



## Elizabeth Ministry International

**Elizabeth Ministry** is an outreach by the parish community to women during the childbearing years. The purpose of this ministry is to affirm, support, encourage and assist women and their families by providing a direct response to their specific needs. An Elizabeth Minister offers a link between the broader church community and the families of the parish.

This ministry is based on the visitation story of Mary and Elizabeth in Luke's Gospel. The sanctity of life and power of the Spirit is revealed in the common sharing of these two women. Following the example of Mary and Elizabeth, volunteers visit those in need.

Kathleen Mastellon, coordinator for the Elizabeth Ministry Chapter at St. Patrick's Watertown, said "An Elizabeth Ministry Chapter is a reflection of the sponsor parish. The abilities and resources vary from parish to parish but the purpose of sharing experiences and affirming the sanctity of life is unchanging. Elizabeth Ministry is a woman-to-woman outreach. Women visit and share with others facing similar experiences. We visit women and families during pregnancy, after a birth and provide comfort following a miscarriage. A health crisis for an infant in the parish generated many prayers. An Elizabeth Ministry volunteer provided food and child care for an elder sibling. We have rejoiced with several couples who opted to adopt, and have provided materials to those seeking information on fertility and infertility."

The international organization's website [www.elizabethministry.com](http://www.elizabethministry.com) offers a wide range of resources for the many facets of this ministry that have emerged since its beginnings some 30 years ago at St. Bernard Parish in Appleton, Wisconsin. Jeannie Hannemann, founder of Elizabeth Ministry, explains the role of an Elizabeth minister. "The goal of Elizabeth ministers is to emulate the example of their namesake—Elizabeth. She's the first one in Scripture to recognize Jesus. So as Elizabeth ministers, our call is to recognize Jesus in everyone that we meet and especially the unborn child. And then our role is to encourage women—to encourage whatever God has given them at that point in their lives."

The only requirements for being an Elizabeth minister, according to Hannemann, are life experience and a desire to help. "We don't come as experts, we come as friends," she says. "What we say is that we are called in Baptism and we are trained through life experiences and are empowered by the Holy Spirit.

That is our bottom-line belief."

According to Mrs. Mastellon, two additional programs are available through Elizabeth Ministry.

"Through SACRED STEPS, we recognize our smallest parishioners with birthday cards and baptismal anniversary cards. The card includes a newsletter that addresses age appropriate faith education to help parents talk to their child about God. This outreach provides a small adult faith formation activity plus it welcomes and helps connect young families to the parish."

The ROSEBUD Program helps a church identify, pray for, and support those who are pregnant, celebrating birth or adoption, grieving miscarriage, stillbirth, abortion, infant or child death, or trying to conceive or adopt. Roses of specific colors are placed in a vase by those seeking prayerful support from the parish family. Contact the Family Life Office for more information about any of these ministries.