

PARISH VISITS PROMOTION for St. Stephen the Witness Catholic Student Center at UNI-2022

Our mission is to form lifelong disciples who pray, serve and belong. We are responsible for about 2000 Catholic college students at UNI, Hawkeye College, and Allen Medical College. Over 88% of our students come from Iowa, and many of them return to communities and parishes in Iowa.

These years on campus are critical for the faith of our young people. About 36% of millennials consider themselves to have no religion, the “nones.” Of all of the Catholics baptized in the past 30 years, half no longer participate in the life of the Church. Of those Catholics who leave the practice of their faith, 80% do so by the age 23. On campus, other churches are actively inviting Catholic students away from the Church. What we do here matters.

We actively reach out to our students in collaboration with four missionaries from the Fellowship of Catholic University Students (FOCUS), who are very effective in forming college students in a mature Catholic faith. They coordinate over 215 in 32 small groups students who meet weekly for Bible studies. They also work one on one with students to show them how to evangelize others.

We form students through two Sunday Masses, daily Masses, the Sacrament of Reconciliation three times a week, retreats like Antioch and the Midwest FOCUS retreat, an annual national FOCUS conference during Christmas break, local service opportunities to encounter the poor, and spring break and summer service / immersion trips. This past year, 150 students went to the SEEK conference, 78 participated in our fall Antioch retreat, 33 went on our spring retreat, 10 went on a spring break service trip, and 8 will be on summer service trips.

Each Wednesday evening is our popular Primetime Mass, which is preceded by an hour of Eucharistic adoration and confessions. About 80 students participate each week.

This past year was our third year with FOCUS. One small but telling example of what is happening is that the number of students coming to daily Mass has grown significantly, going from averaging seven to now averaging over thirty-five.

This past fall, our students organized and delivered 272 Thanksgiving food baskets to help food insecure families in the Cedar Valley. Our Lenten tithing gave over \$7800 to relief efforts in Ukraine and Myanmar.

This past year, four students participated in the RCIA process, and were fully initiated into the life of the Church. We prepare engaged couples for the Sacrament of Matrimony. We also actively promote opportunities for discernment for priesthood and religious life.

Our staff is two full time persons and two part time persons (including the priest.) We also pay \$17,000 a year for each of the four FOCUS missionaries. We hire four UNI students to serve thirteen hours a week as peer ministers, in the areas of liturgy/music, service and justice, community life, and marketing/outreach. We are not a parish, and do not receive ongoing support from the archdiocese. Our budget for 2022-2023 is \$361,000. Our support comes from the students, community members who join us for Masses, alumni, friends, parents, parish appeals, our endowment, this parish visit, and generous benefactors from the larger Church who see the need for a vibrant presence of the Catholic Church on a state university campus. THANK YOU for your prayers and support!