

Redeemer Pastoral Council Annual Report (2021-2022)

Mission statement: Everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.
John 13:35

Vision statement: Through worship, service, community, and Word we strive to bring all people close together and closer to God.

A number of individuals that participated in Redeemer's Synod Listening Sessions asked to have a better understanding of Pastoral Council and its responsibilities. Those comments lead to the idea of preparing a Pastoral Council Annual Report.

Pastoral Council Overview

Redeemer's Pastoral Council consists of 12 members elected by the parish. Election of four members to three-year terms is typically held in late May or June of each year. The four members who have served three years are rotated off Council. A Council term runs from July of one year through June of the following year.

Due to COVID, the membership of Redeemer's Pastoral Council was not typical for the last two years. There was no election in 2020 and all members were asked to remain on Council for an additional year. In 2021, five new members were elected to Redeemer's Pastoral Council to replace four members that had served 4 years and a resignation. In June of this year, four new members were elected. They join the five elected in 2021 and three remaining on from 2019 for a 4th year.

Redeemer's Pastoral Council operates under the Richmond Diocesan Guidelines for Parish Pastoral Council, "Called to Serve". Redeemer's Pastoral Council's Constitution and Operating Principles were derived from that document and our parish's unique needs.

The purpose of the Parish Pastoral Council is to be a consultive (advisory) body to the Pastor. With the Pastor it provides vision and direction to the parish. It is visionary Council and concerns itself with where the parish wants to be in three to five years. Pastoral Council is frequently asked for its input on a current issue but does not make a decision on that issue. It is not an administrative body and does not run the parish or supervise its daily work. That responsibility ultimately falls on the shoulders of the pastor. It is accountable to the entire parish and should discern the needs of the parish community. PC membership should reflect,

where possible, the plurality of viewpoints, ethnicity, and economic reality of the Parish Community.

The 2021/22 Council members

Dennis Fiore 4th year
Shirley Husz 4th year
Don Piacentini 4th year
Dan Corso 3rd year
Larry Cunningham (Chair) 3rd year
Renee Reisenweaver 3rd year
Laura Woodle 3rd year
Bill Adams 1st year
Norman Carter 1st year
Jessica Keck (Secretary) 1st year
Jennifer Kocik 1st year
John Swierczewski (Vicechair) 1st year

Ex Officio Members: Father Jim Cowles and Deacon Chris Coville

Tom Grasberger representing Finance Council and Reagan Penny representing Stewardship, normally attend the monthly meetings. Others may assist with facilitating and discussion as agreed to by Pastoral Council.

Over the last three years Pastoral Council updated Redeemer's Mission and Vision statements, updated our Pastoral Council Constitution and Operating Principles, and helped update Stewardship Committee's Operating Principles. This year we focused on possible long term facility improvements, communications and programs and activities to bring people back into the church and improve the visibility of Redeemer in Mechanicsville. The Synod was added to our agenda at the beginning of 2022. Pastoral Council reviewed the Synod process, results, and recommendations

Pastoral Council Meetings

Typically, a Pastoral Council meeting will follow this agenda:

- Opening Prayer
- Faith Formation (Deacon Chris Coville)
- Finance Council Report (Finance Council Representative Tom Grasberger)
 - Quarterly detailed Financial Report (Finance Council)
- Stewardship report (Reagan Penny)

- Youth and Young Adult Ministry report (Renee Reisenweaver)
- Staff report (Chris Coville)
 - Staff and Liaison Reports (In staff report typically provided before PC meeting)
- Pastor's Report (Fr. Jim)
- Strategic Plan, other Pastoral Council Objectives as decided by Father Jim, other topics as added during the year.
- Input from parishioners
- Next Meeting
- Closing Prayer

Minutes of Pastoral Council meetings along with other information such as Pastoral Council's current members, Constitution, Operating Principles and the Strategic 2020-2021 Plan are posted on Redeemer's web site [Church of the Redeemer \(churchredeemer.org\)](http://churchredeemer.org) Click on Our Parish, Councils, Parish Pastoral Council. A link to Pastoral Council's monthly minutes can be found on Pastoral Councils page.

Besides regular meetings, Fr. Jim hosted a BBQ at the rectory for Pastoral Council members in August of 2021. Fr. Jim also lead a Pastoral Council Retreat "Changing Seasons/Our Unchanging God" in October 2021. The retreat focused on where we are in the Seasons of Life and what temperaments we have during those four seasons. Pastoral Council did not meet in August 2021, November 2021, and May 2022.

What was accomplished in the 2021-2022 term

The 2020-2023 (Fiscal Year 21-24) Strategic Plan was completed in early 2020 and approved by Father Jim and the Pastoral Council in July of 2020. By that time COVID was having a significant impact on our parish and parish activities. The Plan was essentially put on hold while Redeemer dealt with significant financial issues resulting in a reduction in Redeemer's staff. Since then, volunteers and part time staff have filled in as needed and available. Coming out of COVID and seeing parishioners return to mass became a primary goal of this Council. Fr. Jim charged the Council with pursuing several objectives somewhat aligned with our Strategic Plan but focused on what should the parish be doing to retain and attract new members to our parish. Fr. Jim projected that we could lose 1/3 of our active members if we didn't give them a reason to return. This was partly due to COVID but also due to a general trend in Christian/Catholic churches.

Pastoral Council was asked to come up with ideas for Facilities, Programs, Staff, Communications, and anything else we felt would reinvigorate our parish. We were instructed to think outside the box. The first half of this term was spent developing this "Big Idea Bucket List". The second half of this term was spent finalizing Pastoral Council's recommendations to Father Jim and understanding and reviewing the results of the Synod listening sessions. It was understood to start with that Redeemer could not pursue all of the ideas the Council developed.

Big Idea Bucket List

Paula Otto was invited to several of our meetings to facilitate discussions and helping Pastoral Council develop the “Big Idea Bucket List”. Father Jim asked that we not limit ourselves and Paula provided that during the early rounds that no idea was out of bounds and were not discussed until all ideas were generated. Ideas were treated as if every idea was a good idea.

Subcommittees were set up to look at Facilities and Faith Formation, Community and to a certain extent communications.

Several of the items on the Big Bucket List have been considered before but there was still significant support for considering them. Pastoral Council, with Paula’s help, added estimated complexity, relative cost, and timing to some of the items on the list.

Facilities

Fr. Jim asked the Council to come up with ideas for possible facility improvements that might be considered in the future. The following ten improvements were discussed in detail.

- Create a “Redeemer Catholic Center” with activities for the community (\$\$\$, Complex-Long Term)
- Approach the Lutheran Church in front of Redeemer and use as a community center (\$\$\$, Complex – Long Term) center/meeting place
- Create better visibility and signage for Redeemer on Meadowbridge Road (\$- Short Term)
- Build a chapel that would accommodate approximately 25 people (\$\$\$, Complex, Long Term)
- Build a columbarium (Self-funded - Medium Term – Complex due to Diocesan requirements)
- Pastoral Place for quiet reflections (Cost and complexity based on definition) We currently have the Mary Garden and Room 10
- Build a Pavilion for outdoor gatherings (\$\$, Complex- Medium Term)
- Build a Portico for the front entrance to the church (\$\$- Medium Term)
- Add more traditional symbols and statues in the church (\$, Complex? - Medium Term)
- Create a daycare and/or aftercare program and appropriate facilities.(\$\$\$, Complex – Long Term)

Community

Ideas generated by Pastoral Council related to Community are listed below. Many of these ideas will require some investment and significant number volunteers if they are to be pursued by the parish.

- Annually have a big Festival/celebration(s) like St. Patrick's Day and or Oktoberfest. Possibly partner with neighboring churches. (\$\$? Lots of planning) – May be fund raiser for Redeemer
 - Father Jim suggested starting out with Redeemer community first and have at least one celebration a year. Could expand to several a year.
- Start a Nursery/Children's Liturgy Ministry – Care for young children and so parents can participate in mass and other programs.
- Childcare beyond mass and other Redeemer Programs. After school care, etc.
- Increase our outreach for providing services to "Guests" such as Caritas, emergencies. (Partner with other area churches.)
- How do we define "in the building?" in today's hybrid virtual/in-person world?
- Should youth RE be scheduled only on Sundays – around the masses?
- Youth programs may be the key to get parents involved – recreation opportunities including teams, summer camps, etc., activities outside of RE. This was an interesting discussion and PC members did not realize all Renee Reisenweaver was doing with the youth. This was considered a communication topic since Renee does a good job with the youth and communicating with them.
- Offer more special youth/family masses
- Need to reignite the connection to the mass and that communion is at the center of our faith
- TEAMS and FIRE programs help families be very connected on a personal level
- When kids go off to college, many parents stop attending church. How do we keep them engaged?

Communication

There were a lot of ideas and discussion related to communications. The staff currently does a good job communicating across many venues. One of the challenges identified was while Redeemer has a number of forms of communication, the content does not overlap so parishioners need to look at all of the sources to see everything being communicated.

- The list of parish communications in the "Are You in the Know", Means of Communication at Redeemer, was reviewed. They include the weekly Church Bulletin, Reminders weekly Email, monthly Good News, Redeemer web site, Facebook (periodic postings and mass) and Connect Now My Own Church which can be used to register or update your family information, financial giving and tax statements.
- Do people see communications coming from Redeemer? Do we know what is most effective?

- We need to market the church and our programs – to parishioners, area Catholics, the community
- Pastoral Council communications with the parish was considered a concern. While PC publishes its monthly meeting minutes that are available on the parish's web site, that does not seem to be reaching parishioners or meeting their needs.
- Think internal and external to reach local Catholics and community in general
- Redeemer is the best kept secret in Mechanicsville
- Improve marketing of Redeemer and our programs to parishioners, area Catholics and the community in general.

Possible communication improvements include:

- Understanding who is responsible for communications.
- Have 2-minute presentation on ministries, PC, Youth once a month
- General information about parish and our activities (distribute at community events at the church (Print, digital, PowerPoint, Video). (Examples Haiti Yard Sale, Craft bizarre, No Room at the Inn)
- Add content before or after Facebook mass. Can we have a led discussion before Mass – perhaps a preview of the readings/gospels/upcoming events/other information?
- Periodically mailing information to registered parishioners
- More frequent communications to keep parishioners up to date on what is going on in the parish.
- Make sure the home bound and parishioners that attend mass by Facebook receive communications
- Have Pastoral Council members available after masses to listen to parishioners
- Adding staff reports to Pastoral Council minutes
- Links to various communications in one location
- Suggest ½ time marketing/communications staff person (Do other parishes churches have this type of position?)

Faith Formation

Several ideas related to faith formation were discussed. Redeemer has numerous small groups and other faith formation opportunities, but many parishioners do not know they exist.

- 1) Add more small group Adult Faith Formation Programs per week/month
 - a. Better communicate Adult Faith formation opportunities and existing groups.
 - b. Possible have a calendar when various groups meet
- 2) Keep building parish wide adult formation opportunities – these being led by the Fr. Jim and the Deacons are popular.

- 3) Continue Facebook on-line mass.
- 4) For those who still have health concerns about attending mass in person on Sunday, consider attending noon masses on Monday and Wednesday where they can receive communion.
- 5) Have more faith formation opportunities for youth and young adults
- 6) Have more focus on sacraments
- 7) Rosary Rally
- 8) Daily prayer for the unborn

Challenges identified with Big Bucket List

While Pastoral Council developed ideas for Community, Communication and Faith Formation they also identified significant challenges. Many of the ideas require support of volunteers and staff.

- Redeemer's volunteer pool has been fairly fixed for years with many of the volunteers getting older and already volunteer for things. It is hard for them to do more. Younger parishioners have many other responsibilities and limited time to commit to programs.
 - Redeemer is very fortunate to have active, supportive groups like Redeemer's Knights of Columbus Council and Catholic Daughters who assist with numerous parish activities.
- Redeemer's staff was reduced significantly due the COVID pandemic. We lost our faith formation leader and secretary and our youth/young adult coordinator. Deacon Ron Reger volunteers as coordinator for faith formation and Renee Reisenweaver is part time staff coordination our youth and young adult programs.

Pastoral Council identified possible Staffing Needs – Communications/Marketing/Adult Faith Formation/Youth and Young Adult

Funding a new position is also a concern and requires Finance Council showing we can afford staff positions based on our current financial status. Also, it is important to have a well thought out job description.

Presentation of the Big Bucket List to Fr. Jim

Pastoral Council presented our summary of ideas to Fr. Jim at our February 2022 meeting.

We recommended improved signage on Meadowbridge Road (short term). Some research on what Hanover County will allow, is the sign on our property or an easement and estimated cost. (Due to the accident that destroyed Redeemer's existing sign replacing it became a top priority).

Longer term possible facility additions include a columbarium which would be self-funded. Redeemer would need to work thru the diocese which currently also requires a certain number of in-ground plots along with the columbarium. Other longer-term facilities that may be considered are building a chapel/pastoral place for quiet reflection, an outdoor pavilion, and a portico for the entrance to the church. The columbarium and chapel have been considered before but are still of interest and will be looked at again. These are all possible projects for consideration and planning for the next 3-5 years.

Communications remain high on PC objectives and how to improve communications. Our staff does a very good job communicating, but these efforts are in addition to their current job in the parish. Potential consideration to add a part time marketing/communications staff person depending on well defining the responsibilities of that position and could we financially afford that position. Do we know what is most effective for different demographics? Other ideas would be to have ministries speak for two minutes every few months before mass or produce a two-minute talk for Facebook. Produce materials for distribution or display when we have events at the church such as the Haiti Yard Sale, the Craft Bizarre and No Room at the Inn to improve Redeemer's visibility in the community. While Redeemer has various avenues for communicating with parishioners are they being seen and read.

We should continue to have mass on Facebook. It offers Redeemer's mass to many people especially the homebound and those still uncomfortable being around too many people. We should encourage those who want to receive communion but are concerned about the number of people at mass, to attend noon mass on Monday and/or Wednesday where there are fewer attendees. One idea is to provide more information about Redeemer before or after online masses. These could include previews of the readings/gospel and more detail on upcoming events.

Faith formation. We have a lot of groups that get together regularly and the presentations by Deacons Ron and Chris and Fr. Jim are well received, but the idea was to better communicate and expand these. Things like Rosary Rallies and programs focused on the sacraments. Could be like the presentation Fr. Jim gave on the mass.

Other items being considered are having a couple of festivals a year for the Redeemer Community. Things like St Patrick's Day festival, Oktoberfest, other. Possibly expand the wider Mechanicsville community to the outside community in the future. This is an ongoing discussion.

Pastoral Council realizes many of the ideas generated would be impossible to address without staff and volunteer support and that many of the ideas were not new. Pastoral Council

generated most of the ideas last fall and since then Redeemer has initiated activities related to some of the items Pastoral Council listed. These were in the planning before PC presented their Big Bucket List to Fr. Jim. Redeemer has resurrected our youth programs and faith formation programs. We have had events such as Beers and Hymns, Knights pancake breakfasts, St Patrick's Day Luncheon, and Coffee after Sunday masses.

PC continues to try to figure out how to get Catholics back into church. Discussed how the Synod Listening sessions are going and briefly how to reach out and engage the 82% of Catholics that are not regularly active in the church.

Synod 2021-2023

At Pastoral Council's January 2022 meeting, Dennis and Loretta Beeman, who were the Parish Coordinators for Redeemer's Synod Leadership Team, presented a detailed explanation of the purpose of the Synod and how it was going to be conducted at Redeemer. They also discussed what types of reports would be prepared for the Diocese and Redeemer. Pastoral Council strongly supported the process and the need to listen to parishioners, both young and old, those no longer attending Redeemer and those that have left the Church.

Dennis and Lorreta also gave an overview of the reports at Pastoral Council's June meeting. The Council had the opportunity before that meeting to review the results of the Synod Listening Sessions. The final Synod Report can be found on the Parish web site under Parish Publications.

It was interesting that many of Pastoral Council's ideas relating to communications, community and faith formation matched parishioners' responses heard during the Synod Listening Sessions. One item directly related to Pastoral Council was an understanding on what the Council does, who is on the Council and improved communication for the Council.

Input from Parishioners

Pastoral Council has a suggestion box outside of the parish office. Over the last year five comments/suggestions were submitted to the Council. All the submissions were related to our ongoing operations and were submitted to the parish staff and Fr. Jim.

Pastoral Council Elections

Planning for PC elections starts in January before the actual late May or June elections. Solicitation of candidates, presentations at mass, meetings with candidates to discuss their commitment if elected, candidate preparation of personal statements along with the election itself requires coordination with the Churches calendar. The responsibility for the election

resides with the Vice Chair with support of the existing Council. The Pastoral Council would like to see more individuals consider running for the council.