



DIVINE GRACE PARISH

Pastoral Council Meeting Minutes

June 13, 2024

St Gregory's Library-6:30p.m.

The meeting took place at St. Gregory's library, with Laura Dadey and Father Jim calling it to order at 6:30 p.m. Father Jim opened the meeting with a prayer.

Attendees included: Father Jim, Laura Dadey, Jason Gwaldo, Angela Maloney, Seminarian Chris Baker, Michael Assaf, Judy Shearer, Rosina Betz, Valerie Bucek, and Joyce Gaydosz.

Laura proposed a motion to approve the April Minutes, but the email was not sent, so conditional approval was granted.

The meeting started by welcoming new staff members, Jason Gwaldo, Michael Assaf and Seminarian Chris Baker. Laura asked each one to introduce themselves and share their current projects.

Jason Gawaldo, Director of Catechetical Ministries

- **Reintroduction**
- **Preparation for the "Scuba" Vacation Bible School is currently underway.**
 - 100 kids registered, 55 volunteers.
 - 12 new catechists.
 - Might consider two VBS sessions in 2025.
- **Faith Formation**
 - Changing Faith Formation Sunday Schedule: Jason asked Father Jim to adjust the schedule so children could attend Mass first, followed by faith formation classes.
 - Faith Formation Options: Jason will be offering three different formats for faith formation: fully in-person, fully at home, and a hybrid model.
 - Hybrid Program: Once per month on Sunday, the schedule will start with an 8:00 a.m. Mass, followed by a family program from 9:15 a.m. to 9:45 a.m., and then children's formation classes starting at 9:45 a.m. Additionally, a parents' integration program will be offered to help parents support their children's learning at home. This program is intended for preschool through 5th grade.
 - Traditional CCD Classes: These classes will remain the same, taking place after the 10:00 a.m. Mass, with regular weekly sessions from 11:15 a.m. to 12:30 p.m., and will continue to use the same volunteers and textbooks.



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- Homeschool Religious Program: This program will be updated to better accommodate families with children of different age groups.
- The primary resources for catechists will be the Scriptures and the Catechism, tailored for each age group. Father Jim employs a similar approach when teaching St. Gregory's 8th graders, focusing on the Catechism rather than a textbook. Jason aims for the children to become familiar with the Bible, to be comfortable with it, and to recognize scripture.
- Last year, Father Joe Freedy implemented a change at Holy Redeemer where eighth graders attended the 11:00 a.m. mass as part of their faith formation and confirmation preparation. The change was well received with no complaints from parents. We are going to test it at St. Ferdinand next.
- In our diocese the sacrament of confirmation can be administered in eighth or ninth grade. Jason is planning on delaying confirmation until the fall of freshman year for several reasons:
 - Separate confirmation and graduation.
 - Helps with schedule.
 - Helps Integrate students into the high school program.
- New program will start in 2025-2026.
- The council discussed the age/faith formation impact on getting our children ready to receive the sacrament of confirmation.
- Father Jim emphasized that the sacrament of confirmation is a gift.

Michael Assaf, Coordinator of Youth and young Adults

- Micheal is from Syracuse, NY. He has been part of the youth ministry since high school.
- Michael used the example of the Road to Emmaus to clarify the goal of this ministry: Guide the youth back to the sacraments.
- Some of the activities are:
 - Biweekly meetings at Holy Redeemer.
 - Discipleship groups at St. Ferdinand.
 - Between the two groups around 25 kids.
 - Goal is for the kids to have happy and joyful memories in the church. Bring them back to the sacraments and let them know that they are loved.
 - Work with Faith on Fire also. It targets young adults.
 - Planning on having summer retreats next year.
 - Steubenville Conference is coming up. Sign up deadline June 15th.
 - Angela Maloney asked if we could offer something for middle school age kids. Michael and Jason are going to work together to come up with something specifically for them.



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- Michael will be spending some time at the school to build a relationship with the middle school age kids.
- Father Jim supports the idea of creating a program for middle school kids. Divine Grace parish might hire a coordinator for high school and another one for young adults in the future.
- As the program builds, Father Jim is hoping to increase the number of participants by increasing the events offered by our parish.
- Michael and the youth group will be managing the dunk tank at the festival.
- Judy mentioned that the Appalachia group will be managing the bounce houses at the festival this year.

Welcome Chris Baker, Seminarian

- Chris's class will be the last to serve a full pastoral year in a parish. Going forward, first-year seminarians will serve in a parish for a year instead.
- Father Jim is thankful that Bishop Zubic reassigned Chris to our parish. Chris will be with us until June 2025, bringing a great deal of energy, excellent people skills, and a strong ability to connect with others spiritually.
- Chris's goals for this year include:
 - Getting involved in a wide range of activities effectively
 - Establish tasks that can be done without me.
 - Ton of ideas for youth and young adults.
 - Want to be involved in the backend of how this parish works and run.
 - Want to be part of saving souls as part of Divine Grace Parish.
 - Chris: "I have a lot of energy, put me to work"
- Chris is currently residing at Holy Redeemer.

Parish Updates

- A few talks are scheduled this summer/upcoming year
 - Father Joe – July talks at Holy Redeemer.
 - Father Jim – July talks at St. Gregory.
 - Chris will have a speaking series in August at St. Ferdinand.
 - Dr. Scott Hann will be speaking at St. Ferdinand in January.
 - A few speakers will also be talking at all three parishes throughout the year.
- Social Media
 - Angela recommended increasing the social media presence by posting pictures highlighting all the different events at all three churches.



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- Digital Media/ Mission Specialist recruitment
 - The position is for Coordinator of Marketing, Mission, and Communication. Angela played a crucial role in defining the job description. We received 10-12 qualified applications. A team conducted the initial interviews, followed by second interviews with Father Jim, Angela, and Jennifer Livorse. Two candidates were selected, and Father Jim extended an offer to one of them. This candidate currently works for Catholic Charities within the Diocese, bringing diocesan knowledge and vocabulary, as well as a background in digital media. Alaina's role will be reclassified as Digital Media Specialist, handling tasks such as bulletins and flyers. After six months, we will evaluate if a second position is necessary.
 - For support, Father Jim would like to create a communications advisory team, who will meet with the new individual to help him prioritize the strategies.
 - This position includes a six-month contingency period.
- The reopening of Holy Redeemer Church is scheduled for the last weekend in June. The total cost of renovations is approximately \$615,000, with \$315,000 funded through Church Alive from previous fundraising efforts. The remaining \$300,000 is being covered by the parish. To help offset some of the costs, 80 pews were made available for dedications.
- There were complaints from Holy Redeemer parishioners about the renovation costs. Father Jim addressed these concerns during Mass, in the bulletin, and via email.
- June 12th was the first vocation council meeting. A ministry that wants to promote priestly vocations and consecrated life of vocations in the parish.
- A Second Anniversary Mass will be held in conjunction with our liturgical feast, "Mother of Divine Grace," on the weekend of July 20th and 21st. The celebratory Masses will be at 5 PM at St. Gregory, 9 AM at Holy Redeemer, and noon at St. Ferdinand. At these Masses, we will introduce our newly ordained priest, who will celebrate alongside Father Jim and Seminarian Dominic. The Pastoral Council is asked to coordinate a light reception following each Mass.

Safety and Compliance Update – Internal Audit

- Following an incident involving a Catholic church in the Greensburg area, Bishop Zubic has mandated an internal audit of every parish and school in the diocese. An external audit was recently conducted, and we exceeded expectations. The internal audit requires that all employees and volunteers are properly cleared.
- Father Jim informed the Pastoral Council that the Diocese of Pittsburgh is conducting a comprehensive internal audit. The council should advise the pastor that full compliance is mandatory. Any exceptional situations must be understood and managed according to diocesan protocols.
- There has been some resistance from parish members regarding clearances. Moving forward, strict compliance is required from everyone.
- Father Jim plans to include a notice in the bulletin highlighting that all employees and volunteers at the parish and school must adhere to the compliance requirements.



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Pastoral Council Raffle Basket

- Laura collected gift cards for the raffle basket. Rosina picked some games.

Ministry Minutes

- Laura shared Jennifer Livorse's ministry minutes to share with the council to be informed.
- Second ministry affair is on Saturday, June 15th.

Community Events

Diving Grace Parish will have a table at Cranberry Days. Holy Redeemer will have a table at Wandering Ellwood, and St. Gregory School will feature a float in the 4th of July parade in Zelienople.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:30pm with a closing prayer.

Next meeting will be held in September. Day/time TBD.