



## **Minutes for the Holy Savior Pastoral Council Meeting January 22, 2024 (Postponed from December 4, 2023)**

### **Attendees:**

Fr. Aaron Damboise  
John Bernard, chair  
Sr. Bernadette Gautreau, vice-chair  
Margaret Donahue  
Bill Gallant  
Jamie Gallant

Sharon Gates  
Jennifer Kreckel  
  
Mariann Goff-Dumont, parishioner  
Jennifer LeDuc, business manager (ex-officio)  
Linda Pepin (ex-officio)

*Fr. Aaron opened the meeting with prayer at 5:03 p.m.*

### **Previous meeting minutes**

**MOTION:** Margaret Donahue made a motion to accept the October 2023 meeting minutes.  
Sharon Gates seconded.

**Discussion:** Fr. Aaron noted a clarification that *'proceeds from the'* sale of property are placed in stable patrimony.

**VOTE:** Motion carried (unanimous); minutes approved as amended.

### **Our Lady of the Snows (OLS) concerns**

Margaret noted that some of her original concerns were resolved, others remain.

Mariann Goff gave the council an overview of concerns, with the overarching issue being that OLS-based parishioners would like to have a sense of more inclusion.

- OLS used to have more of a sense of its own identity, but as parishioners have moved or passed away, there is less sense of community. The remaining parishioners have made efforts to rekindle it, with events such as rosary, to limited effect.
- The 6 p.m. Mass on Saturday night is not a good option for aging parishioners who prefer not to drive in the dark. Some are opting to go to Norway or Berlin for daytime weekend Masses.
- Families with children want to attend a church with other families with children. In Bethel, that is the Congregational Church.
- How can St A & J be more inclusive of OLS, to feel like one parish? It was suggested occasional attendance at OLS by St A & J regulars would be welcome, and vice versa. Mariann noted, for instance, Deacon Rod Kuhl and Vickie attend once a month; Vickie lectors.

- The invitation to join Christmas and Easter choirs is well received. Perhaps some members of the choir (3-4 voices) could go with the organist to OLS for a Mass. Fr. Aaron will discuss this idea with Nick.
- Sometimes OLS is short a lector and would like to be able to reach out—and to reciprocate. There was extended general discussion about the shortage of people to serve in lector and other roles in both churches. Fr. Aaron noted there are about 20 regular parishioners at OLS, so their options are few. Fr. Aaron noted that as new people join the parish, their integration needs to include determining if they have served in previous parish, and if they're interested in doing so here. He also noted that as part of the Pastoral Plan (to be discussed later in the meeting) a goal could be inviting people to get involved in various capacities.
- Margaret noted there are many denominations of churches in Bethel, and it is her desire that the Catholic church continues to be well-represented. She cited as a positive the participation by St. A & J members at last year's Lenten luncheon ecumenical event. She suggested the event be highlighted in the bulletin this year.

Fr. Aaron stated a survey will be out at OLS on Feb 3 & 10 regarding Mass times. It will be available in the pews, online, and will be mailed to people in the database affiliated with OLS.

Sharon suggested caravans or carpool of St. A & J parishioners to go to OLS, and specifically recommended the Pastoral Council members set a date to go to OLS together. Father concurred that council members who haven't yet been to OLS should attend at some point.

### **Update to the Pastoral Plan**

Fr. Aaron noted the current plan (which can be viewed on the parish website) expired in 2023. It was compiled by Fr. Nathan and parishioners, and had some adjustments because of the pandemic and because of the transition to a new priest. The parish needs an updated set of goals for the next three years.

The group discussed if existing goals had been met (largely no), and the consensus was that there had been significant work put into the plan. Fr. Aaron noted we have a requirement to submit a 2024 Pastoral Plan to the bishop, and he would like a committee to figure out what our parish needs now. John Bernard recommended going to the previous plan's implementation team (Sister B, Sue Adley, Laura & Peter Koch, John Bernard) to evaluate. Fr. Aaron concurred, noting the initial plan was a lot of work. The research does not need to be re-accomplished, but the team should look at the plan to determine what should be carried forward, and what other needs have been identified.

He observed that some portions of the plan were accomplished, though not to schedule, and cited the Alpha Group as being ongoing, with the members of the initial group discerning how they would like to go forward and grow the program.

### **School sale/process for large expenses**

In response to a question about what will be done with the proceeds from the sale of the school, Fr. Aaron reviewed the process for receiving proceeds from a property sale: When the diocese sells property, the proceeds go into stable patrimony (similar to a trust or endowment) for the owning parish.

The proceeds from the sale of the school building are in stable patrimony. While we cannot touch the \$475,000 principal without the approval of the (1) Finance Council, (2) Diocesan financial officials, and (3) College of Counselors to the Bishop, we can access the four percent (4%) interest each year, which rolls into the regular budget.

Jamie asked about the cost of roof repair, and Jennifer LeDuc noted fixing the steeple is first priority, with an estimate of approximately \$69,000 to repair. Also needing repair/replacement are the buttresses on the Knox St side of church (the buttresses are the exterior columns which hold up the walls); the front steps need to be reset and repointed (approx. \$20,000, most of which is for labor); the retaining wall in the parking lot across Franklin Street needs to be repaired or redesigned as a slope. Jennifer LeDuc noted she is working with the Building and Grounds committee on priorities and plans. Jennifer Kreckel observed it will be important not to undermine Concorde Apartments parking with the retaining wall work.

Jennifer LeDuc noted that the parish has savings, but some of the items will be quite expensive to address.

Jamie stated that the carpet at the Maine Ave entrance is deteriorated and becoming a tripping hazard. Fr. Aaron noted the building committee has that on their list to address. John asked if the Building and Grounds committee could present a report to the Pastoral Council; Jennifer L stated that committee has just started and needs time to plan how the priorities should be addressed before they would be ready to present. Fr. Aaron noted when the Building and Grounds committee has had some time to set plans, they can present to the Pastoral Council and to the Finance Council with plans and figures.

John observed that it appears the priority for the interest from school sale stable patrimony will be buildings and grounds. Fr. Aaron concurred.

Sr. Bernadette asked how much input parishioners have in large expenses, and stated people should know where the money is being spent, citing rumors about significant costs for the organ, when perhaps an alternative would be a keyboard. Fr. Aaron stated that is something that is still being figured out.

Bill asked if there was any thought about replacing the Washington Street garage, which was part of the school property sale. Jennifer LeDuc said if we lose a building with a certain function, we can petition the bishop to use money from the sale to build something with that function, as in the case of the garage. There is space in the cemetery garage for the truck, and the truck is not being used for plowing now. While we have a contract for plowing, the truck the parish owns still has value to us, and if sold, we would not have the funds to replace it. The tractor sold was not running and no longer had value to the parish.

Fr. Aaron noted that expenditures of \$5,000 or greater require approval from the Finance Council and the bishop's office. While not all large expenses are things presented to the whole parish, the minutes of the Finance Council are public record for the parish. Decisions regarding worship aids, decorations, etc., are made by the department. Large expenditures for things such as an organ, building renovation, etc., would be funded by a capital campaign. Fr. Aaron noted there is an organ committee, but they are not yet ready to present information as they wait for another proposal. He emphasized that for large expenditures, people will know details because there will be presentations so people can hear about it and speak to Fr. Aaron privately if they have questions.

### **Choir loft parishioners receiving communion**

Jamie observed that choir members are receiving communion after Mass in an area where there is also post-Mass socializing. There was discussion about what had been done in the past (coming down other stairs, EM going to choir loft during Mass). Fr. Aaron stated that the director of music prefers the choir to receive after Mass, and that he will talk to Peter Koch about having the EM go to the back of the church on the Knox St side where there is less natural social gathering.

Jamie also noted that the procedure for traffic flow to communion which was determined at the last pastoral council meeting is working well.

### **Kneelers in the first few rows of St. A & J church**

Jamie noted a suggestion to swap out less-used kneelers from the back of the church with the ones near the front that are quite worn and breaking. The council discussed cracks that pinch and the poor aesthetic for weddings and funerals, when people are primarily in those front rows. Jennifer said swapping front and back kneelers will be evaluated, but because many of the kneelers have been 'rigged' various ways over the years, it's not a simple removal and replacement. She noted kneelers are on the list of things being evaluated with Buildings and Grounds. Fr. Aaron stated that if any kneelers are unsafe they need to be taken care of, even if it means taking them out of use.

### **Bethel weekday Mass**

Fr. Aaron advised the group that Monday evening Masses in Bethel are often not workable with his schedule, so he has changed the weekday Mass at Bethel from Monday evening to Tuesday morning starting in Lent and moving forward, effective February 20. The 8:15 a.m. Tuesday Mass will be held at Bethel instead of Rumford.

### **Adjournment**

**MOTION:** Jennifer Kreckel made a motion to adjourn. Sharon Gates seconded.

**VOTE:** Motion carried (unanimous).

**Next Meeting:** March 4, 2024, at 5 p.m.

*The meeting closed with prayer at 6:30 p.m.*

Respectfully submitted,

Linda Pepin  
Office Assistant