

The History of Alternative Giving at St. John's

Alternative Giving was initiated in 2007 by the '*Against Global Poverty*' (subsequently named '*Embracing Global Solidarity*') subcommittee of St. John's Social Justice Committee. The group's overall goal was to increase Parishioners' awareness of the poor and marginalized across the globe and of opportunities for the US to mitigate and respond to their situation. Alternative Giving was an early activity of the group and has become an annual Parish event.

The intent of Alternative Giving is to bring awareness to the work of a few small-scale organizations working to alleviate poverty while giving Parishioners an opportunity to give meaningful gifts to their loved ones during the Christmas season. The four or five organizations that are sponsored each year were all ones with whom the Parish – or an individual parishioner – had a personal connection.

Initially, Parishioners could purchase a pair of sneakers for an orphan in Haiti, or fabric for a seamstress in El Salvador. In return they received a card indicating the nature of the gift which they could then give to their friend or relative in celebration of Christmas. The focus on selling from a 'catalog of gifts' has recently been replaced by focus on a particular monetary donation. Many parishioners purchase these 'gifts' for their grandchildren and use the opportunity to alert them to situations of need around the world.

When the *Embracing Global Solidarity* group had to disband because its members were aging and needed to take care of family responsibilities, Alternative Giving continued as a self-standing activity under the overall sponsorship of the Social Ministry Committee. Members of the organizing group find themselves unable to continue and are grateful that the Knights are ready to continue the work.

–Sarah Lutterodt

From the Knights of Columbus Columbia Council 7559: Heartfelt thanks to the hard work and dedication of volunteers over these many years and the great compassion of Parishioners in supporting Alternative Giving. We are honored to continue this important effort in 2022.

St. John's Parishioners have helped the poor and marginalized in El Salvador, Ghana, Haiti, and Tanzania, as well as immigrants to the United States. Last year, your generous donations totaled more than \$15,000, reaching out across the globe to improve lives.

Thank you so very much for your kindness and generosity: you are truly making a difference in the lives of our brothers and sisters worldwide.