Thankful" from his NOEL album. The lyrics go, "It's up to us to be the change. And even though we all can still do more, there's so much to be thankful for."

We at Capuchin Community Services are thankful for you and all that you do to make our ministries and services possible for God's little ones - the poor and needy. It is up to us to be the change, and you help to make that happen.

We are already into our Winter Shelter Program. Early in the fall already, guests at St. Ben's were constantly asking, "When will your shelter program start? It's getting cold outside." Again, for those who may not know, St. Ben's Meal Hall is transformed into an overnight shelter immediately after the meal is served, housing some 50 people every night through the

winter. It is the largest seasonal shelter program in the city of Milwaukee. And that still isn't enough room for the housing demands in our area.



▲ Fr. Mike thanks some of the volunteers who help serve St. Ben's Community Meal. They were cutting cake to celebrate the ministry's 53rd anniversary.

Sadly, we have to turn some homeless people away every night because we just can't take another person.

Thank you for your help and your donations that

provide some shelter in these cold winter months.

In our celebration of Christmas, we remember how Jesus came among us - not in power as some mighty King, but as a poor, tiny baby who had no roof over his head. Once the glamour of Christmas disappears, we are faced with the reality of Jesus still living among us in the poor who also have no place to stay, no food to eat.

One of our Capuchin friars, Solanus Casey, is a candidate for sainthood. Blessed Solanus Casey frequently said, "Thank God ahead of time." With a new year upon us, I thank you ahead of time for the generosity and support you show us at Capuchin Community Services. May God be good to you as you are so good to us!

Fr. Mike



Donors & Volunteers Help Feed & Care for Thousands

Holidays Celebrated through Service

St. Ben's Community Meal



◀ Kitchen Manager, Don Rhytman, (Yellow Shirt) cuts turkey parts before roasting. Staff and volunteers in the background help prepare the Thanksgiving Day meal.

▶ Fr. Mike Bertram, OFM Capuchin prays over the meal with the guests and volunteers.

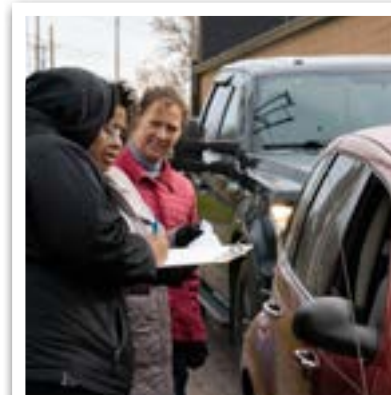


◀ On Thanksgiving we offer table service to the guests. Everyone in this photo is a volunteer, both those filling the plate and those who will serve.

▶ This family enjoyed a fun and healthy Thanksgiving meal.



House of Peace



◀ Due to construction on Walnut Street people picking up holiday food boxes lined up in the alley behind the House of Peace. Staff, volunteers and friars then filled their vehicles with holiday boxes, turkeys and other items.

▶ Fr. Mike Bertram, OFM Capuchin greets the Molina Healthcare corporate volunteer team as they prepare to serve.



◀ Volunteers from the Milwaukee Bucks help sort and pack holiday food boxes.

▶ Volunteers from Gruber Law Offices help put food in cars on a cold day. Steven Gruber (center, blue jacket) & David Gruber (center, scarf) help carry gifts.



Capuchin Ministry Of Presence

Supporters & their family members are remembered

Capuchin Community Services often receives gifts in memory of those who have died. We thank all of our donors for thinking of us at such a difficult time. Please share the names of your loved ones with us so we can remember them in prayer.

We have friars who would like to attend funerals to pray for our supporters. Please send us the funeral details and we will try to be present to you and your family. Please email mbertram@thecapuchins.org with the details.



Lenten Hygiene Bag Drives Begin Soon

Drives start Ash Wednesday and wrap up by Easter



◀ Badger Mutual employees used the proceeds of their popcorn sales to purchase and fill over 195 hygiene bags.

▶ North Shore Congregational Church members load the CCS van with bags after another successful drive.



Hygiene Bag Drives:



Did you know that the Capuchin friars distribute hygiene bags to our guests at both the House of Peace and St. Ben's Community Meal? As many of St. Ben's guests are homeless we make sure their bags have travel-size items. The House of Peace guests have homes so they get the standard household size products. While we focus group drives during Lent, CCS welcomes donations of hygiene items all year long. To learn more scan the QR code or visit <https://ofmcap.cc/CCS-HygieneBags>.



New This Year

We have free hygiene bag drive posters available!

They include space to write in details about your drive.

To order posters, email: dhatcher@thecapuchins.org.



CCS 2024 Calendars

Did you receive your 2024 CCS calendar? They are free and will keep you informed when we are open and closed. Also each month profiles a specific way you can support the Capuchins' ministry. To request extra copies for yourself or friends, please contact Jim Van Hoven, Development Admin.:

jvanhoven@thecapuchins.org or (414) 509-8465.



CCS Ministry Council Meets

Each Capuchin ministry in the Province of St. Joseph is advised by a local group of community leaders. They meet several times per year to advise the ministry director on the needs of the community and the Capuchin response.

The group met as the holidays began to advise on plans for 2024. The members of the council are listed below in the order that you see them in the photo on the right.



Capuchin Community Services Ministry Council, Social Media & Ministry Sites

Chuck Cmeyla • Felice Green • Julie Darnieder • Diane Knight • Dean Lex • Gerri Sheets-Howard
 Anthony Myers • Br. Biju Parakkalayil, OFM Cap., Provincial Council Liaison
 Fr. Michael Bertram, OFM Capuchin, Ministry Director • Not Pictured: Br. McLean Bennett, OFM Cap.
 Fr. John Celichowski, OFM Cap., Director of Provincial Ministries • Sara Zirbel



[Twitter.com/CapuchinComSvc](https://twitter.com/CapuchinComSvc)



instagram.com/capuchincommunityservices/

244N03



Facebook.com/CapuchinCommunityServices



YouTube.com/CapuchinCommunityServicesOrg

St. Ben's Community Meal
 930 W State St
 Milwaukee, WI 53233
 414 271 0135



House of Peace
 1702 W Walnut St
 Milwaukee, WI 53205
 414 933 1300

Support our ministry: www.CapuchinCommunityServices.org/Donate or by mail to PO Box 412, Milwaukee WI 53201-0412