Kirkland parish has ‘great heart’ for serving others

St. John Mary Vianney hosted Tent City twice and maintains local, regional and international outreach programs

KIRKLAND
BY ARMANDO MACHADO

Father Michael Wright was named pastor at St. John Mary Vianney Parish in 2005. Like many of the pastors who went before him, he says a hallmark of the Kirkland faith community is its “great heart for serving others in justice.”

This combines well, he said, with another strength: welcome.

“I’ve been so impressed since I have become pastor with the ways that our parishioners seek to welcome and serve those who are in need,” Father Wright said. “Our hosting of Tent City 4, our teams of adults, college students, high school and middle school students who make commitments to participate in service to migrant workers, the building of homes in Mexico, the funding of wells in Africa through CRS, our parish’s support of Catholic Community Services and St. Vincent de Paul – all of this reflects our community’s understanding of the call to welcome all in Christ’s name,” Father Wright said. “This is a great gift and great strength of our parish.”

Outreach and hospitality

Jan Kline, coordinator of Youth Ministry and Young Adult Ministry for the parish, noted the many good works of active youth and adult volunteers.

“Our Junior High program was the first official sponsoring group to regular-ly prepare Operation Sack Lunch meals in 1991,” Kline said. “Our St. Vincent de Paul all year round and the Christmas Giving Tree never fail to bring out an amazing generosity in our community.”

Kline said the parish is known for its outreach and hospitality, citing also the works of notable parishioners “who have gone to their heavenly place.”

Among them, she said, were: Deacon Dave Warmuth (adult faith formation and other programs); Lori Butsch (Parish Life Committee), Carson Eckmann and Hal McQuade (St. Vincent de Paul Society); Ken and Peggy Anderson (Sonshine Ministry); and Gene Gar-row (various volunteer works, including groundskeeper).

Kline said the parish youth groups have been involved with the Youth Mission Project in Skagit County since the mid-1980s. The groups also do outreach work in Eastern Washington as well as homebuilding for poor families through Esperanza Internacional in Mexico. And the Children’s Ministry, she said, collected hundreds of school supplies for children in Ghana, West Africa last summer during Vacation Bible School.

With their track record of service, it is no surprise that one of the high-profile parish ministries is the youth program — the Junior and Senior High Youth Group. The program engages teens and preteens in music, creativity, different kinds of prayer and social interaction. Coordinators say these are learning tools used to carry out the curriculum.

The program’s educational components include a session on miracles in the Gospels and in our own lives. The youths are encouraged to become a miracle in someone’s life.

The parish has a small but very active Filipino group that participates in all areas of parish life, said Anne Merklin, pastoral assistant for Faith Formation. She noted that the Filipino members are particularly active in music ministry and a rosary group. The parish celebrates Simbang Gabi during Advent including a Filipino dinner.

A relatively new program in the parish is Mom’s Morning Out. Organizers look after young children for stay-at-home mothers and fathers who need time to run errands or have some quiet time. They say it is a great opportunity for primary child caregivers to get a mental break on Wednesday mornings 9:30 to noon, to get their hair done, grab a coffee or just shop and run errands without a toddler in tow.

Parish History

Established in 1971 by Archbishop Thomas A. Connolly, St. John Vianney is a relatively new parish in the Archdiocese of Seattle located on Kirkland’s Finn Hill. Father Edward Hogan was the first pastor and Father Robert Turner, who served until 1984, has been the longest serving pastor to date.

The parish began with about 450 families, growing to about 1,050 families in 2000 and currently has about 800 registered households. Margie Berard, pastoral assistant for administration, said some of the decline occurred when Blessed Teresa of Calcutta Parish was established in Woodinville in 2004 by Archbishop Alex J. Brunetti to serve the Eastside’s growing Catholic population.

According to Berard, the parish was initially housed in the seminary building of St. Thomas the Apostle in Kenmore. In 1991 construction began at the current site on Kirkland’s Finn Hill under Father Theodore Marmo. The construction was completed in 1993 when Father Joseph DeFolco was pastor.

Sharing God’s love

Tent City 4 was invited to inhabit the parish campus by Father Kevin Duggan for three months ending in February 2005. With support from staff and the parish council, Father Duggan dealt with angry protests and unhappy neighbors, said Merklin. No problems occurred while the homeless encampment resided at the site in 2005, and Merklin noted there were no protests from neighbors when Tent City returned for 90 days this summer.

“If I had to sum up all of my thoughts about St. John Vianney Parish, I think the best description one can give is that St. John Vianney is a community that loves God and shares that love with all who come into contact with them,” Father DeFolco said.

This weekend St. John Mary Vianney will participate in the Progress Parish Partnership “P3” program? Five dollars from each subscription sold over the weekend will be donated to their Pax Christi group. For more information on this program contact Marketing Associate Keri Hake at 206-382-2075 or kerih@seattlearch.org

PARISH PROFILE

Parish Snapshot

Founded: 1971
Registered Households: about 800
Pastor: Rev. Michael H. Wright
Pastoral Admin. Assistant: Carol Durbin
Address: 12600 84th Ave. NE
Kirkland, WA 98034
Phone: (425) 823-0787

Pastors:
Rev. Edward Hogan (1971-1975)
Rev. William Heric (1997-1999)*
Rev. Michael H. Wright (2005-present)
*(A priest administrator, Rev. John Ludvik, served from 1998 to 2000)

*Parish Directory, 2007