

# THE CATHOLIC PHOENIX

ELON CATHOLIC CAMPUS MINISTRY NEWSLETTER

FALL 2023

## TAKING CAMPUS BY STORM

Engagement Interns are excited to welcome Catholic first-year students and build friendships



ELON UNIVERSITY



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# BUILDING UP THE KINGDOM

*By Father Peter C. Tremblay, OFM Conv.*

I am so excited to write to you about the incredible hard work, success, and achievements that our ministry has accomplished in the last five years. It all started in March of 2019 when President Connie Book and all the Senior VPs of Elon joined a group of several students, alumni, parents, and staff for a Catholic Life Summit. We dreamt and planned for a bright future for CCM. From that summit came our current five-year strategic plan. As you read this, we are at the final stage of this current plan. We set out six priorities for growth and improvement. We should all be proud of the goals we have set and reached as we have successfully engaged each priority. There are numerous highlights so I will share a few worth extra attention.

CCM has experienced growth in several areas, including retreat attendance and small faith groups. The students on our Servant Leadership team each year enter into intentional discipleship with a staff mentor, and their increasing confidence to evangelize has borne fruit in our retreat numbers. In addition, we have worked with a Catholic consulting company that has helped us train many of our students to lead small groups and serve as faith mentors to their peers on campus.

Our focus on financial development has been incredibly successful. Your support has allowed us to grow our ministry while always being able to fund our budget fully. And in just this past year, we have a new Associate Director of Development for Catholic Life who is

continuing our fundraising efforts while freeing me up to be even more present to minister to our students.

We have brought on a new Assistant Director of Communications & Engagement, which has allowed us to increase our social media presence, expand our reach on campus, and engage students and families with a comprehensive communications strategy.

Undoubtedly, our greatest success has been the creation of our Student Engagement Internships. We have four students each year who are hired, trained, supervised, and mentored by our staff. Their mission is to reach out to first-year students, meet them one-on-one to make them feel welcome to CCM, and invite them to participate in our events and Masses. This internship program began at the height of the Covid-19 pandemic in the fall of 2020. It is not an exaggeration that this program saved our ministry. While many students were lonely, isolated, and disconnected, this program brought growth to CCM. That first year was an incredible success and has only improved since.

I am so proud of the work that we have done. I am so grateful for the support Elon University provides to our Catholic Community. And I am eternally grateful to our donors and benefactors for supporting our ministry and making this success possible.

We are working on our next strategic plan and will be sharing that with you soon. I am sure that we will continue to excel in building up the Kingdom of God here at Elon.

## CCM by the numbers



**332** Came to a CCM event

**24** participated in a service trip



**132** attended a retreat

**318** joined us for Sunday Supper



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## First-Year Engagement



**380** Self-identified as Catholic

**738** Texts sent



**804** Emails sent

**123** One on One Meetings



*Tyler Strenk '27 is a Communications Fellow from Irmo, SC, planning to double major in Environmental Science and Cinema & TV Arts.*

# A WELCOMING START

I first learned about CCM while on a tour of Elon this spring. I grew up Catholic and have always been active in my faith. When searching for colleges, one of the things I was looking for was a vibrant campus ministry. So, when my family and I toured the campus, we found our way to Numen Lumen and learned all about CCM. I spoke to the student workers and Father Peter, who couldn't have been more inviting and excited that I was considering Elon. I left with a good feeling about the ministry, and once I committed to coming to Elon in the fall, getting involved in CCM became a top priority.

During orientation weekend, I attended the Welcome Dinner hosted by CCM and had a great time. I met a few classmates and learned about all the opportunities offered by the ministry. I felt welcomed and as if the leaders and staff were genuinely happy to have me there. At dinner, I heard about a yearly CCM tradition called Beach Retreat. It's a weekend retreat where students from all years gather for a weekend filled with camaraderie, games, and beach time. It sounded like a blast, and as a first-year

looking for any excuse to make new friends and go to the beach, I signed up.

Over the next few weeks, I attended several daily Masses and events and started making friends. I became increasingly excited about the retreat and a weekend away with my newest Catholic community. The first few weeks of classes flew by, and the weekend of Beach Retreat arrived. My classmates and I had a fantastic weekend getting to know each other and Christ in a new and more profound way. We listened to talks from several worship leaders, had a beautiful adoration, and attended an incredible Mass celebrated by Father Peter. The retreat provided me with a break from college life and a weekend away from the noise of reality. It helped me refocus my life and priorities on God and what truly matters in this world. The weekend brought so many new friends, and I honestly had a beautiful experience.

The Catholic community has been remarkably inviting to all new students, giving us a new home and a new family to lean on. I've been incredibly blessed so far, and I am already looking forward to next year's Beach Retreat.



*Tyler Strenk (middle, bottom of pyramid), with his small group on the 2023 CCM Beach Retreat.*

# ANNUAL REPORT OF GIVING

## 2022-2023

Catholic Campus Ministry at Elon University is incredibly grateful for the generous financial support we have received over the past year. We rely on our donors as our primary revenue source to fund our programs, events, supplies, and personnel. The following list recognizes all donors who made a financial gift to Catholic Campus Ministry during the Elon fiscal year from June 1, 2022 - May 31, 2023. Every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of this list. Please send any questions to George Brunner, Director of Development, at [gbrunner@elon.edu](mailto:gbrunner@elon.edu).

\* Parent, alumni, faculty, and staff donors who have made gifts of \$1,500 or more (not including Offertory collections) are recognized by Elon as members of **The Elon Society**, the university's premier donor recognition society for annual giving.



## THANK YOU

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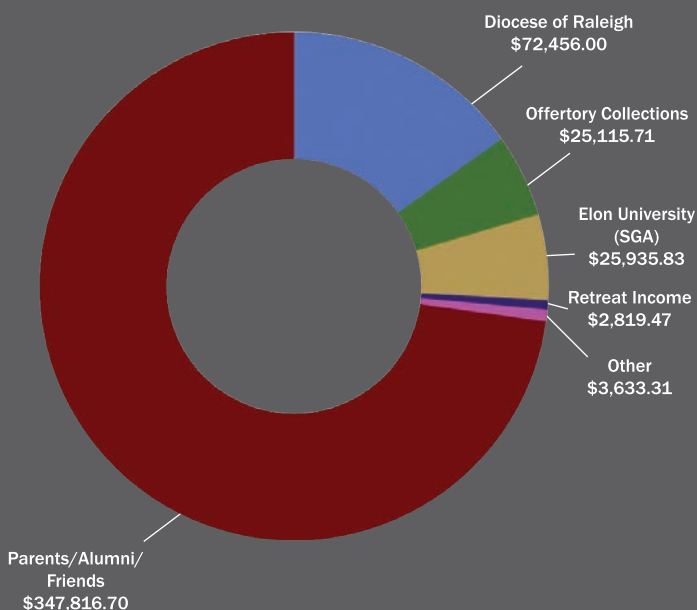
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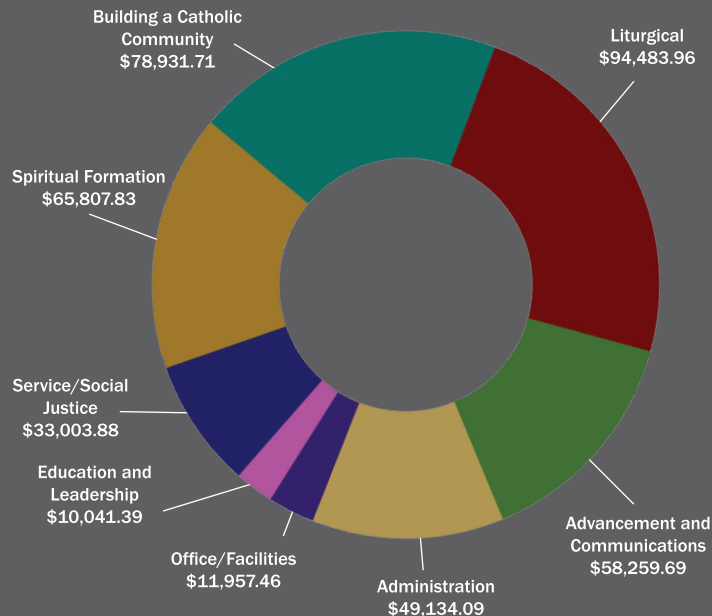
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Annual Operating Expenses \$ 401,620.01





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*Jacqui Vontersch '24, a CCM Music Intern, shares her summer experiences.*



This summer, I had the opportunity to walk the Camino de Santiago, a pilgrimage through Spain and Portugal to the city of Santiago, the legendary resting place of St. James' bones. The Camino, which means *the Way*, is a journey that has been walked by thousands of meaning-seekers, Catholic and non-Catholic, for hundreds of years, and it's the kind of trip that challenges you - in some ways you expect, others you may not.

For example, I was expecting my impatience with my companions, my discomfort and aches from walking, and my exhaustion from waking up at 4 AM. I was not expecting my disappointment. I was uniquely challenged by my expectations and my hopes. Since the Camino is a pilgrimage, I had been hoping for an experience that was palpably spiritual. There are some times and places where you can just feel God's presence and see His works. This was not that trip - at least for me. But, boy, was He present. Precisely in every one of those challenges, He was working in me, revealing little nuggets of truth, crumb by crumb.

Fortunately, the Lord saw my desires, and He did fulfill them. When my companions and I finished the Camino, arriving in Santiago earlier than we had expected, we realized we had the perfect opportunity to visit Fatima, the site of several apparitions of Our Blessed Mother. Here, God's presence was palpable. Spirituality permeated the air. Rosary after rosary was prayed. Mass was available almost all day. Likewise, confession and perpetual Adoration were available. The air was thundering with the weight of a collective, silent call: "Lord, hear our prayer."

I am grateful for both of these experiences. In the crumbs of the first, I was humbled. I had to listen and to ask. In the second, I realized I needed to hope. Ultimately, I learned that God's presence is not defined by my experience of it, but is always there, ever-present.

Names in **bold** are members of Elon CCM's **San Damiano Society**, donors who have given to CCM for four + consecutive years.





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