

Semi-Annual News and Updates

Our goal for this semi-annual newsletter is to inform the Diocese of Bridgeport community about the Aquinas Fellowship Community and its beneficial impact on our Catholic Schools.

Visit Our
Website

Prayer

A Student's Prayer: Come, Holy Spirit, pour forth your brilliance upon my mind, clear my thoughts of sin and of ignorance. Grant me the patience to understand, a retentive memory, method and ease in learning, and abundant grace in expressing myself. Guide the beginning of my work, direct its progress, and bring it to successful completion. This I ask through Jesus Christ, Amen.



A Message from the Superintendent

When I envisioned this program being part of the Diocese of Bridgeport, my goal was to attract faith-filled educators, counselors, and administrators to bolster our Catholic schools while providing our Fellows with strong community support and spiritual development opportunities to aid them on this journey. The Aquinas Fellowship Program launched in the Fall of 2019 and we have been truly blessed with the outcome. Our schools have benefitted greatly by the energy, exuberance, and commitment these Fellows have given in their experiential learning assignments, and our Fellows have gained valuable experiences while developing rich and rewarding relationships within their schools and community. They are truly making a difference in the lives of the children they educate and the schools they support as you will read in the reflections and testimonials below. Three additional Fellows will be joining this Fall and we look forward to welcoming them into the Aquinas Fellowship Community.

I am beyond grateful to Foundations in Education and our generous donor for making this vision become a reality and for the positive effect the Aquinas Fellowship Community has

had in our schools.

Sincerely,

Dr. Steven Cheeseman

Meet the Aquinas Fellowship Community

Program Team:



Superintendent - Dr. Steven Cheeseman



Spiritual Director - Father Dunn



Program Director- Debbie Mitchell



Residential/Community Director - Danielle Cheeseman

Fellows:



Katie Curry, Second Year Fellow

-Pursuing a degree in Education

-Working as a middle school English teacher at St. Rose, Newtown



Hope Bahnke, First Year Fellow

-Pursuing a degree in Public Administration, with a certificate in Non-Profit Management

-Working in OSS, St. Theresa School, St. Joseph School, and St. Mary School, Bethel

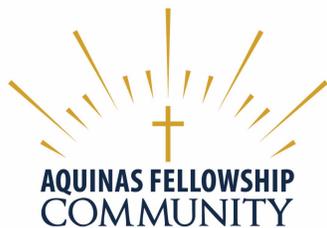
Clare Foertsch, First Year Fellow

-Pursuing a degree in School Counseling

-Working in first grade classroom at St. Gregory the Great School



Program Updates



After its launch last year, the fellowship program has begun to grow and develop with new talent, perspectives, and participants. To reflect this growth and journey, a new logo has been created to represent the fellowship program and reflect upon its meaning to the community and its participants. The colors coordinate to those of the Diocese of Bridgeport Catholic Schools logo in order to reflect the partnership created between the two as fellows work in the schools and their communities and form bonds with their students and peers. The rays behind the words are taken from a common symbol for St. Thomas Aquinas which is the sun. The cross is in the center of the logo, as faith is the central component not only in the program but in our lives.

Retreat Reflection by Hope Bahnke



When I moved into the fellowship housing in mid-August of last year I was filled with nervous excitement as the next few years of my life were beginning to unfold before me. Time passed so quickly as I began to adjust to my new environment, new job, and new academic pursuits that I could hardly believe we had reached January when we gathered for our retreat. Mike Clauberg came to speak to us and guide us on our retreat, and it was like my life had made a full circle. Mike, or as I had known him at the time, Mr. Clauberg, taught at my high school on Long Island. During my sophomore year, I took Mr. Clauberg's religion course on morality. A lot of what I know now can be accredited to the things I had learned in that class, though I probably did not realize its importance at the time. It was most notable to me to reflect upon the application of the things I had learned years ago in high school and, while I have continued to grow, many of those core values and teachings have remained in the forefront of my mind. Seeing an old high school teacher again and reflecting on the impact his class had on my life only reinforces my admiration for my friends and housemates, Katie and Clare, as they pursue their careers in education. I have no doubt their students will remember them for a lifetime as I have remembered Mr. Clauberg.



Katie Curry was the confirmation sponsor for two of her former students. On being asked to be her students' sponsor, Katie said, "I felt so honored they both asked me. They were a part of the very first class I ever taught and they are so special to me. It means so much that they thought highly enough of me to be a guide for them as they make the decision to fully join the Catholic faith. Having them as students and being their sponsor is such a blessing!"

Hope Bahnke aided in organizing and executing a fundraiser at St. Joseph School in Danbury which raised \$42k all while students committed to and performed acts of kindness for their communities. Students made cards to uplift the spirits of patients in nursing homes, hospice, and children's hospitals, collected and delivered gently used books and toys to local charities, and prayed the Rosary. These are just a few of the many acts of kindness in which students participated.

In addition to working in a first grade classroom, Clare Foertsch helped in the diocesan online academy, reaching beyond the St. Greg's school community and working with students from other schools in the diocese. "I really enjoyed teaching my first grade distance learning group! We began each meeting with prayer, I let the kids take turns being "prayer leader" and choosing our prayer. I am so grateful to have the opportunity to work with these children this year. They have such a fresh perspective and are so genuine and sweet!"

Get Connected

The fellows have begun a segment on their Instagram page called Five Minute Fridays where they take the time to have a brief discussion regarding a spiritual aspect of their lives or their community, as well as offering a prayer for the intentions of our diocesan community.



Click the links below to follow AFC on social media!



Find Out More

Do you know someone who may be interested in joining the Aquinas Fellowship Community? Be sure to check out our [website](#) to find out more about this opportunity for recent or soon-to-be college graduates interested in Catholic education.

Thank You!



We would like to acknowledge Foundations in Education for their support of this program. Without their generosity, we would be unable to create and foster the community for our fellows to learn, grow, and thrive. Thank you for all you do!

If you are interested in supporting or learning more about the Aquinas Fellowship Community as we continue to grow, please reach out to Debra Mitchell at debra.mitchell@diobpt.org.

