



**ST. JOAN OF ARC CHURCH
PARISH PASTORAL COUNCIL
NOVEMBER 3, 2020**

Members Present:

Rev. Gabriel Baltes, OSB
Susan Cassa
Andrew Hackley
Mary Beth Kerner
Mathew Klody
Tom Kmiecik
Dan O'Connor

Mary Beth Sobolewski
Tracy Szalek
Leanne VanGronigen
Dick Webb
Rich Weigel
Matt Zurek

Absent:

Mike Budd
Maureen Cunningham
Dave Mankowski
Bob Miller
Jenny Mosteller
Andrea Uribe

I. OPENING

The meeting began with a Hail Mary at 7:00 p.m. in Room 22 of the Parish Center.

II. NEW BUSINESS

Pastor's Address

Fr. Gabriel recounted that he took his sabbatical from January until June. He expressed gratitude to Fr. Dennis Paul, who served as Administrator, and the staff, who rose to the occasion during the Covid lockdown and continue to keep in communication with parishioners and provide recordings of weekend Mass.

Fr. Gabriel also praised Michelle Picchione's smooth transition to the position of principal following Michael Sweeney's passing, and her excellent handling of the transition to online learning during the Covid lockdown. The students are adapting well to the safety requirements currently in place.

During Advent, Fr. Gabriel will visit each classroom, during which time students will present on their classroom's patron saint. These presentations will take the place of the All Saints' Day event this year.

This year, the Annual Appeal for the school will take the form of a video message from Fr. Gabriel.

During this time when large gatherings and certain features of the liturgy, such as congregational singing, are suspended, we have created presentations that can be listened to at home, including podcasts for Morning, Noon, and Evening Prayer, a Youtube series on liturgical formation, Cloud of Witnesses saints presentations, and Bible Studies.

As we are still limited to 100 people in church, we plan to add extra Masses for Christmas.

Fr. Gabriel shared an article, *Catholics: They Are Not Coming Back, Unless* written by Msgr. Eric Barr, with the Council members. It discusses the crisis that the church capacity restrictions have created, and urges us to plan how to bring people back to Mass once these restrictions are lifted.

Parish Staff Updates

Fr. Gabriel appointed Michelle Picchione as principal of the school in July. Rather than hiring a vice-principal at this time, Michelle assigned tasks of the vice-principal to some of the teachers. We may consider hiring a vice-principal in the future.

The position of Director of Religious Formation, which had been held by Dolly Pointner, was eliminated due to financial constraints. These responsibilities have been assumed by our Campus Minister, Barbara Caruso. Our Religious Education program is being conducted virtually this year. The school teachers are serving as Religious Education instructors, for which they receive a stipend. Fr. Gabriel would like the school teachers to continue to instruct Religious Education classes in the future.

Liturgy Coordinator Scott Fox has been made full-time. Scott also oversees the parish website.

Alex Gervacio, who was the Youth Director and RCIA Coordinator, will now oversee Youth Ministry and the newly created Young Adult Ministry. Our Pastoral Associate, Michael Lewandowski, will now direct RCIA.

Church Renovation/Restoration for Centennial

Fr. Gabriel wants to form a Centennial Committee to plan a celebration for our parish's 100th anniversary, which will occur in 2024. Fr. Gabriel also intends to form an Art and Environment Committee as a Centennial subcommittee, which will look at the church artistically and liturgically, and recommend ways to beautify it, which would hopefully be accomplished in time for the centennial. Since there are fewer people in church at the moment, it may also be a good time to accomplish projects in the space.

Fr. Gabriel then brought the Council members to the church to highlight the areas being considered for renovations/restorations. Sr. Sharon Stola, director of the Diocesan Office of Worship, recently visited the church, and noted that some areas of the woodwork are

deteriorating. Ken Brooks, owner of St. Paul Fabricating Company, also visited and noted some damage, and took measurements in the church.

From these conversations with Sr. Sharon and Mr. Brooks, Fr. Gabriel determined that there are several areas that need attention, listed in the order in which they would need to be accomplished:

- Repair, restore, and refinish pews and kneelers. Mr. Brooks advised that the pews be stained a darker color to match the altar appointments. The kneelers need repair so that they are not so loud when they are lowered to the ground.
- Paint walls and ceiling. Ornamental additions may be considered.
- Remove carpet in narthex, nave and sanctuary and replace with another material. The carpet is old, and carpeting is unsanitary, not durable, and bad for acoustics. We would like to install tile instead. There are many options and price ranges for the new flooring. We would need to ensure that the new flooring is slip-resistant.
- Examine the stained glass windows and repair if needed.
- Update lighting as needed.
- Additional artwork, e.g., tapestries, statues.

Fr. Gabriel estimates that it would take a year to get the design in place, and another year to raise the necessary funds. The work would take approximately 6-7 months to complete. The project could cost around \$2 million. Fr. Gabriel will consult the Finance Council, as this is an inopportune time to do fundraising.

Fr. Gabriel also hopes to refurbish the bells so that they will swing and relocate the tower/create a bell arch. There is a concern that the bells might fall down from their current tower, so they should at least be removed. This would be a separate project from those listed above, and would need to be funded by a donor. It is estimated that this project would cost at least \$250,000.

III. MINISTRY AND BOARD UPDATES

School Board Update

Currently, 317 students are enrolled in the school. We are not accepting new students right now, due to classroom capacity restrictions. Some grades have waiting lists. A few students are involved in remote learning.

Due to the Covid pandemic, many safety protocols are in place in the school, including frequent sanitizing, increasing air flow, social distancing, wearing of face masks, etc. Two or three grades

take a turn attending the 10 am Friday school Mass, while the others watch a “livestream” in their classrooms.

Two students tested positive for Covid several weeks ago, but did not contract it from being at school. All safety/quarantine procedures were followed.

Each classroom has a patron saint, chosen by the teacher.

Tracy Szalek reported that at the last School Board meeting, the Board discussed updating the computer system, with respect to bringing in new Chromebooks and having them function properly with the Wifi network. Also, the Board has formed a Development Committee to assist with fundraising and planning, which are even more needed with extra expenses caused by new safety protocols. This Fall, \$24,600 was raised to help with the extra cleaning expenses and to purchase air purifiers for the classrooms. The “virtual” school Fun Run also raised \$12,700 earlier this school year.

Our kindergarten teacher, Angela Suwanski, was named the WGN October teacher of the month, and was featured on the television news station.

Finance Update

Director of Finance, Leanne VanGronigen, reported that due to our inability to use more than 25 percent of the church capacity for Mass, weekly collections are down. However, we are receiving an increased number of offering envelopes in the mail, and online contributions have also increased. This year, we had to budget 15 percent less for anticipated collections, and we are meeting that goal. We are keeping our spending down and staying proactive on any needed repairs.

Enrollment in the school Extended Day program has declined significantly. Also, our revenue from commuter parking permits has declined, as very few commuters are utilizing the North parking lot. We have given commuters the option of paying a reduced amount in order to retain their parking permit.

The Paycheck Protection Program loan of \$460,000 greatly helped in figuring our budget for this year.

Outreach Update

Matt Zurek explained that the pandemic has changed how Pads, Magi Tree, and Harvest Sunday will be handled. Regarding Magi Tree, parishioners will be given the opportunity to make a monetary donation, which will allow us to distribute gift cards to needy families for Christmas. On Harvest Sunday, those who wish to donate food and other products will bring their donations directly to the parish, which will then be loaded onto the food pantry vehicles.

Pads has shut down their interim housing program, in which the homeless were to spend the night at a particular church. Instead, Pads is now providing hotel rooms for the homeless. Our

parishioners regularly donate to help Pads continue to provide hotel rooms, and have also helped provide meals to several homeless individuals in downtown Downers Grove.

Rich Weigel reported that our St. Vincent de Paul Society helped around 100 families last year, and disbursed \$70,000 to help the needy with rent, utilities, and transportation. Our parishioners have been very generous in supporting this ministry.

Diocesan Pastoral Council Update

Andrew Hackley, our parish representative on the South DuPage Deanery Diocesan Pastoral Council, explained that their Council meets with the Bishop a few times each year. The Diocesan Pastoral Council is a means by which the bishop and the parishes can dialogue with one another.

They have not met yet this year, but now that Bishop Hicks is installed, he plans to meet with the Council in the near future. Andrew asked that if anyone has ideas about what they would like to see from the Diocesan Pastoral Council to let him know.

IV. CLOSING

The meeting ended at 8:45 p.m. and closed with a prayer in time of pandemic.

Respectfully Submitted,

Mary Beth Kerner
Recording Secretary