

## 2017 – A Celebration of Community

Here we are, once more at the start of a new year. For some the last year was eventful while for others rather quiet. Our hope is that all came away with treasures for the heart and healing gratitude for the soul.



We, here at OLA's Stephen Ministry, have been steadily growing in the last few months as a stream of applicants were interviewed and admitted to our first training. Training will begin on January 23<sup>rd</sup> and it is again time for us to ask earnestly for your prayers. The next 6 months will be a time of learning, growing in spirituality, forming bonds as a team and always holding gently in prayer, those who will come to this ministry for care. We ask for special prayers for our leaders who prepare for this first training and for bonds of deep caring and support to grow within our ministry team.

As a people constantly challenged to follow Christ's way, we continue to build community. A gamut of emotions was expressed around and after the November elections – all of it held gently in the hands of our good Lord. 'We know that all things work for good for those who love God, who are called according to his purpose' Romans 8:28 NAB. Having done our civic duty of voting, we continue with our Christian duty of prayerful, loving acceptance of self and every fellowman. As true proof of this, the legacy of the Year of Mercy continued at OLA, with all caring ministries reaching out in love to others. Most amazing was the quick and generous response to the call for shipments to the military. It spoke volumes of our heartfelt support for our military and their families; many of whom spend the holidays with a family member stationed away. We raise up a salute to these folks and pray that Stephen Ministry will grow to be a support for them in their time of need.



The efforts of the middle school fellowship ministry, adult faith formation during the children's religious education hour, and many others form a framework that is going to be invaluable to our Stephen Ministry. A parish that shares community life can better reach out to, and guide those who need care, toward the ministries that can be of assistance to them. Stephen Ministry relies heavily on that sort of network so that ministers and leaders can better focus on being fully present to care, and on continued training and education. Kudos to all those who continually strive to infuse life into our parish community! Many blessings on you for all you do. And to all - a joyous New Year, blest with a hopeful, loving community!