

St. Catherine of Siena Parish Council

Meeting of November 4, 2021 6:30 p.m.

NEW KITCHEN: Council members began their meeting with a thorough tour of the new kitchen in Marian Hall. It's finally open after many months of delay due to the need to update health and safety codes as well as supply-chain and Covid-related logjams. Fr. Mark explained the "new" kitchen is actually a mixture of old items from the previous one, such as the stove, and new ones required by code, such as new drainage and air exhaust and intake systems. A new freezer will be large enough to help store turkeys for the upcoming St. Vincent DePaul Thanksgiving baskets. A new commercial quality dishwasher is housed in an expanded area of the kitchen that used to be a storeroom. A new and larger storeroom has extensive shelf space.

Despite a sharp increase in the cost of some materials, the project ended "very little" over budget, Fr. Mark said. The total cost, he told council members, was \$225,000. Many generous contributions, including \$30,000 pledged by Knights of Columbus Council 6980, made this financially possible. Several council members also credited the general contracting skills of Fr. Mark, who has spent countless hours meeting with inspectors and contractors, and has kept a close eye on expenditures.

The new kitchen will be inaugurated Nov. 7 between masses with a birthday celebration for Fr. Bill.

COUNCIL MEMBERSHIP: The council discussed ongoing need for new parish council members created by term expirations. Parishioners who have a name to suggest, or who want to volunteer themselves, may contact Fr. Mark. In future council meetings, the purpose of the council will be clarified through discussions.

PARISH FINANCIAL INFORMATION

The collection totals "are slowly recovering though not at past levels," Fr. Mark reported. The parish is now "spending more conservatively," and slowly building up the savings account. In this bearish fiscal mode the major part of the kitchen project was held off until the money was actually available. Staffing levels have decreased, and current staff members, including the priests, are assuming the work of those who are no longer here. This conservative stance, Fr. Mark said, is putting the finances of the parish, "in a healthy place."

Periodic financial reports are published weekly in the bulletin.

REVISED PARISH MISSION STATEMENT: *“WE ARE CALLED TO HONOR THE LORD BY SERVING EACH OTHER IN HOPE.”*

“The pandemic changed everything,” creating an urgency to reassess how St. Catherine’s expresses its purpose and selects its programs. The staff and clergy created this mission statement which they felt more precisely reflects what St. Catherine’s always has been and strives to build upon.

“WE ARE CALLED TO HONOR THE LORD BY SERVING EACH OTHER IN HOPE.”

This mission statement incorporates three elements central to St. Catherine’s: the Lord, Service, and, especially in light of the pandemic, the power and Christ-centered truth of Hope.

Fr. Mark said the revised statement began appearing weeks ago and only a few parishioners noticed it. (The previous mission statement read, “A community empowered by God and striving to make Jesus known, experienced, loved and imitated.”)

ST. CATHERINE STAFF/SHIFTING RESPONSIBILITIES

Several positions vacated recently, such as the late Mary Hunt, and Jay Landry, who moved out of state. Their duties have overlapped into remaining staff positions. “We are trying to be prudent,” Fr. Mark said.

PROGRAMS

As the parish re-evaluates in the wake of Covid with reduced numbers and income, the opportunity and need to “reinvent” program offerings has been key. Two promising new programs are: “Pizza & Prayer” for young adults (suggested ages 18 – 40) and “PPP” (Prayer, Penance and Pub). Church attendance in all denominations and Catholic parishes is down, and Fr. Mark said he believes that bringing people to the church must be done “one at a time.” Both of these programs have brought people to the church, just not in huge waves. Details are in the weekly bulletin.

BUILDING USAGE

The staff has also re-evaluated the use of parish buildings, prioritizing use for St. Catherine’s parishioners and groups.

MARIAN GARDEN

Bob Romence of Romence Gardens Nursery is assisting the parish in evaluating and working in the gardens. Volunteers are still needed, and several council members expressed interest in the creation of a garden committee. Josh Fisher supports the idea of a Rosary path.

THE KALAMAZOO DIOCESE; BUSINESS AS USUAL.

A year after he submitted to the Pope the traditional intent to retire when he was 75 years old, Bishop Bradley has no replacement yet and is active in promoting the Year of the Holy Spirit in the diocese. The Vatican can take as long as two years to name a replacement, Fr. Mark said.

FUNERAL LUNCHEONS

During pandemic isolation restrictions, funeral luncheons were suspended and the service lost many volunteers, including most of its chairpersons. Luncheons may be different in the near future until that volunteer core can be rebuilt, Fr. Mark said. There is also a catering company available, at more cost, for families who choose to do so.

The council closed its meeting with prayer.

Minutes submitted by Barbara Walters, Council Secretary