



Fall 2026

Our Lady Queen of Peace *Spirit*

Volume 33, Number 4



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The Season of Creation

Submitted by Tricia Heine &
Michael Betlach, Care for Creation
Team Representatives

Care for God's Creation — Catholic Social Teaching

We show our respect for the Creator by our stewardship of creation. Care for the earth is not just an Earth Day slogan, it is a requirement of our faith. We are called to protect people and the planet, living our faith in relationship with all of God's creation. This environmental challenge has fundamental moral and ethical dimensions that cannot be ignored.

Did you know that in 2015, the Vatican officially named this time of year The Season of Creation? This season stretches from September 1 — the World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation — through October 4, which is the feast day of St Francis of Assisi. St Francis is the patron saint of ecology, the environment, and animals/pets. The Season of Creation is a time to renew our relationship with our Creator, and all creation through celebration, conversion, and commitment. Over the last 10 years, the Vatican has been leading the way and providing an example for all of us to fully embrace the deep importance of The Season of Creation. For example, just this year, the Vatican has become fully powered through solar energy. To celebrate the Season



of Creation, we encourage you and your family to become more aware of ways to engage with caring for God's creation. Our Lady Queen of Peace will host several opportunities throughout the Season of Creation for us to come together as a parish to celebrate this season. Prayer cards for the Care for God's Creation from the US Conference of Catholic Bishops and lists of QP activities can be found in the Gathering Space.

Taizé Prayer for Creation: Tuesday, September 1, 6:00 pm in the Chapel

Mass for the Care of Creation: Watch for a date in the bulletin!

Chalk the Walk: Celebrate Creation on our Campus Sidewalks: September 19 & 20, during hospitality weekend

Rosary for Creation: Sunday, September 27 between the 9:30 & 11:15 am Masses in the Chapel

Lectio Divina on the Genesis Creation Story: Wednesday, September 30, 6:00 pm in the Chapel

Fall Calendar of Events

September 4: Spirit and Sustenance after the 8:30 am Daily Mass, Gathering Space

September 10: Noon – 6 pm: QP Red Cross Blood Drive, Gathering Space

September 12: 9 am – Noon: Liturgy Volunteer Training Sessions, Church

September 15: 6-9 pm: Liturgy Volunteer Training Sessions, Church

September 19/20: Season of Creation Celebration and Hospitality Weekend

September 24: 7:30 – 10 am: Liturgy Volunteer Training Sessions, Church

October 2: Spirit and Sustenance after the 8:30 am Daily Mass, Gathering Space

October 3: 11am: Mass of Anointing of the Sick, Reception Following

October 8: 6 pm: Movie and Discussion – Cabrini, Part 1, Parish Center

October 11: 12:30 pm: Welcome Brunch and Program for New Parishioners, Gathering Space

October 15: 6 pm: Movie and Discussion – Cabrini, Part 2, Parish Center

October 17/18: St. Vincent de Paul Big Truck Donation and Hospitality Weekend

October 19: 6 pm: Legacy Giving Presentation, Gathering Space

October 23: 5-8 pm: QP Trunk and Treat with Movie, QP Main Parking Lot

November 2: 5:30 pm: Mass of Remembrance, Reception Following

November 6: Spirit and Sustenance after the 8:30 am Mass, Gathering Space

November 14: 6:15 pm: Queen of Hearts Card Night, Gathering Space

November 14/15: Giving Thanks and Hospitality Weekend

November 29: Advent by Candlelight, Gathering Space

What a Great Way to Celebrate Summer and Share God's Love!

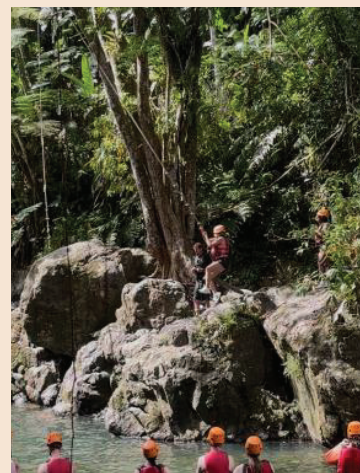
Submitted by Cheryl Horne, Pastoral Associate

Mission Trip '26

This summer nine high school students and three adults served on Mission Trip in Arecibo, Puerto Rico. Our work took us to the Boys and Girls Club. We served each other and the other participants from a church in Colorado who were there with us. We served at a farm that was being renovated as a housing site to be able to bring in more missionaries. We made friends, and we saw God in nature in the scenery and went swimming in the ocean. We learned about the history of the island, and we walked where flood waters and devastation from Hurricane Maria still affect the people every day. We prayed. We sang. We danced. We sang AND danced. And yes, we went off rope swings into water pools in the rain forest. And more than one of us celebrated a birthday while

we were there. "It was a week I will never forget" said one of the young missionaries. And in the end — despite the long flights, the delays, the layovers, (and the mad sprint through a Texas airport to make our connecting flight on the first day), despite the heat and humidity, the long hours, the constant roosters outside the windows of our sleeping rooms, and despite the tearful goodbyes when we left the children on the last day of serving — we wouldn't trade a moment of it.

Thank you to everyone who helped support us by donating, by visiting Culver's on our Share Night, buying baked goods from us at A Night in Bethlehem, and especially by praying for us during the trip. Thank you for making this experience possible!



Be P.E.A.C.E.: Living Our Stewardship

Submitted by Mary Jo Vitale, Principal

Each year, Our Lady Queen of Peace School reflects on who we are, what we do well, and how we can better serve our students, parish, and community. This past year, we completed our formal accreditation process — a comprehensive review of every aspect of our school, including Catholic identity, academics, leadership, operations, and student success.

Accreditation is more than a seal of approval. It is a chance to celebrate our strengths, identify areas for growth, and renew our commitment to the mission God has entrusted to us.

Alongside this process, I had the privilege of participating in the Catholic Leadership Academy with **Katie Fischer, Betsy Brennan, and Sue Godfrey.**



Through prayer, collaboration, and planning, the academy helped us better understand who we are as a Catholic school and how we can prepare for the future. At the same time, our faculty, staff, parents, parish representatives, and school leadership all contributed to the accreditation process, helping us reflect on our mission, vision, and core values.

I am proud to share that Our Lady Queen of Peace School was accredited with flying colors. While this achievement is worth celebrating, the greatest outcome was not the accreditation itself — it was a deeper understanding of who we are as a Catholic school community.

As we reflected on our identity, one word continually rose to the surface:

PEACE.

How fitting that the name of our parish became the foundation of our vision for the future.

This year, our school theme is **Be P.E.A.C.E.**

More than an acronym,

PEACE reflects the values that define our community and the virtues we strive to live each day: **Preparedness, Excellence, Accountability, Compassion, and Evangelization.** These guide our shared mission to fulfill God's plan for our school, parish, and one another.



These are not just words or a yearly theme. They express who we are and who we are called to become.

As stewards of God's gifts, we recognize that stewardship goes far beyond financial support. It means using our talents to teach, our time to serve, our faith to inspire, and our hearts to love. It is seen in the teacher who stays after school to help a student, the parent who volunteers, the parishioner who prays for our school, the student who chooses kindness, and the family that prioritizes Catholic education.

At Our Lady Queen of Peace, students receive an excellent academic education, but even more importantly, they are formed as Christian leaders. They learn to serve, lead with humility, grow in faith, and share Christ with the world. They come to understand that success is measured not only by what they know, but by who they become.

This is the stewardship of Catholic education. Together, our parish and school are forming young people who will carry Christ into their homes, workplaces, communities, and Church for generations to come.

As we begin this new school year, I invite every member of our parish family to embrace our challenge:

Be P.E.A.C.E.

Together, let us continue building a thriving Catholic community centered on *Faith, Excellence, Leadership, and Community*, where all our children are known, loved, challenged, and inspired to become the person God created them to be.

Thank you for your prayers, generosity, and faithful stewardship of Our Lady Queen of Peace School. Because of you, our students are not only learning — they are becoming the future of our Church.

***"Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God."* - Matthew 5:9**

May each of us strive every day to simply....

Be P.E.A.C.E.



Listening for the Plan: *A Faith Journey Still Unfolding*

Submitted by Sue Godfrey, Director of Stewardship and Development



But after collapsing in that airport, I couldn't stop thinking about what those nurses had said. If God had a plan for me, what was it?

both of my lungs, preventing them from getting the oxygen they needed. That's why I collapsed on the airport concourse. What had seemed like a normal day had suddenly become a life-threatening medical emergency.

Over the next week, as the blood clots gradually cleared, nurse after nurse said the same thing: *"You're lucky to be alive. God must have a plan for you."*

Those words stayed with me.

I was born and raised Catholic. I attended Catholic grade school and high school. Through college, I faithfully attended weekly Mass and Holy Days. I knew the prayers by heart. I knew the commandments, and while I certainly wasn't perfect, they guided most of my decisions.

I prayed. I went to confession now and then. I served the poor and hungry. I genuinely believed I had a good relationship with God.

But after collapsing in that airport, I couldn't stop thinking about what those nurses had said. If God had a plan for me, what was it?

For several years, I searched for the answer. The funny thing is, while I was looking for God's plan, I was living as though nothing had changed. Here I was with what felt like a second chance at life, but I got caught up in the same things most of us do: family drama, workplace conflicts, daily frustrations, self-doubt, and the endless busyness of life.

Eventually, I realized I was approaching it all wrong. Instead of trying to *figure out* God's plan, I decided I would simply *listen*.

That decision changed everything. What followed was a series of moments and messages that felt remarkably clear.

In 2005, I stepped off a plane in Nashville and felt lightheaded. Before I knew it, I collapsed. The next thing I remember was waking up and staring at the jetway ceiling, wondering what on earth had happened. One of those airport golf-cart ambulances whisked me away to a waiting ambulance, and I was rushed to the nearest emergency room.

After a series of tests and a CAT scan, a doctor came into my room and told me he knew what had happened. I had suffered a bilateral pulmonary embolism — a bi-PE — and it was a significant one. In simple terms, a large blood clot had blocked blood flow to

When I began experiencing anxiety attacks caused by work-related stress, I leaned more deeply into prayer. Through that experience, I felt God reassuring me that I was moving in the right direction and that His love was stronger than my fears.

Then my aunt invited me to join a women's faith group. For quite a while, I politely declined. Eventually, I said yes. Looking back, I wish I had said yes sooner. Through that group, I met women whose faith in Jesus and His teachings was inspiring. I learned new ways to pray that felt natural and meaningful. More importantly, I found a community of women whose faith encouraged me to strengthen my own.

Then another unexpected door opened. A position at Our Lady Queen of Peace became available. To be completely honest, I only interviewed for practice. I was confident it wasn't going to be a fit. God, as usual, had other ideas.

When I sat down with Father Brian, I quickly realized how wrong I had been. Every experience, skill, challenge, and lesson from my life seemed to fit this role perfectly. It was as though all the winding roads of my life had quietly been leading to that moment. Not only could I continue my own faith journey more intentionally, but I could also help support others on theirs.

Along the way, I've learned something else: gratitude.

I've become more aware of God's gifts, both large and small. Sometimes it's the beauty of the countryside on a summer morning. Sometimes it's a difficult experience that taught me something important. Sometimes it's a person God placed in my path at exactly the right time.

I've also come to understand that many of the accomplishments I once claimed as "mine" were never mine alone. The promotion I received wasn't earned solely through my own efforts. It was made possible by teachers, mentors, friends, colleagues, family members, and even people who challenged me along the way. Each person played a role in shaping who I became.

Today, when I reflect on the peace and joy I've experienced over the last three years, I see God's fingerprints everywhere. My faith journey didn't happen overnight. It wasn't a straight line. It certainly wasn't always easy. In fact, it took a couple of decades and included more twists, turns, detours, and lessons than I ever expected. But here I am.

And that leads me to a question for you: Have you thought about your own faith journey? What moments brought you closer to God? What are you grateful for? How do you serve others — and yourself?

If you'd like to share your faith journey, I'd love to hear it. Your story may be exactly the encouragement someone else needs as they navigate their own path.

After all, sometimes God speaks through the stories of ordinary people who are simply learning to listen.

QP Wants a Piece of Your Mind

Really.

This fall, we're asking everyone connected to Our Lady Queen of Peace to share their perspective on our parish and their experience of faith at QP.

Whether you're at Mass every week or only occasionally, have been part of QP for decades or are relatively new, are deeply involved or don't feel particularly connected, **we want to hear from you.**



Beginning September 16, QP will participate in the **Disciple Maker Index (DMI)**, a confidential survey conducted by Catholic Leadership Institute. The DMI will help us better understand where we are as a parish

— our strengths, our opportunities for growth, and how well QP supports people in their faith and relationship with Christ.

The survey is designed to:

- Invite you to reflect on your own faith and journey of discipleship.
- Help us understand how QP supports you and our parish community.
- Give parish leadership meaningful information to help guide decisions about QP's future.

The survey takes approximately **10–15 minutes** and will be available online from **September 16 through October 28**. Paper surveys will also be available for those who prefer one.

Your responses are confidential. QP will receive information about our community as a whole and will not have access to individual survey responses.

We hope to hear from as broad a cross-section of the QP community as possible. Every perspective helps us better understand who we are today and discern where God is calling us as a parish.

Your voice. Our QP.

Watch for the survey beginning September 16



Honoring Sacred Connections With Care Team Ministry

Submitted by Sylvan Bachhuber, Pastoral Care Associate

Community runs deep at Our Lady Queen of Peace, and members feel the warmth of their church family through our Care Team Ministry even when they are no longer able to attend Mass. Care Team volunteers conduct weekly social visits with homebound parishioners, forming the meaningful relationships that weave our parish family closer together. The act of simply showing up, listening, and being present with one another offers our many volunteers and care partners profound meaning and spiritual growth.

Betty Rosengren, a dedicated Care Team volunteer, captures this spirit beautifully. "Volunteering with the Care Team Ministry is conversation, listening, laughter and prayer, caring and growing closer," she shared. "It's letting the Care Team Partner know our church community is there for



Betty Rosengren with her Care Partner Richard

them when they no longer are able to attend in person. Having God's presence with us makes this ministry a great joy."

For others, like Dee Mattke, this ministry will be a continuation of a lifelong passion for service. With 12 years of professional caregiving experience behind her, Dee is excited to become a new care team volunteer, sharing her expansive skillset and deep compassion with her church community. "Caregiving is one of the most fulfilling things I have ever done," Dee said. "Now as a care team volunteer I am excited to continue in that role. Spending quality time with another person is a gift."

These testimonials remind us that Care Team is reciprocal. While the recipients receive comfort and companionship, the volunteers find purpose, spiritual growth, and deeper bonds with their neighbors. Additionally, for many families of Care Partners, the program is a lifeline. Family members who care for their homebound loved ones often struggle to find moments to breathe and experience isolation as caretakers. Care Team volunteers offer caregivers an hour a week of breathing room and connection with their church support system.

A few weeks ago, Betty received a text from her Care Partner, Richard's daughter that said, "We so value you and QP's volunteer program," offering a reminder of how much her weekly hour is appreciated.

At its core, Care Team is about reinforcing the idea that no one walks alone. When a volunteer knocks on a door or makes a phone call, they are bringing the warmth of the church directly to those who need it most. It is a ministry that brings our community closer together and invites parishioners to step into the sacred space of connection and care.

To learn more about volunteering with the Care Team, please contact Sylvan Bachhuber at sylvan.bachhuber@qpoc.org or 608-213-4614



Singing: Prayer & Hospitality

Submitted by Caleb Mitchell, Director of Liturgy and Pastoral Music | Photos by Craig Schriener

"Gather your people, O Lord; gather your people, O Lord! One bread, one Body, one Spirit of love – gather your people, O Lord!" This text is probably familiar to you. It's a common gathering song by Bob Hurd, sung frequently in Ordinary Time to gather us for Eucharist. As we gather, we unite our voices as we participate in this feast to which God has invited us. In this feast, this meal, this sacrifice, we are invited and encouraged to pray and participate together through spoken dialogue, reverent silence, and sung prayer. The Church, specifically in the documents of the Second Vatican Council, calls for music to play a central role in Catholic liturgy by "lifting our souls, drawing hearts to God, and fostering a deeper participation in the sacred mysteries" and "is a treasure of inestimable value" – *Sacrosanctum Concilium*. As we gather, there are also roles that are described by the Council's documents for the summoning of the Spirit from the Body of Christ in song. The instruments that support the singing and the cantor are mentioned, but the group that is called out the most is the choir.

In our liturgy, the role of the choir is to support and encourage the singing of the assembly gathered and to offer stand-alone pieces that envelop the gathered assembly in prayer and praise. Think of the choir as ministers of hospitality – they invite, encourage, lead, strengthen, and lift our souls. The role of the choir is not to perform at Mass. The choir, in a more real way, becomes a "liturgical family." They pray together, are formed in faith together, and spend many hours each week together. Here at Our Lady Queen of Peace, we are fortunate with many different choirs that range in size and musical style. The parish Adult Choir, made up of 40 plus voices, sings primarily at the 9:30 am Sunday liturgy from September through June. I recently posed this question to the choir: "How has singing in this choir impacted your faith life and how have we been able to help the gathered assembly to pray?" Here were some of the responses I received:

"As one of the newest members of the Queen of Peace Adult Choir, I feel a true sense of a welcoming community. After being a guest singer during the Christmas season, I felt such



a strong sense of belonging that it was impossible to leave and return to my previous choir. Being able to share singing with warm, caring, and devoted musicians is a true blessing."

Charles Hodulik

"Singing in the choir carries me back to my youth and singing in those wonderful K-12 choirs I sang with. It's a great joy now to sing in the Adult Choir, and I'm certain the choir's song enhances the celebration of Mass for so many. An added bonus: I've met many great people in the choir. Choristers are the best!" **Michael Martin**

"The Queen of Peace choir has a great repertoire. The lyrics are beautiful, and, put to music, it feels like praying while you sing, even in rehearsal. Singing in the choir is also a great way to meet more people in the parish." **Molly Sullivan**

"Singing in the choir has brought me to meet new people at church and it brought me closer to church through music. I like when we learn new songs for Mass!" **Stephanie DeAngelo**

"I love singing in the choir every Sunday! Whenever I sing, I feel like I connect to God, which is amazing. I have also made good friends with other choir members! I would welcome anyone to join the choir." **Joseph Jainga**

"It has been an honor and blessing for us to be part of the 9:30 Choir. The personal connections that have developed make all the choir members feel like family to us. Christmas, Holy Week, and Easter have become our favorite times of the year. Practicing and then singing for those special days and throughout the year has given us a deeper faith and better understanding of how music can transform all of us." **Ted & Rose Amman**

"You don't remember a sermon, but you do remember a song." **Steve Schroeder**

"I don't recall the year Joy and I joined the 9:30 choir, but it was when Queen of Peace had a choir loft, Fr. Erbe was our pastor, and Mike Birkley, our director. It has been a great privilege and blessing to contribute to the Eucharistic Celebration. The presider and lectors bring sacred scripture to life, and following the readings, indeed throughout the liturgy, the choir leads all assembled, worship aids in hand, in song, raising our voices in praise and thanksgiving. Prayer set to music, and as we all know, or so we are told, to sing is to pray twice.

The experience is especially rewarding and spiritually uplifting during Advent and Christmas, and certainly Lent, Holy Week, and Easter Sunday. Equally moving and perhaps most unforgettable was Sunday Mass following the 9/11 terrorist attack on the World Trade Center. The choir sang The Clouds' Veil. I can't imagine attending Mass and not singing, whether in the choir or from the pew. During the pandemic, we couldn't attend Mass, couldn't sing. We're so glad those days are over, and so thankful that the 9:30 Choir has increased in numbers and is now thriving under the direction of Caleb Mitchell."

Richard & Joy Jones

"Having the ability to sing is a privilege, a calling, a gift from God. Serving in the Adult Choir is one way of saying thank you for that." **Rich Sucik**

"When the choir gathers each Wednesday for rehearsal, I can feel the enthusiasm in the group. They are ready to pray together, to be servant leaders, to be hospitable to one another and to our community. Whether we are rehearsing a piece of music that is new or something that we have sung many times, the energy of the Spirit is always with us. If you are looking for a place to feel welcomed and to belong, choir might be for you."

Caleb Mitchell, Director

As you can see, choir members truly feel a sense of belonging and hospitality with one another and with our gathered assembly. How blessed we are to be able to sing, to lift our souls and draw our hearts to God through music and in a spirit of hospitality as we gather.

Are you interested in joining the Adult Choir? Contact Caleb Mitchell (caleb.mitchell@qopc.org | 608-231-4618) today!

Building Community One Swing at a Time

Submitted by Mary Jo Vitale, School Principal



Stewardship is about much more than sharing our treasure. It is about sharing our time, our talents, and ourselves to strengthen God's kingdom. Each year, our golf outing beautifully reflects what stewardship looks like in action.

While it is certainly a day filled with laughter, friendly competition, and fellowship, its impact reaches far beyond the golf course. **This year's outing raised more than \$35,000** to support the ministries of Our Lady Queen of Peace and the mission of our school. We are incredibly grateful to our generous sponsors, golfers, volunteers, and organizers whose generosity and dedication made this event such an overwhelming success.

Yet, as wonderful as the financial support is, the greatest success of the day cannot be measured in dollars.

It is measured in the relationships that were strengthened, the friendships that were formed, and the community that came together with one common purpose — to invest in the future of our parish, our school, and our children.

That spirit embodies our school theme for the coming year: **Be P.E.A.C.E.** It reminds us that stewardship is about living our faith through perseverance, excellence, accountability, compassion, and evangelization. When we come together to support one another, we are putting those values into action.

The golf outing is a wonderful reminder that stewardship isn't simply something we do — it is who we are. Every sponsorship, every volunteer, every golfer, and every act of generosity helps strengthen the mission of Our Lady Queen of Peace and ensures that our parish and school continue to thrive for generations to come.

As we look ahead to next year's outing, we invite even more parishioners to join us. Whether you golf, sponsor a hole, volunteer your time, or simply come to enjoy the fellowship, there is a place for everyone. Together, we can continue building relationships, strengthening our community, and making a lasting difference.

Thank you to everyone who made this year's golf outing such a tremendous success. Because of your stewardship, generosity, and commitment to our parish family, we continue to grow stronger together.

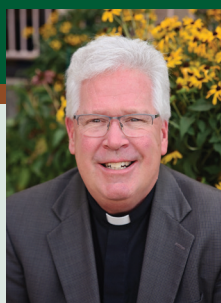
Together, let us continue to **Be P.E.A.C.E.**



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Father Brian's Message

Dear Friends,

We are happy to provide you with a copy of our most recent Queen of Peace Spirit Newsletter. It contains timely information about parish happenings and initiatives. Please read it and share it with others you know who may have an interest.

We have had an active summer in terms of planning for the next year. We have also had an active summer in upgrades to our buildings and grounds and completing a variety of maintenance needs.

We will be undertaking a discipleship survey early in the fall to better equip us in determining the programmatic needs of the parish. We will continue to have an emphasis on stewardship and development as we strengthen our parish community.

These are exciting times for us as we grow in faith and community. Thank you for your continued support.

Rev. Brian J. Wilk

Fr. Brian J. Wilk

Special thanks to the staff and parishioners of Queen of Peace for their contributions to this newsletter.