

St. Augustine Catholic Church
Pastoral Council Minutes
September 3, 2025

Council Members:

Present: Rev. M. J. Nicks, Debbie Battaglia, Malia Craven, Zack Cunningham, Carmen Piccolo

Absent: Mike Hutchinson, Greg Repetti, Paul Stewart

Meeting Called to Order at 6:05 PM

Fr. Nicks led the council in prayer. April 15, 2025, minutes were reviewed and approved.

PASTOR'S REPORT

Old Business

Post-Summer Review

A. Security Issues on Campus / Homeland Security Grant

- i. As Fr. Nicks and a parishioner, who is a professional grant writer, further researched writing a grant for a campus-wide security program, it was learned that this is a very time-intensive, arduous process and would require a certain amount of financial commitment.
- ii. It has become evident that, currently, between the cost and the extensive time commitment, we do not have the resources to make a grant happen.

B. Parish Pizza Party (timing, location, seminarian involvement)

- i. The parish pizza party was very well attended, and the feedback was overwhelmingly positive. Overall, the parishioners enjoyed the event, finding it a nice change, and appreciated having it in the gym.
- ii. Some parishioners said they preferred hamburgers, but coordinating a BBQ, resourcing the correct number of burgers/hot dogs/buns/condiments/etc. requires much more from volunteers as it is time-intensive. As our parish has aged, our volunteer pool has been reduced, and we don't currently have the volunteers necessary to continue with the previous model.
- iii. The venue change also worked out as people made positive comments about being out of the sun. We will continue to host the event in the gym, so the weather will not be an issue.
- iv. It was agreed by all that it was nice to include the seminarians. Going forward, we will again coordinate the date with GU's Welcoming Mass so the seminarians can join us annually. Msgr. Mee and the South Hill parish priests will also be invited next year.
- v. Fr. Nicks is inclined to have the pizza party again for next year's Feast of St. Augustine gathering. It worked out well, as it was nice to see more young families attend.

C. Summer Mass Schedule

- i. Fr. Nicks understands that some parishioners are disappointed with the twice-weekly summer Mass schedule, but it will continue indefinitely for the following reasons:
 - 1. For the next several years, Fr. Nicks will be in Ottawa further pursuing his schooling.
 - 2. It is difficult to secure substitute priests.
 - 3. Substitute celebrants are paid a stipend of \$50 plus mileage for each daily Mass. Daily Mass would be a financial challenge to absorb, even if we could find available priests.
 - 4. The council suggested that Fr. Nicks share these obstacles with the regular daily Mass attendees.
- ii. Some parishioners were disappointed in the lack of First Friday Adoration during the summer. It was explained that Deacon Richard was out of town a lot during the summer

months. Fr. Nicks shared that of the roughly 10-15 people who come to Adoration in the summer, and a good number of them are not St. Augustine parishioners. It would be a big ask to have consistent Adoration during the summer, but if more people come, he will do what he can to see that it is available at St. Augustine.

D. Sound System

- i. While the new sound system is not perfect, it has generally received positive reviews from the parishioners who say it is an improvement. Zack Cunningham shared that the improved sound seems to keep the children more engaged during Mass.
- ii. With our extensive hard surfaces, the resulting reverberation will always make our space a challenge for acoustic clarity. More bodies on the weekends will always have better sound quality than daily Masses when there are few people to help absorb the echo.
- iii. Additional options for enhancing clarity by reducing reverb in the space include wall hangings and/or padded pews. There are no current plans to pursue either, but the pastoral council has been asked to reflect on these options while we continue to evaluate the new system throughout this upcoming liturgical year.

E. Landscaping & Sign

- i. The new landscaping and new signage have been well received by parishioners, other Catholics, and even non-Catholics who have reached out to us, commenting on it.

New Business

II. Looking Forward

A. Pastoral Council Meetings Moving to Thursdays

- i. As Fr. Nicks will now be teaching OCIA on Wednesday evenings, the Pastoral Council meetings will be moved to the following Thursdays: 11.13.25, 01.08.26, 03.05.26, 05.07.26.

B. HVAC System & Boiler

- i. We have two HVAC units on the church proper. Both HVAC units are well past their normal life expectancy, and the northern unit has begun failing. Due to the long lead times necessary for fundraising and the ordering of custom equipment that would fit on our roof, this requires our parish to be proactive.
- ii. In addition to the heating and cooling that provide a comfortable environment for parishioners, maintaining a consistent temperature range is also essential for the well-being of our organ.
- iii. We have begun reaching out to companies for estimates for the project but anticipate that each unit would cost well over \$100K.
- iv. We have one boiler in the hall/gym section of our facilities. It is old and, after addressing the HVAC for the Church, we should turn our attention to making sure we are prepared for the costs associated with its future replacement.
- v. Andrews Mechanical suggested that we work on replacing just the northern HVAC unit initially, allowing us more time to raise funds and granting us the ability to use the parts from the northern unit to maintain the southern unit.
- vi. We would have to commit to this investment well in advance, when there is no snow. Fr. Nicks will ask Tom to send the RFP to three companies.
- vii. The Pastoral Council agreed that raising funds for the replacement of the HVAC units and the boiler should be our next Summer Project, but we would need to roll it out as early as December. Fr. Nicks said he would have to run this by the Finance Council.

C. Annual Parish Themes

- i. Fr. Nicks would like to have a different parish theme each year and asked the council what they thought about “The Eucharist – Come to the Table” as a theme for 2026. The idea was received positively.
- ii. Initial components for this theme include an emphasis on the Eucharist during Sunday and school Masses, and Deacon Richard leading a book study during Lent on the theme.
- iii. Ideas discussed:
 1. A Eucharistic procession sometime during the year, perhaps with the involvement of the school.
 2. In addition to providing additional opportunities for Eucharistic Adoration, creating a pamphlet about Adoration or having a guided period of prayer in the context of adoration.
 3. Perhaps it would be possible to incorporate stories about Eucharistic miracles during Adoration. Children love stories about miracles. Zack Cunningham said that 20 minutes of silence is a long stretch of time for kids; he thinks the students, especially the younger ones, would be engaged and excited about it.
 4. Soft background music or Gregorian chant playing during Adoration. This is very popular at the Cathedral.

D. Upcoming Programs:

- i. Religious Education & Sacramental Prep
 1. The programs will begin on Sunday, 09.21.25, following the 9AM Mass.
 2. RE will again be run by Tess Wyborne. This year, the program will be broken into two or three age-appropriate groups in separate rooms in the parish center instead of all ages in one setting. Two parishioners have volunteered to assist in teaching RE. Another volunteer or two would be helpful.
 3. Sacrament Prep will again be taught by Audra Keyes.
 4. There will be an informational meeting about the programs for the parents on Sunday, 09.14.25, following the 9AM Mass in Pearson Hall.
- ii. OCIA
 1. This is a way for those who wish to learn more about the Catholic way of life to do so, while discerning if it is the faith in which they are called to participate.
 2. Fr. Nicks will lead the program this year. This is also a good opportunity to engage with adult Catholics who have never been confirmed.
 3. According to program coordinators, Ruth Marchetti and Beth Nichols, one gentleman is very enthusiastic about the program, and another individual may also attend the meetings.
 4. OCIA meetings will be held in Pearson Hall at 6:30pm on Wednesday evenings, beginning on 09.24.25.

E. Nazareth Guild Celebration Light

- i. The gala will be held at the Hemmingson Center on Saturday, 10.18.25. This year it will feature a paddle raise. St. Augustine will again sponsor a table.

Meeting was adjourned at 7:00PM.

Minutes respectfully submitted by Carol Messier, parish office manager.