

Mission Connections

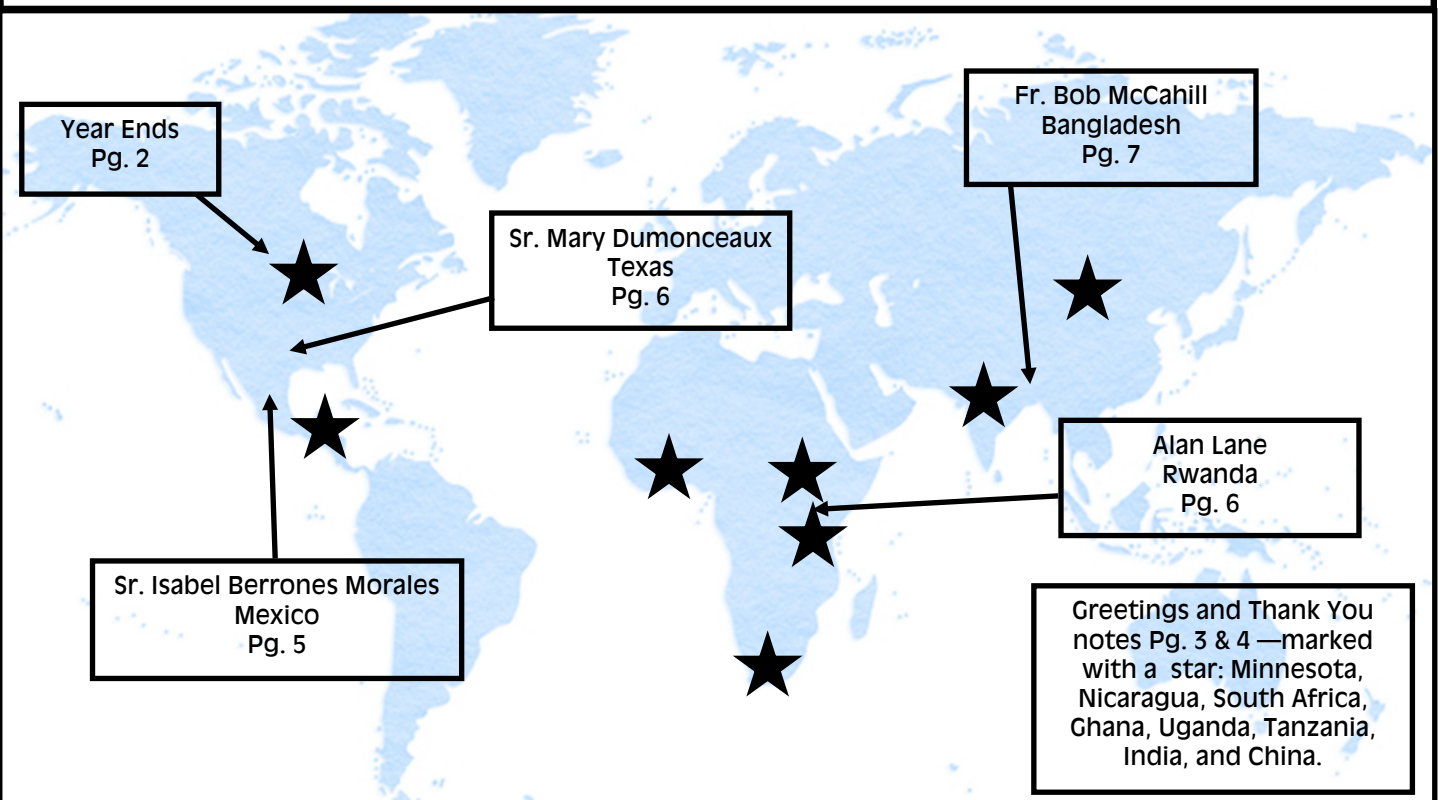
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Winter, 2024



Prayer for Acceptance

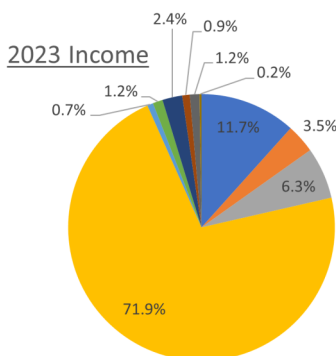
Heavenly Father, thank you for adopting us into your family. Remind us that the gospel is for every tribe and every nation; it doesn't discriminate based on race, economic status, or background. Lord, we ask that you help us to see people as you see them, looking past the physical and into their hearts. Help us to welcome people with open arms, minds, and hearts giving us discernment as we seek to honor you in everything we say and do. Please help us to love as you love. Amen.



From Whom and Where in the World do our stories come from?

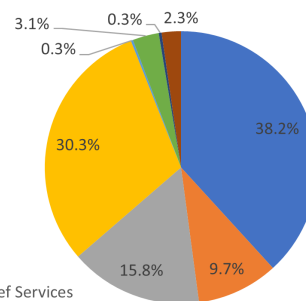
Year End Reports

2023 was a great year for the St. Cloud Mission Office as we were able to participate in many wonderful and fruitful opportunities. We would like to extend a huge thank you to all our amazing donors, supporters, and partners. It is through your continued enthusiasm for Mission that we are able to do all that we do!



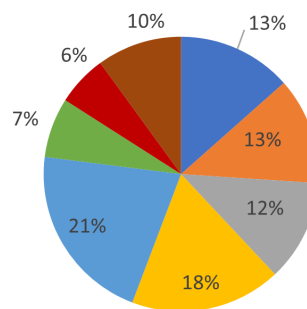
- Catholic Relief Services
- Partnerships
- Pontifical Mission Societies (PMS) & Society for the Propagation of the Faith
- Missionary Cooperative Plan (MCP), Mission Support, & Other Missions
- Mission Groups, Education, & Promotion
- Fair Trade
- Office and Admin
- Estates
- Masses
- Interest

2023 Expense/Dispersal of Funds



- Catholic Relief Services
- Partnerships
- Pontifical Mission Societies (PMS) & Society for the Propagation of the Faith
- Missionary Cooperative Plan (MCP) Mission Support, & Other Missions
- Mission Groups, Education, & Promotion
- Fair Trade
- Office Expenses
- Masses

2023 Time Spent in Areas of Ministry



- Admin
- Sales
- Mission Support/Promo
- Partnerships
- MCP
- PMS
- Mission Ed.
- Auxiliary

World Mission Rosaries 2023:

- Over 3,000 Rosaries were distributed throughout the U.S., in our diocese, and even a few internationally.
- We only charge shipping reimbursement for World Mission Rosaries as they are graciously donated to us every year. Thank you to everyone who helps us with this wonderful ministry!



MISSION CONNECTIONS is published by the St. Cloud Mission Office, 11—8th Ave. South, St. Cloud MN 56301 (320) 251-1100.

It is distributed to the those within the Diocese of St. Cloud and to others concerned with the mission of Jesus Christ and global solidarity and justice. There is no charge for the publication, but tax deductible donations for our educational work are gratefully accepted.

Donations for any of the missionaries or mission connections mentioned here may be made in care of the Mission Office.

**Please direct comments, suggestions and articles to Samantha Wiechman at missionofficeeducator@cloudnet.com

**The mailing list is managed by Carolina Walz, at missionofficemanager@cloudnet.com

**For further information about the work of the Mission Office, contact Elizabeth Brown, at enmission@cloudnet.com

Thank You Notes From Missioners

<p>Thank you for your email, the Mass intentions, offerings, and the Christmas Gift. It will probably take until at least the middle of January before I get a report from the Mission Office at Techny, but so far their record leaves me no doubt that when it reaches them they will pass it on to me. I will probably be able to start celebrating the Masses in January.</p> <p>I am doing well and keeping myself busy. The Mission Office should be sending you my Christmas letter before Christmas. It will give you more information on what I have been doing since my return to Ghana.</p> <p>Wishing you and all members of your staff a Blessed and Merry Christmas.</p> <p>Fred Timp, SVD (Serving in Ghana)</p>	<p>This money will have life-changing effects on the people we serve. Children will go to bed with food in their stomachs; students will be able to go to school with hope for a bright future; elderly individuals who have been abandoned because families cannot afford to care for them will be given a home, loving care, security and dignity. Children born with cleft lips and palates will be provided with free surgeries.</p> <p>God bless you and the parishioners of the Diocese of St. Cloud for their loving sharing for the needy that we serve. We are grateful for the powerful witness of faith that is experienced as the parishioners share from the blessings which they have received. This truly is an inspiration to us all. May you and all the parishioners be blessed one hundredfold in return.</p> <p>With gratitude in the service of Christ and the Gospel,</p> <p>Karen Jarosz, Mission Director on behalf of Dr. Geetha and Tom Chitta (Serving in India)</p>
<p>I'm so grateful. Heartfelt thanks for your kindness and generosity. With the Mass Stipends and Christmas gift I will be able to sort out first the school fees and other requirements for Seminarian Joseph Owor Ndiri and my nephews/nieces.</p> <p>As soon as Schuyler acknowledges receiving the funds, I will let you know. It just takes one working day for the funds to be wired to Tororo.</p> <p>Gratefully yours,</p> <p>Fr. Gabriel Joseph Ssenkindo. (Serving in Uganda)</p>	<p>On behalf of all the confreres, I thank you for your recent generous donation in support of our Crosier Priory life here in Onamia. You have conveyed to me before that this is a way for the Mission Office of the Diocese of St. Cloud to support all the "behind the scenes" work and logistics that we Crosiers do in betterment of our missionary efforts, and we are once again thankful for your thoughtfulness and generosity.</p> <p>We are, indeed, blessed to be able to lend our community's energies and vision in constant support of our 'frontline' confreres, particularly here Fr. Moise and Fr. Zawadi, and all that they do for the churches of Congo and Indonesia. We are very grateful. May the Lord continue to bless the work that we do, and the missionary endeavors we share.</p> <p>Fr. Kermit Holl, OSC Prior of the Crosiers at Onamia</p>
<p>Greetings from Maryknoll, I hope you, your family and the St. Cloud Mission Office have a Blessed and Fruitful 2024. Thank you so much for the money, I will use it for my mission work. I am still at Maryknoll. I saw my doctor on Friday who is dealing with my sleep apnea. She told me that on Tuesday her assistant will install the information from my sleep apnea study into my new Sipap machine. She will need two weeks to complete this work. Then I must use that Sipap machine for 30 days before returning to Tanzania.</p> <p>Brother Loren Beaudry (Serving in Tanzania)</p>	<p>Thank you so much for your monetary contribution to Connecticut Quest for Peace, Inc. in support of Monica's projects in Nicaragua. We are so grateful for your generosity to her mission.</p> <p>In Gratitude,</p> <p>Jane McCaffrey, CT Quest for Peace, Inc. Board of Directors on behalf of Monica Rudawski (Serving in Nicaragua)</p>
<p>Greetings! I hope you are doing well. As Mission Director, I am happy to assist Dr. Geetha and Tom in their mission Work. As I write this, they are back in India working hard to serve needy people.</p> <p>This letter is to acknowledge our joyful receipt of your check. We are so very grateful for these generous gifts!</p>	

Updates From Missioners

Story and Photo by Fr. Lawrence Dominic Otieno, MHM

The year 2023 is almost ended and I would like to express my heartfelt thanks to the Bishop, the Mission Office, and the people of goodwill from the St. Cloud



Diocese for their support toward the missionary work that I am carrying on in South Africa. It is the Spirit of the Living God, dwelling in our hearts, that can move us to think about others, sacrifice, and freely offer our support to those in great need and to the missionaries serving them. I am immensely grateful for the support I received from your diocese to facilitate

the work of evangelization in my parish. What a great joy to find out that a day in October was set aside by the Mission Office to remember me and the flock entrusted to my care in prayers! These are signs of the unfailing care and the divine providence which the Lord accords to all who serve him with joy. It is kind of you friends, thank you. May the Lord of the mission be gracious and reward you. I also prayed for you in my 6 days retreat in early November, 2023.

The support from your diocese has been a special contribution for building, strengthening, and sustaining the work of evangelization in my parish throughout the year 2023. The parish is located in a cutting edge in the Free State Province, the support sent catered for the monthly petrol and car maintenance for the work of evangelization, formation of the youth, and catechesis. Infants, youths and the adults received the sacraments of baptism, Eucharist, 2 couples received the sacrament of matrimony and 17 more youths are ready for the sacrament of confirmation on the 3rd Sunday of January, 2024.

Today we start the Advent season. Spiritually we are preparing for the celebration of Jesus' Birthday, but we also prepare ourselves to have some family gatherings in order to deepen the family spirit among us. For this reason, we write letters, we share experiences, we try to connect with each other. This is the reason of sending you this Christmas letter, always hoping that one day I will be able to come and visit you in person, God willing. Have a nice start to this Advent Season, we will keep in touch through our prayers. God Bless, Roberto Tonetto (Serving in China). Photo from Roberto's Ministry to the right.

We want to hear from you!

If you are in contact with a Missioner from our diocese that you believe we might not be aware of, or, if you yourself have had a mission experience and are interested in sharing about it, please reach out and let us know!

It also catered for building and strengthening the basic Christian Communities through monthly masses and leadership trainings which aimed at rekindling the spirit of the laity's participation in the life and mission of the Church in their locality. The needy members of the parish also benefited from the help received from your diocese. With the humanitarian aid the parish provided lunch for the 47 orphans every Saturday in this year, Eucharistic celebration, and a simple lunch for 38 elderly Christians was organized on the 28th of October 2023. It was a day of reunion and joy for them as they got the opportunity to meet in the church and celebrate together as one family after a long time of being away from the Church because of their old age and lack of helpers who can bring them for Sunday masses. Families in great need were visited and given food. A family got support for putting up a temporary shelter as they are waiting for the government to provide a proper house in the years to come. Lastly 3 orphans in secondary school also received the school fees from the support and they are thankful and happy as they go on well with studies.

To conclude, the parish has achieved a lot with the support you sent. The parishioners and I lack words to thank you enough for the material and spiritual support we have received. Thanks for the gift of our mission partnership. We remember you in our weekly masses. I have sent some pictures of the ongoing work of evangelization. May you have a look at them. Blessings upon you. Thank you, Fr. Lawrence Otieno Dominic (Serving in South Africa)



Casa Maria: A Safe Place For Students

Story and Photos by Sister Isabel Berrones, OSF who lives and ministers in her native country of Mexico.

I observed some of the students who had graduated from high school in San Rafael, while living at our Casa Franciscana, also wanted to attend college. Some of these successfully completed their college studies and others began but did not finish. One of the major factors for those who did not finish was lack of a safe and supportive environment and lack of sufficient financial resources to live in the city and study.

I wanted to find an affordable way to offer housing in Saltillo, Mexico, for young female students from rural areas in order that they might have a better opportunity to successfully finish their desired university studies. I spoke with Bishop Hilario of the Saltillo Diocese to see if the diocese might have a house suitable for this purpose. In April of 2022 we found out there was a house we could use located close to downtown Saltillo where students could easily access buses to reach the college of their choice.

After some months of cleaning and maintenance, I was able to open Casa Maria at the end of July 2022. The house is large enough to accommodate 10 resident students, myself, and a resident assistant. From August 2022-June 2023 we housed and supported three students. During the spring of 2023, I visited high schools in San Rafael and other rural areas to spread word of the opportunity and extend an invitation to come. Five students now live at Casa Maria, four are from the San Rafael area and one is from Ocampo, the place where we sisters served for three years in the parish of Saint Catherine of Siena.

The five students are all in different schools, two are studying Business Administration, another Human Resources Administration, the fourth Industrial

Engineering in Manufacturing, and the fifth Education and Management of Educational Institutions.

The objective of Casa Maria is to provide accommodation, nutritious food, and an environment of security and support in order to promote the human and spiritual growth of the students while they pursue their higher studies. The students collaborate with cleaning the common areas of the house, help prepare meals, and participate in moments of prayer; all this is done according to their available time after completing their school tasks. Then every month there is a community weekend to carry out recreational, cultural and/or spiritual activities, where they can get to know each other better and strengthen their relationships with each other.

The parents of the students are grateful and confident that their daughters can live in a safe place where, in addition to accommodations, they can have an education in values and the opportunity to continue growing in their faith.



I have the support of three people as volunteers, Bianka, Roxana, and Beni. They make up the Casa Maria Team to support the students. Bianka has a Master's degree in Administration and Leadership, Roxana is a Psychologist, and Beni is a Social Worker. All three work in different institutions and they help support me in planning and executing activities with the students.

I thank God and all the people who have supported the development of this project so that many young women who would not have the possibility of studying a professional career can achieve it. Infinite thanks to the St. Cloud Mission Office for the faithful and generous support of the ministries of the Franciscan Sisters, and for the good of the people of God, and the most disadvantaged.

Thank you!



Ntwali Lane

Story and Photos By Alan Lane

Back in the Spring of 2023 I wrote a brief article about my wife and I's new Foundation here in rural Rwanda. It is called Ntwali Lane, Ntwali after her late brother and Lane for my surname. I would like to update everyone on the status of the Foundation and the work we are doing.

There is a saying, "someone, somewhere is suffering." That of course includes each and every one of us at times. My wife and I live in rural Rwanda where people, in general, are very grateful and fairly joyful despite having minimal material means. However, regardless of financial situation we can and often do struggle and suffer to a degree, and that is no different here.

Often times the suffering here does not just happen because someone does not have enough food on their plate, though that certainly does exist. The suffering here also comes from dealing with trauma as a result of the Genocide in 1994, from living in a family or marital situation that is not supportive or healthy, or from simply not being able to sufficiently take care of and provide for one's self.

When we come across suffering people, we do our best to provide them with both the Corporal and Spiritual Works of Mercy. We believe providing both is the best way to help people survive and hopefully thrive, though the latter often takes some time. At the very least, we leave each person knowing they are loved and cared for. The same is also true for us.

When we visit people, we like to keep in mind that "Jesus shares the sadness of those he encounters while at the same time works in them to transform them in joy." We hope we help facilitate that and believe and trust Jesus is working inside us to do so. In turn, we are also transformed in joy through the dignity, grace, beauty, and love of the people we encounter. It is always a two-way street and we all benefit from and grow in love toward each other and God as a result.

Regarding the Foundation, as you can imagine it is a fairly involved and lengthy process. 'Pole pole' as they say in Swahili, slowly, slowly. We don't have a

definite timeline in terms of when it will be officially registered, but we have been told that as long as we are in the process of registering we can operate as if we are official. Thankfully this includes being able to develop our website:

www.ntwalilanefoundation.org. The site gives more background on the Foundation, who we are, and what we do. We have been very intentional about our development and the content it contains, and have no doubt you will find it engaging and worthwhile to look at.

One purpose, though not the only one, for developing our website is that it will open up the possibility of being able to receive donations so long as they go through a third party (St. Cloud Mission Office). We also developed our website to help better share our story and mission. We hope that some will choose to support us, whether that be in the form of prayers, spreading the word, being inspired to do something similar, paying us a visit, or if you so choose a monetary gift. No matter what you choose, it makes all the difference!

My wife and I are hoping to visit the St. Cloud area at some point in the future. If we are able to do so, we would love to share more about what we are doing here in Rwanda. We have plenty to share in stories and photos. With that, we say be blessed and Imana iguhe umugisha (God bless you).



Living On The Border

Story by Sr. Mary Dumonceaux, OSF

Our house and community of Franciscan sisters here in the Rio Grande Valley, on the border of Texas and Mexico, has consistently been about hospitality and assistance to those crossing the border. This was true of our presence in Weslaco, later in McAllen, and now in Mission, TX. It is a service to new and longtime immigrants, to our missionary Sisters in Mexico, and to other people seeking a border experience.

This Franciscan hospitality aided me personally when crossing the border while at San Rafael Mission in Mexico, 2008-2020. Presently, Sr. Gloria Haider, Sr. Mary Dumonceaux, and Sr. Pat Forster form a local community in Mission, TX. We have

a common interest in each new immigrant group. So, we assist at the Respite Center in McAllen and cross into Reynosa, Mexico, to help at the House of Immigrants where pregnant women and their families reside as they wait to cross into the U.S.A. From our accumulated experience we are also able to design and implement border experiences for visitors from other states who want to witness the reality here.

Living on the border teaches us the fragility of place and possessions, and the art of daily adaptation. It highlights the limited control we have on life. It requires that we ask daily who decides the rules and who benefits from them. The worldwide immigrant movement mirrors both life in general and our own inner life in transformation.

Goodbye, Adios, Ma'alsalama, Kwaheri

In the past few months we have sadly said goodbye to a handful of missionaries; they were wonderful friends from far and near. They will be greatly missed!

Bishop Paride Taban

Bishop Taban was not from the St. Cloud Diocese, but he was a good friend of the St. Cloud Mission Office for many years. He was a remarkable peacemaker, spiritual leader, and humanitarian who did great work in South Sudan. He started the Holy Trinity Peace Village in Kuron, South Sudan with the goal of bringing together young people of different ethnic groups in peace. He was the recipient of many awards for his decades of peace-building efforts, including winning the Hubert Walter Award for Reconciliation and Interfaith Cooperation, being nominated for a Nobel Peace Prize, and posthumously winning the Opus Award for \$1 million dollars in 2023. He did all of this before passing away on November 1st, 2023 at the age of 87.

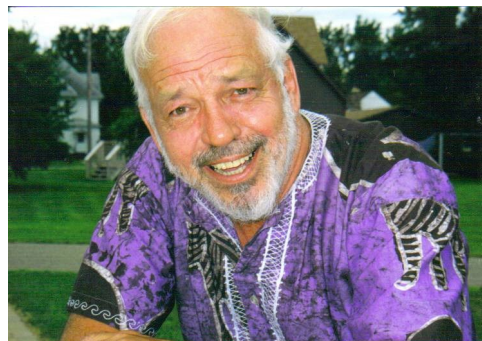


Sister Carolyn Law, OSF

Sister Carolyn was a Franciscan sister in Little Falls, MN for 43 years. In that time she served in the United States, Venezuela, and Nicaragua. She had a love for wide open spaces, often finding God in nature. She was a gift to her community and those who knew her well. She sadly passed away on December 16, 2023 at the age of 71.

Fr. Herb Gappa, MM

Fr. Herb Gappa was an Urbank native and a dear friend of the St. Cloud Mission Office. He was first and foremost a pastor, priest, and missionary. His life's work was in service to God and the Bariadi community in Tanzania where he served for over 30 years. He worked to grow faith and the church with an ecological aspect. He felt planting trees and planting faith were interconnected. Herb loved a good Tanzanian liturgy that included vibrant singing, glorious dancing, and common-sense preaching. He was a Maryknoll priest for 55 years before passing away on December 22, 2023 at the age of 81.



This Is Bangladesh

Story by Fr. Bob McCahill, MM

Dear Friends, two weeks ago I completed the first year of a planned three year stay in Srinagar town in Bangladesh. Shahe Alom, the founder of a kindergarten and high school in the town believed in my stated intention to serve the poor, especially children, and invited me to live at the school. My home in the school is 1/4 part of an empty classroom, measuring six feet wide and fourteen feet long. Immediately beside me is a classroom for happy, noisy five-year olds. Formerly my room had been used as the school's prayer room.

From that room I daily depart on bicycle at 6 a.m. in search of children in need of medical, surgical, or mental attention. That effort is progressing slowly, for the people know no other Americans and surely no other Christians. Our conversations center on three questions put to me by persons who suspect Christians of aiming to convert them from Islam to Christianity.

They ask, "Who are you?"
 "Your Christian Brother Bob."
 They ask, "What do you do?"
 "Look for children who need treatment."
 They ask, "Why do you do it?"
 "Jesus is my model in life and I try to do what Jesus did."
 They ask, "What is your benefit from serving them?"
 "I receive Allah's blessings: happiness and peace as rewards."

Although this has been my first year among the Muslims and Hindis of Srinagar, it has been a happy year-long experience. The invitations I offer parents to take their children for free treatment oftentimes end in failure to convince them. Yet, it gives me satisfaction to have made the offer. I feel good that I tried.

I observe goodness in the lives of many here. When I see a rickshaw driver giving a free ride to an exhausted, penniless beggar I am impressed. The wife of a village chairman founded a school to assist autistic children living nearby. A remote village's baker, Monir, invited me to visit his humble bakery and gave me a freshly baked cake as a remembrance. Monna's mother, eager for her twelve year old son to stop crawling and learn to walk, proclaimed for me and the neighbors to hear, "I will give my life for anything that will help him walk." Sipat's mother in Bir Tara village feeds her son slowly, by hand, as she has done for every meal since his birth sixteen years ago. The kindness and compassion of all these people are unmistakable. It is also evident as many people hesitate to accept my offers of help that to build trust among us will take more time.

While my knowledge of the villagers in Srinagar is still growing, I do know we all belong to God.

The unpredictable fact is that, for the most part, payment for the children's treatment at most hospitals is much reduced or even forgotten. Why? Because as Bangladeshis often explain, "TIB," meaning: This is Bangladesh.

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Upcoming Events

Spring Mission Rally!

Mark your calendars for Thursday, April 25th from 8 a.m. to 1 p.m. at St. Rose of Lima church in St. Rosa, MN.

More information will be posted to our website event page and Facebook page as it gets closer. Feel free to reach out to our office with any questions!



Lent is just around the corner! Churches will be receiving their resources in the next few weeks, and now is a great time to start thinking about how you will be participating in this act of solidarity during the season of Lent. The CRS Rice Bowl is a great way to get involved and learn about others across the world! There are also lots of great resources at: <https://www.crsricebowl.org/>

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