

St Ambrose Parish Pastoral Council Minutes

7PM, Tuesday, Mar. 4, 2025

Present; Dave Rutten, Janet Ouellette-Westra, Marilyn Thornburg, Bronwen Grody, Father Albert Kemboi, Msgr. Michael Hazard, Mary Hentschl-Early, Judie Maliszewski, Jim Cousino.
Absent: Paul Rahn

Opening Prayer: All – Holy Spirit Prayer

Tonight's Meeting Minutes: Digital recording edited/summarized by Jim Cousino.

Parish Council Meeting: Scheduled and agreed to next meeting being held on May 13th @ 7PM.

Parish Financial Report: Bronwen went over the mid-year financial review. Feeling very comfortable with where the numbers are now. We don't have January results yet, but the Sunday collections through end of January are not as good as what you see here, but there's still \$7,800 better than last year, so we're still doing better than last year and we're keeping pace with inflation. Bronwen provided some clarification between net profit/loss and adjusted profit/loss.

FY26 Budget Status: Bronwen stated that minimal progress made at this point due to not having January and February months reconciled. Janet will be helping to put together a draft to submit to the finance council for evaluation. FY26 budget to be submitted by June 15th deadline. Next finance council meeting is on May 6th which will be looking at and setting the new budget. A late May finance council meeting will be set to finalize any remaining items before final submission to the diocese.

Order of Christian Initiation of Adults Update: Dave reported that there have been two opportunities for expressed interest. The first was a couple that ultimately decided that they weren't ready. The second was an older woman who also retracted due to not being ready.

Religious Education: Janet reported on submission of status and activity provided by Sarah Orr: "Classes are going well. We haven't added any new students, so we still sit with the same numbers as last time. We are trying to engage our students and families in a couple Lenten activities this year. I've attached both. The first activity we're encouraging our families to participate in is "40 things in 40 days". The second activity we've given to our students is a blank Lenten calendar. They can either color in everyday tracking Lent (more of our littles) or they can write a way that they will follow Jesus. We also have our 7th graders putting on a special version of Stations of the Cross. We're really hoping that the more we can engage our families in the Lenten season the more our kiddos will grow in their faith." The 7th grade stations of the cross are scheduled for March 28th @ 6:30pm in the activity center. Janet submitted a suggestion to the council regarding coffee & donuts on Sundays to get a "traffic carpet/rug" with some toy vehicles to have available for the small children (< 5yo.) and possibly a box of toys as well. All council members liked the idea.

Newsletter Update: Janet reported that half were mailed out on March 3rd while the remaining half was mailed out that day (March 4th). Msgr. Mike expressed gratitude to Janet for her efforts in coordinating member contributions (writings) and pulling it all together to get sent to our parishioners.

Lent & Easter: Fr. Albert mentioned that lent begins the following day (Ash Wednesday). Stations of the cross are on Fridays. Two special stations of the cross will occur- the first being the 7th graders on 3/28 and the second being a couple from Allegan who perform the stations to music (tentative date but not yet firm). There will be a soup supper on April 2nd (day after penance service); sign-ups are posted.

Father Albert's New Role: Fr. Albert was recently honored by the bishop to be chosen as the "Dean of the Central Deanery" for the next 5 years. A handout was provided which outlined the deanery in the diocese where Fr. explained some of the geographic deanery layout. In this role, Fr. Albert will help the bishop as he oversees tending to the needs of two diocese. More... Fr. Albert's title will now be followed by "V.F." (Vicar Forane). Msgr. Mike went on to explain what is meant by Vicar Forane which was described as meaning lieutenant to the bishop over the local jurisdiction. Furthermore, the deans serve as the bishop's active presence when he is unable to be present. St. Ambrose will now function as a sort of "headquarters" for these new functions and activities. Considerations for funding of the activities of these new duties is not provided by the diocese and therefore is intended to be a budget line item of the parish. Fr. Creagan was the previous Dean of the Central Deanery before Fr. Albert was appointed.

Rectory Improvement: With St. Ambrose now serving as the home of the Dean of the Central Deanery, more visitors and activity will occur. For this reason, Fr. Albert communicated that the furniture in the rectory has been replaced. Previous furniture pieces are in the basement and will be donated in the future.

Facilities Report: Greg provided the update that the facilities report assessment draft has been completed at this time and submitted to Fr. Albert and Jim. There were some significant findings. Next steps will be for priorities for each item be evaluated and agreed upon then Jim will coordinate a parish council meeting for Greg to go over the full and final report in detail for consideration of how to proceed.

Strategic Plan: Fr. Albert noted that he received the previously constructed strategic plan (2019) from Dave which will be built upon and completed by the end of 2025 then implemented immediately thereafter in 2026.

2025 Bishop's Annual Appeal (BAA): Will begin in April and a committee will be formed to facilitate that initiative with the goal being to meet our goal within the first month.

Parish Attendance & Web Traffic: Jim briefly presented (in Paul's absence) an overview of Paul's submitted data that was provided in advance to all council members. It was noted that trends in attendance and activity in the online channels are indicating declines however the most important and very positive trend is that Mass attendance is increasing across all metrics.

Closing Prayer: Hail Mary and Blessing (All)