

Sophia Christi Catholic Community
Fifteenth Anniversary Commemorative



August 13, 2022

How it all started

The international initiative in the Church known as Roman Catholic Womenpriests (RCWP) began with the ordination of seven women as priests on the Danube River on June 29, 2002 by Romulo Antonio Braschi. In the following years, Christine Mayr-Lurnetzberger, Dr. Gisele Forster, Dr.

Patricia Fresen (a former Dominican nun and seminary teacher) and Dr. Ida Raming (a theological scholar) were all ordained in Europe as Roman Catholic Bishops.



The mission of Roman Catholic Womenpriests is to prepare, ordain in Apostolic Succession, and support primarily women who are called by the Holy Spirit and their communities to a renewed priestly ministry rooted in justice and faithfulness to the Gospel.

On April 9, 2003 in Stuttgart, Germany, Dana Reynolds, was ordained the first American bishop. Then, four other RCWP/USA priests were ordained as bishops in a ceremony in California on April 19, 2009. These women bishops were ordained in full Apostolic Succession and openly carried on the work of ordaining women in the Roman Catholic Church. RCWP members do not intend to leave the Church but hope to initiate healthy change within it.

The very first ordinations of Roman Catholic Womenpriests in the United States were celebrated in July of 2006 in Pittsburgh, PA.

Reverend Toni Tortorilla, pastor of Sophia Christi Catholic Community, was ordained a deacon through the Roman Catholic

Womenpriest movement in Santa Barbara, California, and subsequently was ordained as a Roman Catholic priest in Portland, Oregon on July 28, 2007, by Bishop Patricia Fresen.

Today Roman Catholic Womenpriests are at the forefront of a model of service that offers the People of God a renewed priestly ministry in vibrant grassroots communities, where all are equal and all are welcome.



Bishop Patricia Fresen ordains Pastor Toni into the priesthood.



Mary and Paul Michaud (lower left corner) were foundational in the Eugene Community.

About Our Pastor, Reverend Toni Tortorilla

Toni's background includes many years of service within the Catholic Church. She graduated with a B.A. in Theology from St. Mary College in Leavenworth, Kansas in 1968. After graduation she served two Catholic parishes during the bumpy transition following the close of Vatican II. As Director of Religious Education she was responsible for adult faith formation, as well as preparation of catechists and curriculum for children and teens



Western Regional Call to Action Conference in Portland on May 18, 2018.



Fourth Anniversary Mass in Portland on August 13, 2011.

2007 she began celebrating the Eucharist on a monthly basis in Portland and in Eugene as pastor of Sophia Christi Catholic Community.

in these parishes. For three years she also taught Religion in Catholic high schools. She has served on Liturgy Committees and Pastoral Committees, developed outreach programs for alienated and disenfranchised Catholics and organized outreach ministries to GLBTQ individuals, their families and friends. All of these activities were attempts to follow the insistent call to the priesthood, anchored in her soul at age five, as the only way open to her as a woman within the Catholic Church.

In 1979, still following that same call, she graduated with a Master's degree in Counseling from San Diego State University. Unable to serve at Christ's Table as a Catholic woman, she decided to become a professional listener and reconciler of hearts in the secular confessional. She has been in Private Practice as a counselor working with individuals and couples for over 40 years now.

In 1998 She had the opportunity to return to her first love, the study of Theology, at the Graduate Theological Union in Berkeley. In 2001 she received a Master of Divinity degree from the Jesuit School of Theology. While there she was trained as a Spiritual Director and has been doing Spiritual Direction in addition to Counseling for the last 21 years.

Following her ordination as a priest in July of

Formation of Sophia Christi

Many people who came to Toni's ordination in 2007 wanted to continue celebrating the Eucharist with her, so in August 2007, the first Mass was celebrated at University Park United Methodist Church in North Portland. This turned out to be the first monthly Liturgy of the Sophia Christi Catholic Community.



Since Toni had also lived in Eugene for many years and had served in outreach ministries in two separate parishes, there were many friends and colleagues from Eugene who supported her calling to the priesthood and were present for her ordination. Several of them asked her to come celebrate Mass there following her ordination. In November she responded to their invitation and made the journey south. This proved to be the beginning of a monthly Liturgy in Eugene as well.

By the beginning of 2008, it was clear that both Portland and Eugene communities were developing roots, beginning to grow and needed a name. Everyone on the email list was invited to submit ideas for naming these two groups and very quickly one name rose to the top. When the email flurry came to a close, both Eugene and

Portland had decided to share the name Sophia Christi and to become one community residing in two locations. Thus we have one Leadership team comprised of members from both groups.

Various members travel between towns on occasion to attend Liturgies and community meetings in their sister-city. Our identity as Sophia Christi is enriched by our extended Oregon locations, and we believe Sophia is doing something new and exciting through our shared identity and valley-wide ministry.

About the Name



Statue of Sophia at Ephesus.

The figure of Sophia—Wisdom—appears in the Book of Proverbs, the Book of Wisdom, and in Sirach. In the Wisdom Literature of the Hebrew Bible, She is the personification of various attributes of God. By the first century BCE, She had become such an influential figure among Greek-speaking Jews that She functioned almost as a Goddess in the culture. Though She is a powerful expression of the great feminine archetypes, Her development was restricted by the monotheistic beliefs of Judaism. During the Hellenistic period (roughly 323 to 146 BCE) there seemed to be a growing interest in Sophia, and even a glorification of Her, which may have led to the eventual substitution of the word “Logos” for “Sophia” in New Testament writings.

We call ourselves “Sophia Christi” which literally means “the Wisdom of Christ” in order to claim the Divine Feminine tradition of our Christ-centered heritage.

Early Church “fathers” actually wondered whether Jesus might be the incarnation of Sophia! This is not a far-fetched question scripturally, given the many attributions of Sophia’s identity onto him. We celebrate the interplay of gender within our conceptual framework of the Divine in order to remember that first, God has no gender and second, Mystery is at the heart of Whoever and Whatever God is. Sophia and Jesus are the feminine and masculine aspects of a Divine Mystery attempting to reveal itself in a specific place and time in non-physical (Sophia) and physical (Jesus) form. We elevate the feminine because it has been forcefully repressed throughout history, but we worship at the altar of Mystery while finding our focus for worship in the person of Jesus, who is the Christ.

Guiding principles and a Mission Statement Were Developed

Our Mission Statement was written at a community-wide retreat.

We offer a refuge of healing and spiritual nourishment for all, including those who have been alienated or hurt by the Church.

Mission Statement

We are a Catholic Community under the guidance of Holy Wisdom Sophia, rooted in the consciousness of Vatican II, and continuing the renewal of the Church, the Body of Christ.

We celebrate Mass with an open Eucharistic table, served by women priests.

We are committed to inclusivity at every level — liturgy, language, ministry and theology — as we seek to honor the infinite expressions of the Divine.

We welcome you wherever you are on your spiritual path. We offer a refuge of healing and spiritual nourishment for all, including those who have been alienated or hurt by the Church.

In our unfolding journey, we strive to embody the social teaching of Jesus as we listen together for the voice and direction of Spirit in our outreach to the world.

Celebration of Sacraments

We celebrate all traditional seven Sacraments.

The Sacraments of Initiation

Baptism



At Sophia Christi infants, children and adults are ordinarily baptized during Sunday Mass so the entire community can participate in the celebration.

Baptism sacramentally initiates one's spiritual life in Christian community. The waters of baptism symbolically "birth" us into the waiting arms of a receptive and nurturing church—the communal Body of Christ. In and through this sacrament we receive and welcome infants, children and newcomers into the family. We

Baptism in Portland on May 9, 2009.

make commitments to one another, commitments of love, compassion, and presence with the intention of serving others as we work together for the highest good of all.



While we welcome everyone to the Eucharistic table, we also encourage parents of older children who have not been baptized and/or have not yet received their first communion to consider the tradition of preparing children for these sacraments.

Baptism of Angelina Valdez, held by her father Brian, in Portland on July 11, 2015



Valdez Baptism, blessing of the parents and godparents in Portland on July 11, 2015.



Jim Learned blesses newly baptized Valdez baby, with parents Brian and Elizabeth, in Portland on July 11, 2015.

Confirmation



Confirmation is the sacrament that follows Baptism as part of the initiation process with God and the Church, where the candidate receives the gift of the Holy Spirit and continues their journey with Christ.

Josie Miranda's Confirmation in Eugene on April 8, 2018 with her sponsor Carey Hilbert and Altar Server Carol Zolkoske.



Josie Miranda's Confirmation in Eugene on April 8, 2018.

The Eucharist or Holy Communion

Eucharist celebrates our oneness in and with the Cosmic Christ. It reunites the human family when it feels broken and invites us to re-experience the divinity within each person, and within all of us together as one family. When we gather at Christ's table we re-member ourselves as the people of God and re-commit to honoring the divinity within each and all.

At Sophia Christi we welcome everyone to the table of Christ, believing Jesus would do the same.



Aria and Emma Goodman receive their first communion on November 12, 2010.



Sophia Christi Tenth Anniversary Mass on August 12, 2017 in Portland.

The Sacraments of Healing

Reconciliation or Penance

The voice of conscience can sometimes be a troubling task-master urging us to alter course or change our hearts, mend our ways, or correct our attitudes. There are a multitude of cultural and social norms, as well as our own needs for security, affection, control and pleasure, that influence how we think, feel and decide. At times we find ourselves stuck in patterns we recognize as contrary to our values. At other times we want more accountability in our effort to become less self-centered or more responsive to the legitimate needs of others. The sacrament of Reconciliation offers a place and a time to look more deeply at both our motives and our aspirations while being held in the arms of an unconditionally loving God.

The sacrament of Reconciliation is not the same as counseling, nor is it spiritual direction. The focus is conscience—the voice of God within—and how you respond to its directives. Sometimes the challenge lies in stripping away the cultural or religious thought-patterns that mimic and conceal the authentic voice of conscience. Sometimes it's a matter of holding oneself accountable to that voice and learning to partner with God in the process. It is a sacrament of hope and healing, meant to assist in letting go and moving on, feeling encouraged and supported on the journey.

Anointing of the Sick



Anointing of the sick with Pastor Toni and Susannah Lustica in Eugene on August 6, 2012

Anyone experiencing a health crisis may request the sacrament of anointing. In most cases they choose to be anointed during the Liturgy with community participation.

Illness enters our lives in a variety of forms—physically, mentally, emotionally and even spiritually. In those times we especially need the care and compassion of others, the support and companionship of family and friends. Through the sacrament of Anointing the church community embraces the one who is sick and enfolds them in the healing energy of the Body of Christ. Ordinarily Anointing happens within the Liturgy, so the entire community can participate in offering prayers for the one in need of healing. At other times, Anointing may occur in hospital or in one's own home by contacting the pastor.

This special blessing is one way to make the ill feel strengthened and more connected with God in both mind and body.



Anointing of the Sick in Eugene on August 6, 2012.



Anointing of the Sick during Sophia Christi Mass in Portland on October 12, 2013.

The Sacraments of Service

Through Marriage and Holy Orders, couples and the clergy promise to serve and build up the Church community.

Marriage

We celebrate the love and commitment of all couples and offer wedding preparation and services for both same-sex and heterosexual couples. The devotion to each other, and to Christ, mirrors Christ's love and service to the church.



Wedding of Giovana and Cathy in Portland on June 4, 2014.



Wedding of Diane Carpenter and Sandra Inman.

Holy Orders

Sophia Christi Members actively participated in several Portland area ordinations of Womenpriests and deacons. The members helped prepare the altar with banners, flowers and linens, and prepared food and decorations for the receptions. Members served as greeters, lectors, Eucharistic Ministers and musicians during the ceremonies.



Reverend Juanita Cordero, Reverend Toni Tortorilla, Bishop Olivia Doko, and Reverend Kathleen Bellefeuille-Rice participate in Helen Umphrey's Ordination in Portland on October 19, 2013.

Celebration of Mass at Sophia Christi Community during our Fifteen Years



Kathleen Glover and Leanne Kerner prepare the altar for the Third Anniversary Mass in Portland on August 14, 2010.



Mike Newton and Ron Evers participate in the Introductory Rites for the Tenth Anniversary Mass in Portland on August 12, 2017.



Dianna Shaffer and Leanne Kerner participate in The Introductory Rites for the Tenth Anniversary Mass in Portland on August 12, 2017.



Michelle Michaels-Tyner participates in The Introductory Rites for the Tenth Anniversary Mass in Portland on August 12, 2017.

The Introductory Rites of the Mass includes the Greeting, the Opening Prayer, Penitential Rite and the Gloria.



Joy Learned, Ron Evers and Jim Learned prepare to bring the collection, wine and bread to the alter during Sophia Christi's Sixth Anniversary in Portland on August 11, 2013.



Sophia Christi Tenth Anniversary Mass in Portland on August 12, 2017.



Doug Smith leads the congregation in the singing of the Gloria during the Sophia Christi Tenth Anniversary Mass, Portland on August 12, 2017.

The Liturgy of the Word includes the Readings, Gospel, Homily and Prayers of the Faithful.



Annie Hayes reads the First Reading during Sophia Christi's Tenth Anniversary Mass, Portland on August 12, 2017.



Pastor Toni prepares to read the Gospel at the Sophia Christi Tenth Anniversary Mass in Portland on August 12, 2017.



Pastor Toni gives an insightful homily at Sophia Christi's First Anniversary Mass in Portland on August 9, 2008.

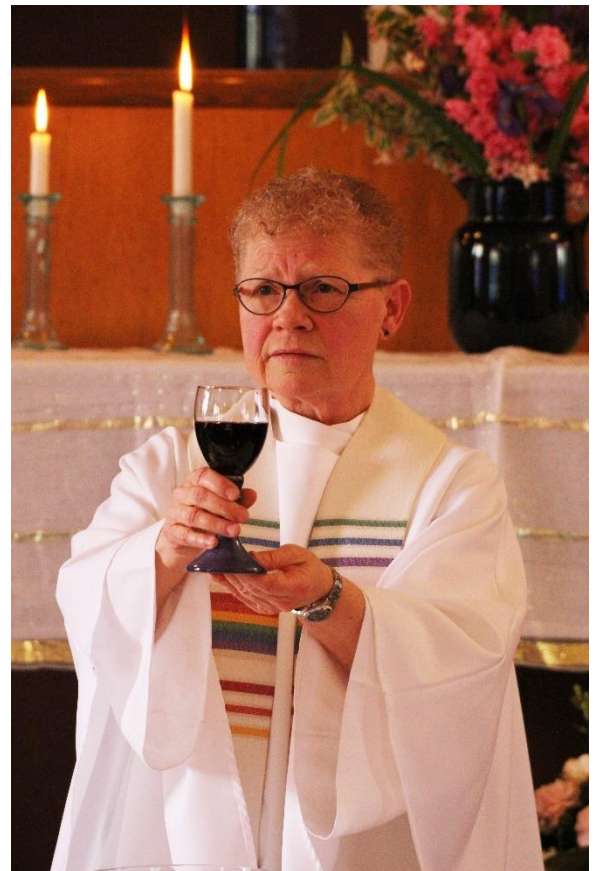


The Profession of Faith is read by Pastor Toni assisted by altar servers Deacon Bob Larroque and Deacon Helen Umphrey at the Sophia Christi Sixth Anniversary Mass in Portland on July 11, 2013.

The Liturgy of the Eucharist includes the Eucharist Prayer, the Our Father and Holy Communion.



Reverend Toni prepares the wine for the Eucharist Prayer during the Sophia Christi Roman Catholic Community Mass in Portland on May 10, 2014.



Reverend Toni proclaims the Eucharist Prayer during the Sophia Christi Roman Catholic Community Mass in Portland on May 10, 2014.



The preparation of the altar and the gifts during Easter Mass in Eugene on May 8, 2011.



The Sophia Christi congregation recites the Lord's Prayer at Sophia Christi's Sixth Anniversary Mass in Portland on July 11, 2013.



The Sophia Christi members recite the Lord's Prayer at the Tenth Anniversary Mass in Portland on August 12, 2017.

Bill Urban greets Sally Cohn during the Kiss of Peace at Sophia Christi's First Anniversary Mass in Portland on August 9, 2008.



Kiss of Peace at Sophia Christi's Sixth Anniversary Mass in Portland, on August 11, 2013.

Helen Umphrey gives Jim Anderson a special blessing during the Kiss of Peace at Sophia Christi's Sixth Anniversary in Portland on August 11, 2013.





Eucharistic Ministers Marguerite Larroque, Dianna Shaffer and Leanne Kerner assist Reverend Toni in the distribution of communion at Sophia Christi's Eleventh Anniversary Mass in Portland on August 11, 2018.



Altar Server Joy Learned assists Pastor Toni during the Sophia Christi Roman Catholic Community Mass in Portland on May 10, 2014.



Bob Larroque leads the procession that ends the Sophia Christi Sixth Anniversary Mass in Portland on August 11, 2013.



During extreme heat on August 13, 2016 Mass was moved to the basement of the Northminster Presbyterian Church in Portland.

Potlucks After Mass

A tradition of the Sophia Christi celebration has been a potluck meal following each monthly Mass. Annually there is a special anniversary Mass. All people attending the mass were invited to the meal. Many of the meals you would consider as feasts, with delicious main courses and many side items.



Renee Lippay at Sophia Christi's First Anniversary at University Park United Methodist Church in Portland on August 9, 2008.



Second Anniversary Sophia Christi Mass and Potluck in Portland on August 8, 2009.



Second Anniversary Sophia Christi Mass and Potluck in Portland on August 8, 2009.



Rhoda Kirwin, Dorothy Attneave, Dianne Dugaw, Amanda Powell, Kathy Pekarsky, and Corol Zolkoske at the Dinner following the Mass in Eugene on February 12, 2010.



Potluck after Sophia Christi Mass in Eugene on July 14, 2013.



Potluck after Sophia Christi Mass in Eugene on July 14, 2013.



Potluck after Sophia Christi Mass in Portland on October 12, 2013.



Joy Wallace and Drew Lippay at potluck after the Third Anniversary Mass in Portland on August 14, 2010.

Retreats

Retreats were conducted annually at a location central to the Portland and the Eugene communities. They were conducted by professional facilitators.



First Lenten retreat at the Silver Falls Conference Center on January 4, 2014.



First Lenten retreat at the Silver Falls Conference Center on January 4, 2014.

Summer Picnic

An annual picnic was held at the country home of Carolyn and Gary Zolkoske near Stayton. Their home is equal distance from the Eugene and the Portland Churches. There was good food and the opportunity for members to explore the Zolkoske Estate.



Joy Learned and her dog Patches at Sophia Christi's Picnic in Stayton, Oregon on August 4, 2013.



Reverend Toni and Carol Zolkoske at Sophia Christi's Picnic in Stayton, Oregon on August 4, 2013.



Sophia Christi Picnic in Stayton, Oregon on August 4, 2013.



Sophia Christi Picnic in Stayton, Oregon on August 4, 2013.

Kathy Pekarsky and Rhoda Kirwin at the Sophia Christi Picnic in Stayton, Oregon on August 4, 2013.



A walk around the grounds during the Sophia Christi Picnic in Stayton, Oregon on August 4, 2013.



*Bruce Turner and Mary Lyn Villaume
at the Sophia Christi Picnic in Stayton
on July 15, 2017.*



*Maryellen Coutu, Terry Brown and
Rhoda Kirwin at the Sophia Christi
Picnic in Stayton on July 15, 2017.*



*Gary Zolkoske, Dianne Turner,
Josie Miranda, Terry Brown,
Jessica Katon (our current parish
council teassurer) and Reverend
Toni at the Sophia Christi Picnic
in Stayton on July 15, 2017.*

Ministry Within the Sophia Christi Community

Liturgical Ministry

Lector

The lector reads lessons from sacred Scripture, except for the Gospel, recites the psalm between the readings and presents the intentions for the congregation.



Leanne Kerner reads at Sophia Christi Mass in Portland on May 10, 2014.

Dennis Barrett-Dennehy
at the Sophia Christi
Roman Catholic
Community Mass in
Portland on May 10, 2014.





Nancy Barrett-Dennehy
reading at Sophia Christi
Roman Catholic Community
Mass in Portland on May 10,
2014.



*Lector Amanda Powell on
Pentecost in Eugene on June
12, 2011.*

Lector Cecile Blumn in Eugene.



Eucharistic Minister

The Eucharistic Minister assists the priest in administering the elements of Holy Communion, the consecrated bread and wine.



Eucharistic Minister Kathy Pekarsky and Reverend Toni on Fifth Anniversary Mass in Eugene on August 12, 2012.

Hospitality/Greeter

The Greeter welcomes people to the service and hands out bulletins, as well as making guests feel welcome at the potluck after Mass.



Greeters welcome members and newcomers in Eugene.

Musician/Choir

The musicians provide music for the liturgical services.



Bob Lorroque, Doug Smith, Bill Ready, Sally Cohn, and Peggy McComb at University Park United Methodist Church in Portland.



Anna Sasaki plays the piano at Sophia Christi's Sixth Anniversary Mass in Portland on August 11, 2013. on August 12, 2017.



Marlise Strobe Labyrinth and Mass at her studio, Sophia Center at Gabriel Woods in Battleground, Washington on July 17, 2011.



John DeLucca and Doug Smith play at the Fifth Anniversary Mass in Portland on August 11, 2012.



Choir members Susannah Lustica-Hall, Dorothy Attneave, Dianne Dugaw at the piano, and Judith Manning in Eugene.



Choir members Dianne Dugaw, Dorothy Attneave and Judith Manning singing at a retreat.

Altar Server

An altar server assists the celebrant in Sophia Christi's liturgical services. The altar server attends to supporting tasks at the altar such as fetching and carrying, helps bring up the gifts, brings up the book, among other things.



Joy Learned assists Pastor Toni at the Fifth Anniversary Mass in Portland on August 11, 2012.



Joy Wallace assists Pastor Toni at Sophia Christi Mass in Portland on June 9, 2012.

Community Ministry

Connecting the community through phone contact, home visits, care and attention to needs within the extended family of Sophia Christi.

Visiting/supporting the ill and homebound

Library/Librarian

Books, video and audio materials held at our Portland location available for circulation.

Parish Council

Commitment of time and focus on the vision and mission of Sophia Christi

Anchor point for the extended family residing in two geographic locations—Eugene and Portland, OR.



Dianne Turner was instrumental in setting up Sophia Christi Catholic Community as a non-profit and she was the first parish council president. Picture taken at annual picnic in Stayton on July 15, 2017.

Outreach & Social Justice

LGBT

Parade and Booth staffing annually

Community of Welcoming Congregations

Oregon United for Marriage

Eugene Celebration Booth staffing annually



(Left to right) Diana Shaffer, Dennis Barrett-Dennehy, Bill Urban, Maryellen Coutu, Leanne Kerner, Joy Learned, Nancy Barrett-Dennehy and Reverend Toni Tortorilla carry the Call to Action banner in the Gay Pride Parade in Portland on June 19, 2011.



Judith Manning, Dorothy Attneave and Rhoda Kirwin person our booth at Eugene Pride 2013.



Sophia Christi, in the Gay Pride Parade in Portland on June 17, 2012.



Carol Zolkoske, Dianna Shaffer, Reverend Toni Tortorilla, Patti Pomerantz and Joy Learned represent the Sophia Christi Catholic Community at the Gay Pride Parade in Portland on June 17, 2012.



Reverend Tara Wilkins and Reverend Toni Tortorilla at a Community of Welcoming Congregations booth at the gay pride event in Eugene on June 15, 2013.



Reverend Toni Tortorilla and Bishop Gene Robinson of the Episcopal Church when Multnomah County first issued marriage licenses to same-sex couples on May 19, 2014.

St. Andrew's Food Pantry



*Michelle Michaels-Tyner and Ron Evers
Collection of food for the food pantry, Sophia
Christi Mass in Portland on October 12, 2013.*



*Bob Larroque brings food from the Sophia
Christi food collection and stocks the St
Andrew's Food Pantry on October 25, 2013.*

Conferences



Panel Discussion - Women Priests, Portland on May 31, 2009.

Reverend Toni says Mass assisted by Joy Wallace and Otto Schlumpf at Western Regional Call to Action Conference in Portland on May 18, 2012. Many Sophia Christi members participated in the conference.



Dianna Shafer stands in front of the banner she created for the Western Regional Call to Action Conference in Portland on May 18, 2012.

Catholic Worker House in Eugene

The Eugene Sophia Christi community provided assistance to the Eugene Catholic Worker House in Eugene for approximately 2 years. The community members worked at the house to make sandwiches that were then distributed by the house volunteers to individuals in need within Eugene. For a short time, some community members volunteered at the Catholic Worker House that was a temporary shelter for women and their children as they were gaining the support necessary to transition into safe dwelling spaces. Some community members also prepared supper meals for the House residents and made soup that was served on Sunday mornings in the downtown Eugene area.

Rose Haven in Portland

Rose Haven Day Shelter and Community Center: to provide day shelter, resources, emotional support and community connections to women, children and marginalized genders experiencing homelessness and poverty. Sophia Christi donates bedding, clothing and other items.

Mass and faith sharing in your community or in your Home



Labyrinth walk and Mass on the property of Marlise Strobe and Dave Zine at Sophia Center at Gabriel Woods in Battleground, Washington on July 17, 2011.

Mass on the property of Marlise Strobe and Dave Zine at Sophia Center at Gabriel Woods in Battleground, Washington on July 17, 2011.





Mass on the property of property of Marlise Strobe and Dave Zine at Sophia Center at Gabriel Woods in Battleground, Washington on July 17, 2011.



Meal served after the Labyrinth and Mass in Battleground, Washington on July 17, 2011.

A Christmas Eve Home Mass tradition started with Dianne Dugaw and Amanda Powell inviting the Eugene community to their home.



Dianne Turner and Kathy Pekarisky at Eugene Christmas Eve Home Mass on December 24, 2013.



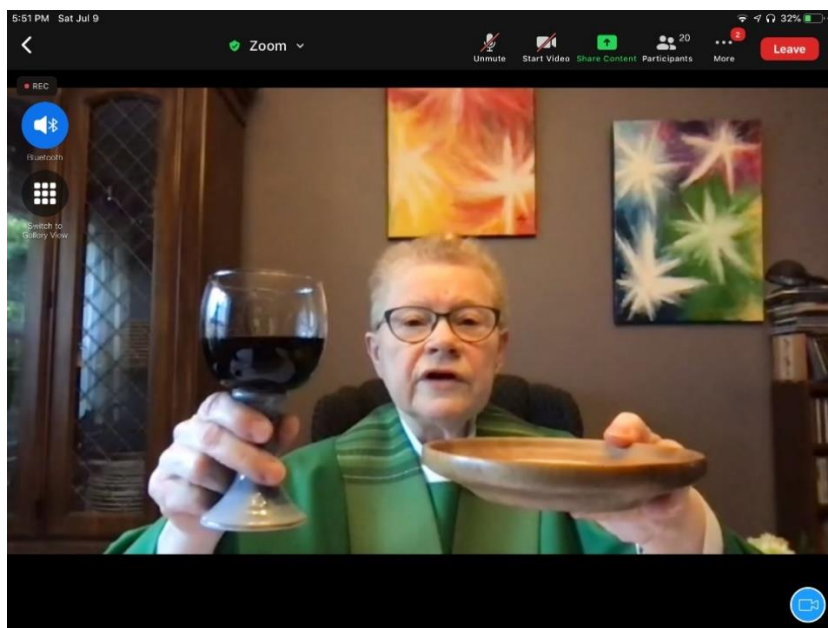
Mitch Moore and Dianne Dugaw at Eugene Christmas Eve Home Mass on December 24, 2013.



Joy Learned, Patti Pomerantz, Cecile Blumn, Maddy Blumn and Andrew Blumn at Christmas Eve Mass in Eugene on December 24, 2013.

Coronavirus Results in Major Changes to Sophia Christi

Sophia Christi moved online in April of 2020, with the Easter Vigil on Holy Saturday becoming our first Zoom Mass. We will continue celebrating Eucharist virtually at 5:00 pm on the second Saturday of each month until it is safe for everyone to gather in-person again. We also have a monthly Zoom social meeting giving members a chance to get to know each other. The pandemic has provided an opportunity for members of our extended community—spanning two large cities and three smaller towns—to begin ‘seeing’ each other face-to-face for the first time through internet technologies. We continue to embrace the pastoral needs of progressive women and men within and outside the Roman Catholic tradition, representing an alternative voice on theology, liturgy and practice.



Zoom Mass on July 9, 2022.

Zoom Mass on July 9, 2022.



Member Stories

Kristina Bak

“I cried through my first Mass with the Eugene Sophia Christi community. From the moment Toni Tortorilla began her processional into the chapel, I felt I had come home to the Church I’d dreamed of through years of alienation. At Saint Anne’s in Seattle I’d been baptized at age thirty into a Catholic Church passionate with the promises of Vatican II and the inclusive social justice encouraged by our beloved Archbishop Hunthausen. I was offered a spiritual Mystery to embrace and explore. Later in that decade I was radically challenged to examine my attitudes toward race, materialism, and the status quo by Father Ted Kennedy, Dame “Mum Shirl” Smith, and the Redfern Catholic community in Sydney, Australia. All along the way I was guided by hard working, deep thinking, prayerful nuns, the first of whom I met in Seattle explained her role to me as “sort of a lady priest.” As a convert, that was the Catholicism I knew and loved for a decade before it all slipped away through my own geographical relocation and changing attitudes in the Vatican. Now when I make the long drive over the mountains from Central Oregon to Eugene for Mass, I feel again the heartbeat of a living Church.”

Carol Zolkoske



“Everyone in my family knows where I will be each 2nd Sunday of the month. I will be in Eugene for the Sophia Christi Catholic Community Mass. This has been a special time for me since Sophia Christi was established in 2007. I drive, in all sorts of weather, almost 60 miles one way in order to attend. What, you may ask, is worth all that trouble? Do I go because it’s an obligation, because all my friends and family are there, or because I like to drive? The answer is no. This is the short list of the many reasons. I go to participate in a Spirit-filled mass and to listen to faith filled homilies that make sense for my life. I attend because Sophia Christi is inclusive. The members are kind and caring people from all walks of life. Strangers are made to feel welcome.

The choir and accompanying piano have energy and enthusiasm. I enjoy the delicious potluck afterwards where there is much laughter and visiting. Much has changed in my lifetime in the area of social justice, for which I am grateful, but what I am most grateful for is the opportunity to attend Catholic Mass with a kind and compassionate woman priest.”

A paragraph by Carol Zolkoske from the March 6, 2022 Newsletter:

“I have found that my inner strength continues to move me forward. In these challenging times, my support system becomes yet more important. It is a source of comfort and renewal when I reflect on the many blessings I receive from the Sophia Christi Community. The consistent, positive message in Toni’s homilies have reinforced my faith and helped me navigate everyday life. A sense of joy and being ready to meet all challenges rises from my years of being a member of this beautiful

community of caring people. My wish at this time is that all people could have this sense of peace and togetherness that comes from a community such as Sophia Christi.”

Danielle Bastien



“I was drawn to Sophia Christi because of the way the community lives out the value of inclusion. Language in the liturgy reflects the worth of each person and that God is both feminine and masculine and not always personified. The Eucharistic table is always open and welcome to all people, no conditions. In addition, I appreciate that the community is rooted in social justice and is working to create change, and all of this is done with a grounding in the radical messages of the Bible and Catholic Social Teaching. Community members are welcoming, and I connect well with Toni’s pastoral presence which is both passionate and gentle, wise and humble. I continue to be a part of the Sophia Christi community because I am inspired by the values, way of being, and people that are a part of this community.”

Judith Manning



“I belong to a Catholic parish that’s known for being progressive (but not progressive enough to suit me). The priest is OK but gives very intellectual homilies that leave me cold spiritually. I love my parish family, and will continue attending there to be part of that. But I also go to Sophia Christi. Though it’s only once a month, it meets my spiritual needs. Toni’s homilies are always inspiring and moving. Sophia Christi also gives me another parish family to love, which I do.”

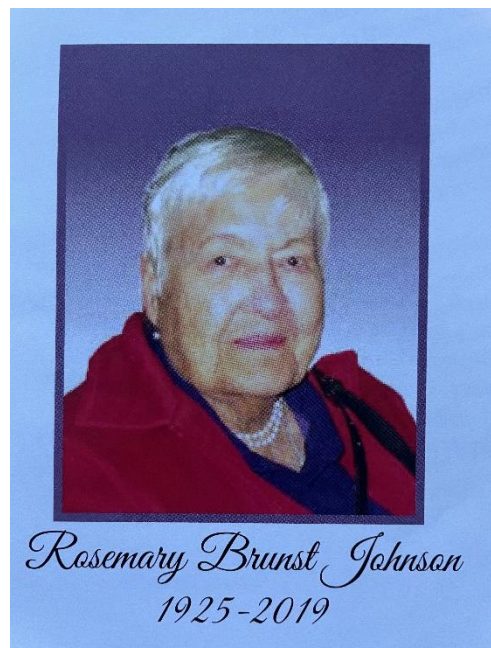
Mike Newton (on left) and Ron Evers (on right)



“Ron was the first to come to Sophia Christi. He was invited by a friend of his and he liked what he saw. Then he invited me and I also liked Sophia Christi. We especially like Toni’s warm and welcoming attitude. We both like her homilies and her messages in the monthly newsletter. We enjoy the music and the group fellowship. It is a small group and you get to know most everyone. It is a warm and friendly group.”



Rosemary Johnson



“For 87 years I was a second-class citizen in my religion and now I feel resurrected. Being part of Sophia Christi has lead to a deepening of my faith and commitment to progressive Christianity.”

Anna Lankutis

“I have been a member of the Sophia Christi Community for about five years. I came to the community in search of a more “genuine” spiritual practice, than what I previously had been involved with when I first came to Oregon. I find that the Mass with Sophia Christi is grace filled and I truly feel the presence of Christ there. I am a cradle Catholic, and was fortunate to have a solid foundation in post Vatican II “new thought, and practice” in the Church, when I was in middle school and high school. In my home parish at the time a more progressive climate continued into the early 2000’s. It seems the Holy Spirit had chosen Central Montana to be a place to administer some of her deep and mystical teachings. However, the climate in the church changed, and so did I. When I got to Oregon, I was adrift of a solid spiritual practice although I have always had a deep connection to mysticism and a passion for studying and integrating the mysteries presented through the practices of contemplation and spiritual works. I have found that Sophia Christi provides all that I consider important for developing an increasingly deeper spiritual life. Because of the leadership and guidance of Pastor Toni, I believe I have the opportunity to embrace and explore the deeper mysteries of my faith, and live an increasingly genuine life in Christ. I am part of the contemplative prayer group, a lector, Eucharistic minister, and have been recently active as an altar server. I really love serving the Sophia Christi community through these activities. I am constantly grateful for the gifts and the blessings I have been given through participation in our community!” (July 7, 2019)

Josie Miranda

“I am grateful for the opportunity to serve on the Sophia Christi parish council. I was introduced to Sophia Christi about 3 years ago and my life hasn’t been the same since. As an infant I was baptized Catholic, but from age 5 on was raised a Jehovah’s Witness. In my early 20s I became disillusioned with the faith and ended up rejecting it and religion in general. However, several years later I found myself struggling with a personal crisis that I couldn’t manage on my own, and I began to understand that “something” important was missing from my life. Thankfully, it’s when we find ourselves stumbling in the dark that God sends a bright lantern, and my lantern lit a path for me that led directly to Sophia Christi. I received communion for the first time and was confirmed in the presence of my Sophia Christi family in Eugene, and today I look forward to deepening my relationship with Christ through my service to this grace-filled parish that I have come to love so deeply. “Here I am. Send me!” – Isaiah 6:8” - Council Member (December 1, 2019)



Anthony (Tony) Meyer and Joan Claffey

“Joan and I are newcomers to the Sophia Christi Community, participating less than one year and still learning. The force of theological thinking represented by Sophia Christi drives our participation. Some of this thinking is represented in liturgical action. We

are particularly moved by the distributed offering of bread and wine which symbolizes distributed participation in the priesthood of Christ. We find Pastor Tortorilli's homilies lead us to reflect in more profound and joyous ways on our place in God's plan. We thank the Sophia Christi Community for being the channel for liberation regarding these and other dimensions of our catholic experience."

Epilogue from the Parish Council

We would like to take the opportunity of this special milestone to recognize the many people that contributed their time and resources to make the Sophia Christi Catholic Community a great success. While having a full-time job as a Spiritual Director and Counselor, Reverend Toni served as our pastor for the last fifteen years. She officiated at all of the ceremonies of the parish including monthly Mass at two locations, periodic home Masses, all of the sacraments, and memorial services. She actively participated in all parish business, financial and liturgical planning work of the parish council. She was a positive participant in Sophia Christi community outreach programs such as conferences, and gay pride parades and booths. She has prepared a monthly newsletter with her meaningful reflections for the month and parish news, and monthly liturgical aids. Thanks for all she does for the members of Sophia Christi and as a representative of the parish.

Thanks to all current and former parish council members for their work in keeping the parish running smoothly in terms of finances, liturgical planning and other parish business. Thanks to the many people that served as greeters, lectors, greeters, Eucharistic Ministers, altar servers and musicians helping to make the services meaningful to the congregation. Thanks to the people that helped prepare and serve food resulting in many memorable potlucks, picnics and receptions. Thanks to all who have participated in our community outreach programs, positively representing our community. Thanks to those that have donated money, food and clothing to programs for people in need that we support. Thanks to those that helped develop and maintain the website, the Facebook page, email address lists and in managing Zoom Masses and meetings.

A special thanks to members who have consistently gone out of your way to make Sophia Christi an inclusive and welcoming community for so many.