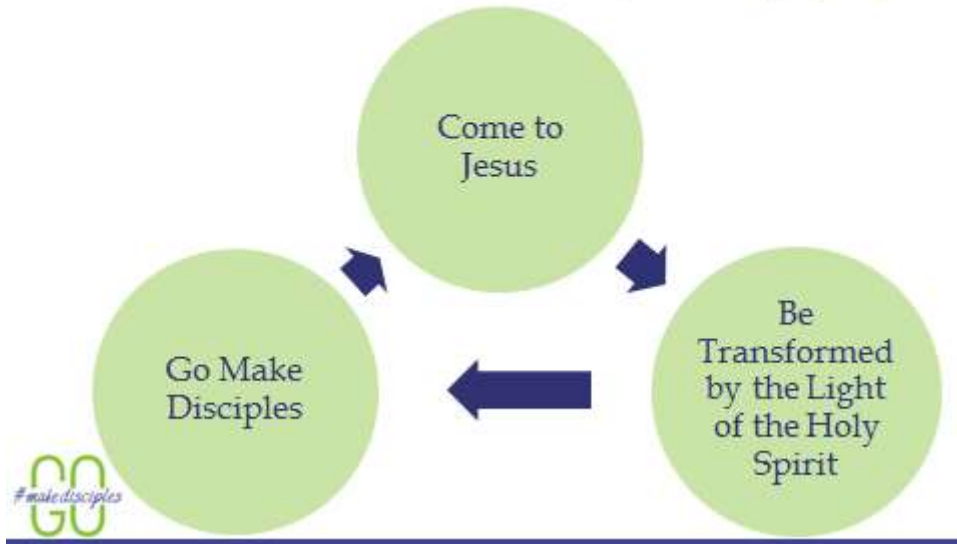


## THE MISSION

- Regarding the overall life of the community, on the slide with the three circles where you talked about coming to Christ, being transformed and going to make disciples, who will be doing that? Are you doing that alone?

# Pastor's Update

## I. Mission - Strive to be a community that helps people



The goal is reach out not only to your children but to others and help them understand that our faith, the Church, Jesus Christ is not only relevant but essential to a life filled with Joy and true purpose. With that background then, it is easier to understand **our mission to be a community that:**

**Helps people COME TO JESUS**, provides them a place where they feel at home to worship yes, but also a community where they are valued and where they can share their gifts as they come to know Jesus better, both sacramentally and in the community.

**Allows God to guide people to BE TRANSFORMED** by the Holy Spirit and with the graces given in and by our communities

**Sends people out to GO, MAKE DISCIPLES**, people set on fire with the Love of the Lord, graced by the Holy Spirit to share with others the grace they have been given

Over and over we've talked about reaching out and being an invitational community. Just as we have been welcomed and found a home to worship, we are called to invite others to come experience Gods love too. Repeatedly, Pope Francis has asked us to step out of our comfort zones and be FEARLESS in sharing the Good News. Wouldn't it be great to have every Mass with standing room only, filled with believers who have encountered Christ? We can't be satisfied until this occurs. Be transformed and GO Make Disciples. That's our mission. I want and hope for us to become a place where the whole community experiences the transforming power of the Holy Spirit, is fed and nourished so that they are on fire to go and share that Gift with others. Ultimately it is the same mission we have always had but with a new, more intentional focus - that's what brings us to the pastorate plan of Be Missionary Disciples.

This is not for the mission for the pastor alone or even just for the parish staff. This is the mission for each of us as individual disciples and for all of us as members of this community. It is the call given to us

by Christ and we have the responsibility for it. We will have to answer to Him at Judgement time how well we have done.

## ALPHA

### • Who is the “Alpha team?” What is the next step after Alpha? When will I be able to participate in a discipleship/connect group?

The Alpha Team is the group of people who are leading our efforts in evangelization and outreach through Alpha. The group is headed by Mrs. Laurel Swencki and right now includes individuals who have been scheduling and administering the sessions, those who have been Hosts and Helpers, and the food teams who see the meals are planned and served. The group is looking to expand both in numbers and in ideas. They recently had a meeting and are looking to hold Alpha’s at other churches and in local communities from Myersville to Brunswick.

As I have said many times, Alpha is the “on-ramp” to greater love for and awareness of the presence of God in one’s life. It is also the start of a greater and more involved discipleship in our community. We are actively planning what those next steps should be. The goal has both individual and communal dimensions, as laid out in the book by Father James Mallon, **Divine Renovation: Moving Your Parish from Maintenance to Mission**. The individual dimension of the goal involves the creation of “Connect Groups” and “Discipleship Groups.” Connect Groups would be larger groups of people that help members to support one another on a regular basis, helping them to pastor one another. Discipleship Groups would be smaller groups with the expressed purpose of building up participants in the content of our faith. These would be more like Bible Studies, classes on topics.

The communal goal is to create a more vibrant community that draws on the strengths of each individual disciple to make disciples both of those already present but even more, in sharing the Good News of Jesus Christ, with those out in the larger community who are estranged from the Church or do not yet know or see Jesus as relevant in their lives.

All of this must be done with a good deal of care and concern and cannot be forced to happen quickly. It may seem to some an excruciatingly slow process and I know that there are those who are impatient. The important thing is to do it correctly, to supply and equip leaders to direct it, and to make sure it is sustainable over the course of a long period of time, scalable so that it can grow with us, and transferable so that it is not dependent on any one person.

## LEADERSHIP STRUCTURES

### • Certainly, our parish bulletin “staff” list is out of date. Shouldn’t it be changed to reflect the new organization? And that new organization is still not clear, at least to me. It seems you, the director of finance, and others on the staff are being given new titles and enlarged responsibilities. In addition, new non-paid staff were announced. Why isn’t any of this reflected? My understanding of the new and growing parish bureaucracy would benefit from a clear organization chart (there are free templates on the internet) showing each staff member’s respective duties and responsibilities as well as providing a clear indication of who reports to whom. There’s no way Father created a flat organization. He doesn’t have time for that. All this organizational information and chart should be provided on our web page. I learned that there are at least 5 parish groups that are involved in making important decisions about parish life. I think transparency requires that the parishioners be given more information regarding the corporators, the parish council, the finance committee, the liturgy committee, and the “leadership team.” Specifically:

- **What are the duties and responsibilities of each body?**
- **Is the respective body juridical: i.e., is it required by church canon or archdiocesan rule/regulation? or is it *ad hoc*, the result of the pastor's personal management style?**
- **Who are the members of each body?**
- **How are they chosen and what are their terms of office if any?**
- **When do they meet? Is the meeting open to parishioners?**
- **When, if at all, is parishioner feedback sought by that body?**

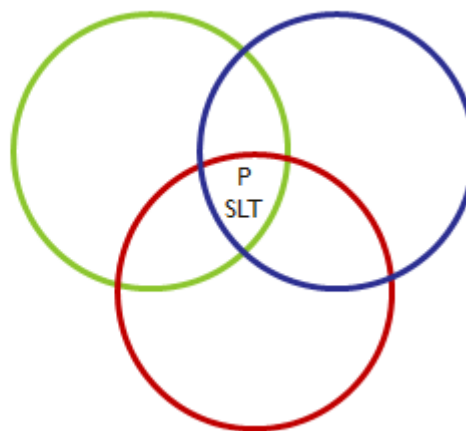
Certainly, this is a comprehensive question about the structures that help me to guide and serve this parish. I'll try to do an overview answering each part of the question individually. Most are not open to the public, but a specific area of responsibility of the members of each group is to be part of and active in the community to draw feedback in formal and informal ways.

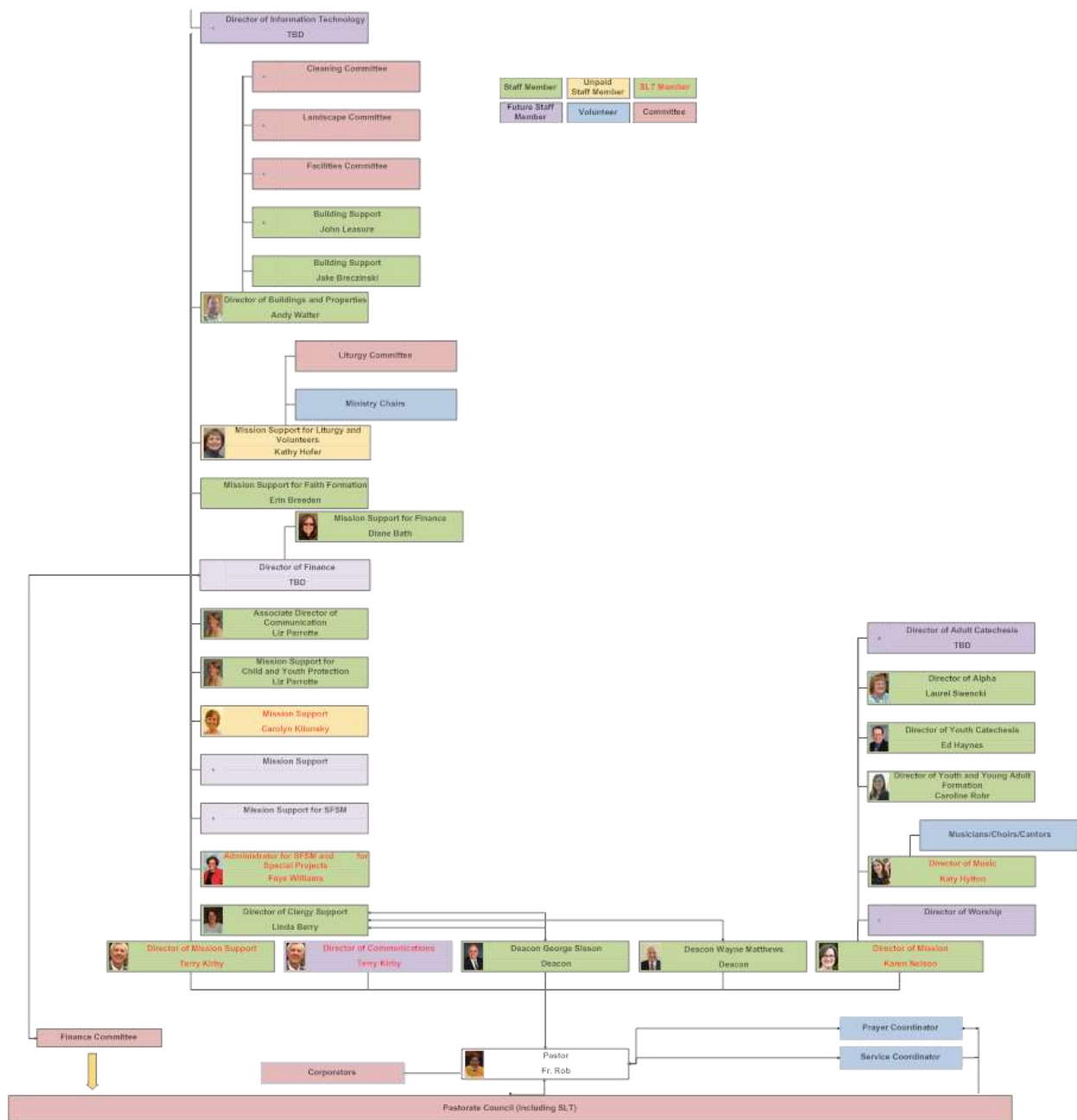
Parish Leadership structures are in flux right now as we form the pastorate, combine the staff, and seek to form a single leadership structure for the pastorate. This also involves creating an (additional?) team that will help us in the planning and changes that come from the pastorate. This area of parish leadership structures will be one of the primary focuses of the coming year. The transition and call for a single parish leadership highlight my inability to balance and use these structures to the fullest potential. This has been especially true in the last two years as I have had both parish communities to pastor. Together with the Senior Leadership Team, I am making the rebuilding and populating of these structures one of my top priorities so that we can manage the transition and focus on vision. There is a chart indicating how each of these groups should overlap but that each has responsibilities distinctive to it.

Yes, the bulletin (and other parish means of communication such as the website) should reflect the realities of newly hired staff members, additional staff members that were added because of the combination of the two communities and relatively new concept of unpaid staff members. All that I can say is that we're working on it. Immediate and more pressing needs have taken precedence but we hope to keep up with these other things as well. I have developed a chart that outlines the new positions and the means of reporting but it is in the process of evolving.

Now let me respond to the questions about individual groups. I have also added an additional one that the questioner did not ask about, the staff

- **Pastoral Council**
- **Finance Council**
- **Pastoral Staff and Ministry Leaders**
- **Pastor with the Senior Leadership Team**





## THE CORPORATORS

- **What are the duties and responsibilities?**

The parish corporators are responsible for assuring that matters such as safety, condition of the physical plant, hiring of personnel, finances, security of parish assets, operations in accordance with Archdiocesan policies, and compliance with State and federal laws are being dealt with in a reasonable and prudent manner. Corporators need not do these things themselves, but must assure that they are being done.

- **Is the respective body juridical: i.e., is it required by church canon or archdiocesan rule/regulation? or is it ad hoc, the result of the pastor's personal management style?**

None of the above. This set-up is due to the intersection of civil and canon law. The establishment of an individual parish corporation in civil law helps shape what canon law calls a juridical person. In each case, the idea is that a group of people can function according to the law. The Parish Corporation is the legal vehicle for managing the affairs of the parish and establishing specific legal accountability for those affairs.

There is a separate corporation for every parish in the Archdiocese. The Parish Corporators are the Board of Directors of each parish corporation.

- **Who are the members?**

The Archbishop, *ex officio*, is president of the Board, and the regional vicar (for us, that's Msgr. James Hannon), *ex officio*, is vice president of the Board and the Pastor, *ex officio*, is the secretary and treasurer of the board. Bylaws specify that "two laypersons appointed by the Archbishop" serve as members of the Board of Corporators. Parish Corporators, nominated by the pastor and approved by the Archbishop, serve for a period of five years. Currently, the lay corporators are: Sammie Hayas for St. Francis; Laurie Kaler and Gary Smothers for St. Mary; Mark Carter and Samantha Holt for Holy Family. This is in the process of changing as the merger of St. Francis and St. Mary parishes has been approved.

- **How are they chosen and what are their terms of office if any?**

Bylaws specify that "two laypersons appointed by the Archbishop" serve as members of the Board of Corporators. Parish Corporators, nominated by the pastor and approved by the Archbishop, serve for a period of five years.

- **When do they meet? Is the meeting open to parishioners?**

My goal is to meet every other month. This has been sporadic during the transition. These meetings are not open to parishioners.

- **When, if at all, is parishioner feedback sought by that body?**

Parishioner feedback is sought by each individual corporator who shares these concerns with me both formally at meetings and informally as they see me.

## **THE PARISH COUNCIL**

- **What are the duties and responsibilities?**

The parish council serves as a formal body for advising the pastor and as a vehicle for the pastor to disseminate information. They are a consultative body who can be tasked with different responsibilities. The basic responsibility of the pastoral council is to serve as the group that looks at the parish from 30,000 feet, helping to provide insight and guidance to the pastor on mission, planning, and long-term goals. This is in transition right now as we determine the best way forward considering the pastorate.

- **Who are the members?**

Currently the members for St. Francis-St. Mary are: Cheryl Miller – Secretary, Michelle Cousineau, Theresa Ghiorzi, Lisa Haynes, Price Kaler, and Wayne Neely

Currently the members for Holy Family are: Andy Ferenschak, Carolyn Kilonsky, Dan Prendergast, Kevin Self *ex officio*, Annette Stepler

- **How are they chosen and what are their terms of office if any?**

They were chosen by a combination of election and appointment. Most have been asked to stay beyond their three-year term as we determine what is needed for the pastorate.

- **When do they meet? Is the meeting open to parishioners?**

Right now, in transition, they meet occasionally. The goal is to meet quarterly for an extended meeting to help plan and determine where we are on track. This has been sporadic during the transition. These meetings are not open to parishioners.

- **When, if at all, is parishioner feedback sought by that body?**

Part of the responsibility of each member of the pastoral council is to be part of the community and to listen to the needs of the community. Parishioner feedback is sought by each individual member who shares these concerns with me both formally at meetings and informally as they see me.

## THE FINANCE COMMITTEE

### • What are the duties and responsibilities?

The members of the Finance Committee are to assist the pastor in the administration of the goods of the parish. They are to:

- Create overall pastorate operating budget with staff ministry budgets
- Review proposed budget against pastoral priorities
- Develop long-term financial plan for the parish
- Financial reporting (minimum quarterly), annually to parish, diocesan report - highlight any material variation
- Oversee Accounting (Revenues and Debts/expenditures)
- Assist with Internal Controls/Accounting
- Development and Asset Management (Stewardship)
- Advise on expenses over a certain amount of money

### • Is the respective body juridical: i.e., is it required by church canon or archdiocesan rule/regulation? or is it ad hoc, the result of the pastor's personal management style?

The Finance Committee is required by canon law. Can. 537 In each parish there is to be a finance council which is governed, in addition to universal law, by norms issued by the diocesan bishop and in which the Christian faithful, selected according to these same norms, are to assist the pastor in the administration of the goods of the parish, without prejudice to the prescript of can. 532 (the pastor is to take care that the goods of the parish are administered).

### • Who are the members?

Currently the members for Saint Francis-St. Mary are: Jim Grattan, Chair; Gillian Shurland, and Faye Williams.

Currently the members for Holy Family are: Kevin Self, Chair; Gary Gregoire, George Littrell, Erica Saccoia, Terry Kirby and Karen Nelson.

### • How are they chosen and what are their terms of office if any?

The members are appointed by the pastor. There is no term of office.

### • When do they meet? Is the meeting open to parishioners?

They meet monthly. These meetings are not open to parishioners.

## THE LITURGY COMMITTEE

### • What are the duties and responsibilities?

The liturgy committee serves as the planning body for parish liturgies. They are tasked with planning and scheduling for all parish liturgies.

### • Is the respective body juridical: i.e., is it required by church canon or archdiocesan rule/regulation? or is it ad hoc, the result of the pastor's personal management style?

The members are chosen by the pastor, usually drawing on chairs of ministry teams such as sacristans, greeters, lectors, servers and extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion, etc.

### • Who are the members?

Currently the members for St. Francis-St. Mary are: with the retirement of Rosie Berkey and the Chair, this committee is in transition.

Currently the members for Holy Family are: Kathy Hofer, Chair, Katy Hylton *ex officio*, Mary Hyde, Judith Kowalski, Stephen Kowalski, Deacon George Sisson, and Gina Stelma.



- **How are they chosen and what are their terms of office if any?**

The members are chosen by the pastor, usually drawing on chairs of sacristans, ministry teams, such as greeters, lectors, servers and extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion, etc. There is no term of office.

- **When do they meet? Is the meeting open to parishioners?**

Right now, at Holy Family, they meet monthly except during the summer. Over the last year, we have been meeting for formation in addition to our regular meetings. These meetings are not open to parishioners.

## **THE SENIOR LEADERSHIP TEAM**

- **What are the duties and responsibilities?**

The senior leadership team is the brain child of Fr. James Mallon and the Divine Renovation Network of which we are a part. The goal is to help the pastor lead from a team perspective rather than as an isolated individual. The members provide advice and support for the pastor and serve as his most regular and senior advisors. While the pastor, as prescribed by canon law, always maintains the last word, this group has been especially helpful to me in keeping me focused on mission and in sharing the responsibility of decisions. A large part of the job of the pastor and the senior leadership team is to provide vision, to create a community where the development of leaders is a priority and one that has a “pipeline” to bring new members into leadership, to develop and form them in the parish culture of service, and then to raise them up as leaders. The goal is not merely to fill necessary leadership positions in the parish but to learn and develop the strengths of each individual so they can serve in the areas of their greatest strengths.

- **Is the respective body juridical: i.e., is it required by church canon or archdiocesan rule/regulation? or is it ad hoc, the result of the pastor’s personal management style?**

This body is wholly the result of my (desired) personal management style to seek input and to garner support in making decisions. The concept was developed by the Divine Renovation Network and helps to make up for my weaknesses.

- **Who are the members?**

Currently the members are Katy Hylton, Carolyn Kilonsky, Terry Kirby, Karen Nelson, and Faye Williams. However, I am reviewing the makeup of this group as the needs shift from maintaining two parish communities to forming a single pastorate leadership. I will be making changes when I return in August.

- **How are they chosen and what are their terms of office if any?**

The members are chosen by me specifically to address my blind spots and weaknesses. Clifton Strengths finder is used to help determine what those areas are and where the greatest help is needed. There is no term of office.

- **When do they meet? Is the meeting open to parishioners?**

We meet weekly for several hours each week. These meetings are not open to parishioners.

## **THE STAFF**

- **What are the duties and responsibilities?**

The primary duties of each staff member vary, but all are called to help build a community that develops leaders to answer the call of Jesus to GO, Make Disciples. This is a shift for us as results from a broader vision focused on those who are NOT here, those estranged from the Church, those living on the margins, those who do not know Christ. This is the frequent call of Pope Francis and a radical understanding of the call of Jesus. Previously, our staff was focused on customer service, on serving the needs of our people who come every week and support us. The goal, though, is to help both the staff and those who are here,

share a common focus on those not here. The combination of the two parish staffs has allowed us to strengthen areas that were previously weak, such as communications.

- **Is the respective body juridical: i.e., is it required by church canon or archdiocesan rule/regulation? or is it ad hoc, the result of the pastor's personal management style?**

None of the above. The staff is structured and hired to help meet the needs of the pastorate.

- **Who are the members?**

See the chart above with new additions coming soon!

- **How are they chosen and what are their terms of office if any?**

New staff is chosen through the interview process. An ad hoc committee is chosen when a new person is to be hired. They screen applicants and meet with candidates. Once the ad hoc committee agrees on a perspective candidate, that person meets with the pastor who interviews the person regarding vision and sharing in the mission of the pastorate. There is no term of office.

- **When do they meet? Is the meeting open to parishioners?**

N/A

- **Will Father have a term limit? Will you Father Rob be here throughout this time of change and transition?**

No term limit has been given and I serve at the pleasure of the Archbishop of Baltimore who has the responsibility for and interests of the whole Archdiocese to keep in mind. He could reassign me at any time. That said, the Archbishop understands well that for these changes to take effect and these plans to take root, stable leadership is required. Therefore, I think the Archbishop will leave me in place for the next few years. As far as I'm concerned, I'm here for the long haul...

- **Will the Director of Worship be that for both parishes or just for Holy Family?**

Yes, as will the pastor and every staff member. The costs for each are shared jointly by both communities.

- **Lately I've been hearing the name Terry Kirby concerning the operations of St. Francis/St. Mary. My question is will Faye Williams be handling and overseeing the affairs of SF/SM or will everything go through Terry Kirby concerning the operation of our Parish and Faye will have no role or input concerning our church?**

The combination of both parish staffs has allowed us greater diversity in and sharing of responsibilities. Mr. Terry Kirby is the Director of Mission Support for the Pastorate which includes both communities and covers the areas of finances, facilities, personnel, technology, administration, and administrative help. Faye Williams is part of the Mission Support Team and will also have responsibility in those areas to St. Francis-St. Mary.

## **THE PASTORATE**

- **What drove the decision to become a pastorate? Wasn't one of the purposes of the pastorate to handle a decreasing and insufficient number of priests? If that's the real point, then we should call it that. After all, if it looks like a duck and acts like a duck, etc. Isn't this about money? At what point, if the finances are not there, will the diocese step in and take control? How will they handle it? As an ordinary parishioner of HFCC, the only impact I have felt so far is the loss of the**



**Wednesday Mass, but I'm wondering if there are additional sacrifices you all are planning for us to make?**

As I mentioned at the meeting, I did not go into all the information on the pastorate that we covered in November. In hindsight, I regret this because questions such as these about the reasons for and ultimate goals and hopes for the pastorate got lost in the specifics of buildings, finances and administration. Over the course of the next few months, I will be focusing on questions such as this so that I can make clear what the pastorate is and what it's not. In the meantime, I would encourage you to visit [www.bemissionarydisciples.org](http://www.bemissionarydisciples.org) and read the information that is there, beginning with the pastoral letter from Archbishop Lori, **A Light Brightly Visible**.

Certainly, this will involve sacrifice on the part of all and it will be far more significant than just financial sacrifice alone. As I mentioned in other answers, the pastorate process seeks to go to the core of who we are as individuals and as a community. It is about Building Missionary Disciples. This sacrifice, then, can be understood in the same way that Jesus spoke of dying to oneself and living for God and for the other.

**• You only mentioned Popes John Paul II, Benedict and Francis. What about Pope John XXIII and Vatican II. I don't want to go back to pre-Vatican II. We must hold fast to Vatican II.**

Agreed and wholeheartedly. My point in listing only the last three popes was to point out that these very different men all regarded the new evangelization as vital to the life and mission of the Church today. For the second presentation and in my homily at Saint Mary, I stressed that this very call was at the heart of and flowed from Vatican II that called for a full, active and conscious participation not only in liturgy but in every aspect in faith and life.

**• We do not feel we have any say in this process. Will we have any input into the changes coming? People do not feel they have any control over the changes which makes them anxious and upset.**

I can appreciate that so many changes over the past few years have come very quickly, especially with the closing of the Saint Francis church building. In some of those changes, such as the closing of the church, you did not have input in and in some cases, I had no choice but to act decisively as pastor. In the other changes that are coming, the very notion of the pastorate is about planning so that we can shape our community. As I have said repeatedly, the pastorate plan does not have a predetermined outcome. We are encouraged to get involved and to help shape what the end result will look like for our pastorate and individual parishes. More about the specifics to come but I encourage you get involved when the time comes so that you can have a say in the result.

**• You mentioned the 2013 survey (taken by SFSM parish leadership). Why can't we do something like that again? Were those questions answered?**

SFSM took a parish survey in 2013 to help understand what was working well and what areas the community could improve. This was like three independent surveys taken by Holy Family leadership in the last 15 years. The outcome of all 4 were remarkably similar in what was needed. However, in all cases, I could see little follow-up after the results of the survey were shared. My goal with the pastorate planning process and what it calls for from each parish community is to make sure that the same thing doesn't happen again. We cannot take surveys and ignore the results. The time has come for action based on the planning we do. The pastorate process will help us not only to gather the information, but to follow-up. A pastoral plan or the results of a survey do no good to anyone if they only sit on the shelf and gather dust.

- **What is the size of St. Francis/St. Mary's in proportion to Holy Family? Does Holy Family have more children? Does the registered parishioner count include those from St. Francis Church? What portion of each church community contribute regularly in the offerings?**

The number of registered parishioners for Saint Francis – Saint Mary is 325 and the number of registered families for Holy Family is 1046. These numbers though, can be deceiving as there are many people listed on the register who are not actively part of our community. We are just around average when compared with other parishes throughout our nation in that about 1/3 of those listed on the register are active, contributing members. This means that 2/3 are NOT ACTIVE and present us with a great opportunity to reach out and see how we can help them to come to know the Lord better. Some parishes are now using weekly attendance as a better gauge. For Saint Francis – Saint Mary this is approximately 250-300 on the weekend and about 800 on a weekend for Holy Family. Holy Family has more children registered (as well as more adults!) than Saint Francis - Saint Mary.

- **Can you address anything to help bring these two communities together?**

There are several things that come immediately to mind that can help lower barriers and unite the pastorate. First and foremost is anything that brings us together and helps us to get to know one another. We will be looking at ways we can do this. One of the most helpful bridges has been Alpha that unites people to one another and to Christ, helping to break down barriers of “us” and “them”

[Parishioner Feedback: The Over 55 Group at Holy Family is already reaching out actively to St. Francis/St. Mary's parishioners.](#)

## **FINANCES FOR THE PASTORATE**

- **Are the parishes of the pastorate going to merge finances? Will the costs for each be borne by the entire pastorate, or will the costs for each be borne by each? Is the pastorate responsible for the maintenance (mowing grass, property insurance, etc.) of each parish? You mentioned that the finances of the different communities will be kept separate in the pastorate? But then you mention common expenses. How do you explain this? When will the proportionate accounting be determined and enacted? In the meantime, how are expenses covered?**

No, we are not merging finances. Each parish will maintain separate financial books and separate bank accounts. The pastorate plan does not create a single new combined parish community. It maintains the separation of individual parishes but calls them to work together for planning and mission. The pastorate plan does not combine the finances of both parishes but calls each to bear a percentage of shared costs (clergy, staff, etc.). Each parish will bear separately its own expenses.

Finances for both parishes have been reorganized according to Mission. Rather than the list of accounts that we have had in the past, we are breaking down cost to see how they serve the mission directly such as in the areas of faith formation, Liturgy and worship, Alpha, evangelization, outreach and advocacy. Other expenses are determined by how they support the mission such as costs having to do with finances, facilities, personnel, technology, administration, and administrative help.

In each pastorate, one of the parishes, usually the largest, is designated a Host parish for accounting and personnel purposes only. All staff are made employees of the host parish. Staffing costs are billed proportionately to the other parishes of the pastorate. For our pastorate, the staff and most other SHARED expenses will be divided with 70% of the costs to be borne by Holy Family and 30% to be borne by Saint Francis – Saint Mary. The exception is that both parishes will split even the costs associated with me as pastor (salary, benefits and rectory expense). Several factors were involved in determining the

proportion for each parish. These included size, use, need, etc. Again, this is only for shared expenses. Each parish continues to pay the particular cost associated with it. Until the fiscal year begins, each parish is responsible for its own expenses.

Currently we are working on Completing the Budgets for FY 2018 and each parish will have its own budget. Both parishes will continue to have separate Corporators but, as we have already been doing, we will meet together. We will be focusing in the fall on Stewardship. Does what I give constitute a proper return to God for the blessings God has given me?

- **Does the 2017 HFCC fiscal year reflect any expenditures from the pastorate?**

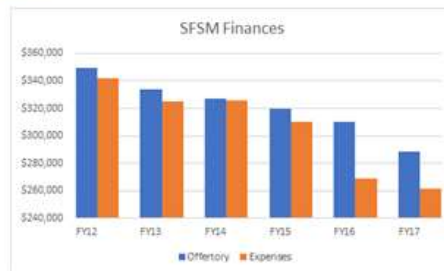
No. The pastorate is not effective until July 1 and begins with the new fiscal year.

- **Is there such a chart of the finances from last 5 years of both communities? If so, are we privy to them?**

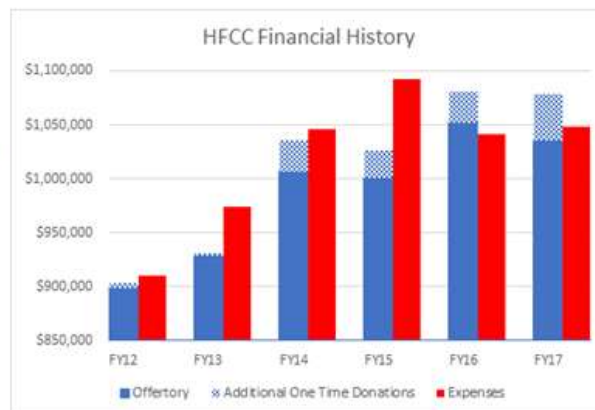
I reviewed the finances for each community when I offered the town hall in the community. I omitted the other community to save time. Both charts are listed below and I would encourage you to review the notes associated with them. Further information regarding Holy Family is below, due to an additional question.

## Pastor's Update

- I. Mission
- II. Pastorate Information
- III. Staff
- IV. St. Francis - St. Mary Community
  - A. New Parish Entity - St. Francis - St. Mary
  - B. Finances



Pastor's Update



**FAITH FORMATION**

- **In the foreseeable future, is the elementary school faith formation for St. Francis-St. Mary intended to stay at Brunswick or will it move to Middletown as well? Why has 7-12 grade Faith Formation moved to Holy Family?**

Faith Formation for grades K – 6 will be offered in two locations and at three different times:

- a. Elementary (K-6) Monday Night Brunswick Elementary (6:30 – 7:45)
- b. Elementary (K-6) Monday Night HFCC (6:30 – 7:45)
- c. Elementary (K-6) Tuesday HFCC (4:30 – 5:45)

Our goal is to provide the best formation for all levels of disciples, from the very youngest to the “fully mature” and, especially in our programs for kids and young people, the pastorate has already been a great benefit to both communities. We have already targeted Faith Formation as one of our most important areas of attention and outreach.

The Middle School (7 and 8) and TYM (Total Youth Ministry) program under the direction of Mrs. Caroline Rohr has been very successful in providing for our young people a strong foundation not only in the content of our faith but also in prayer, service and community. I realize that this was already present in both communities to a large degree, but it has truly been a blessing to bring our young people together from both communities, offering them the opportunity to learn and grow with their peers, so many of who they know already from high schools. We have also incorporated the Alpha Program for teens into our already strong program and we have seen very positive results. One of those results comes in the growing number of young people who remain with the program even after they have been confirmed. Also, a growing number of young people are signing on to serve as peer ministers to serve the classes behind them as well. Even though I did not roll it out well, I think it has been a great blessing for our young people as they shared with me on their retreat, and the very lively Mass we had at Holy Family when they returned. Caroline is also working more closely with a team and with young advisors to increase the strength of the program even more.

In addition to Caroline, Ed Haynes, who was the Director of Faith Formation at St. Francis-St. Mary, is now concentrating on grades K through 6. We look to provide new opportunities in each parish through the increased support of catechists and offering the same program at both locations (Brunswick Elementary School and at Holy Family).

Caroline is also reaching out to young adults (18-39) from both communities to see what we can offer to them. As I mentioned, statistics show that most of our young people in that age bracket are married with children. Those numbers surprised me but will help us reach out. For example, we are looking at how we provide for the nursery as our young adults keep telling us that, for them to participate, they need help with their kids. This will not simply be child care, but age-appropriate formation and activities to help our youngest disciples grow in their faith as well.

## **SAINT FRANCIS-SAINT MARY COMMUNITY**

- **Is the diocese planning to close St. Mary’s too? I’m feeling that you are saying in the future our St. Mary’s will only be a chapel. Is this correct? Will St Mary Church close as well? If so, when do you anticipate that it will close and what will happen to the cemetery? Are we aiming to build a new church in Petersville/Brunswick? Is there a time frame for building the new church for St. Francis/St Mary’s? Are finances on track for affording that type of project?**

There is no plan to close the parish of Saint Francis - Saint Mary. The current church building will serve us long into the future (see the additional answer on the interior changes) and the cemetery will remain there as well. Demographic trends and projections indicate that this part of the county will continue to

experience phenomenal growth as has already been glimpsed in Brunswick Crossing and other new developments. A parish is needed in this area, but it must be a parish that is responsive to the needs of all people, not merely those already here.

Again, and clearly, there are no plans to close St Mary church building or dissolve the parish of St. Francis-St. Mary. However, we cannot continue down the same road of declining numbers and offertory. The priority of the pastorate model is to strengthen the community and focus us outward to the larger community on service of others. The planning efforts will help us to examine where we are, what we need and how best to meet those needs. This planning is not being done, indeed cannot be done, without the input of our community. That means we **MUST BE INVOLVED** in that process. Over the coming year, we will be unpacking how that will occur both in the parish community and in the large pastorate.

Here again, I am deeply sorry that the messenger (me) obscured the message by focusing this part of the talk at Saint Francis - Saint Mary on changes and the possibility of a new church building. It was only my intention to speak of a strong future and I did not mean to demean the current community.

It is my hope that as we begin to become Missionary Disciples, as we begin to focus out on the other, we will be so attractive that we would need a bigger church building. Because of the rising costs, we are already looking at the areas to see what can be purchased and how we can afford it. There is no time-table for any purchase or building, but it is hoped that as we focus on reaching out and welcoming new members, we will be able to plan and afford to meet the needs of the whole community. Any costs associated with a new church building would be borne by Saint Francis – Saint Mary parish as each parish is separately financed. The Archdiocese is working with us at every step of the way to see us succeed.

- **Will there be a weekly presence of any staff in the Brunswick/Petersville area? Can I stop by St. Mary's during the week? The office staff moved out of SF Rectory in such great haste - would it have made sense to leave the office at SF Rectory until such time the minds in Baltimore decide as to what to do with the property and still have a presence in Brunswick? To me there is no presence in Brunswick and Petersville - this is not a good idea with no one around in that building alone as a safety concern. At least in Brunswick you have houses around and the police station down on the corner. Do they need to drive up here for all office support such as getting a Mass card? What hours can you get into St. Mary's to pray before the Blessed Sacrament?**

Yes, there will be an office in St Mary House that will be open 2-3 days each week, including, hopefully Sundays when most of the people have need of the services offered. The days and times to be determined. Most of the staffing will be by volunteers as we had already started to do at the Saint Francis office. If you can help and share the vision we are building, please contact Terry Kirby or Faye Williams.

The moving of the office personnel from Brunswick is part of the process to have one administrative and support staff for the Pastorate. It was not meant to be perceived as a hasty move, but part of a larger plan to maximize the staff to serve the Pastorate more efficiently and effectively.

Security measures are being addressed including camera surveillance of the St. Mary Campus. This is already present on the Holy Family Campus and was being implemented at St. Francis-St. Mary even before the pastorate was called for. Sad to say, it has become a necessary part of doing business and in protecting people while on our campuses.

The church building of Saint Mary is open on Wednesday mornings (no later than 8:15) for confessions and Mass and usually closes after Mass ends at 9:30. It is also open on Saturday afternoons (no later than 4:00 p.m.) and closes after Mass and on Sunday mornings (no later than 7:30 a.m.) and closes after the 10:00 a.m. Mass. I realize that this does not give as much opportunity as I would like, but we do offer Eucharistic



Adoration on the 1<sup>st</sup> Sunday of the month following the 10:00 a.m. Mass (Saint Mary) and on the 1<sup>st</sup> Monday of the month following the 8:30 a.m. Mass (Holy Family) and on the third Tuesday evening of the month at 7:00 p.m. (Holy Family).

- **I'm not sure I understand the finances for St. Francis/St. Mary's. You're telling us we are not making budget but we have still had a surplus for the past two years?**



As the diagram shows, our offertory has exceeded our expressed expenses. However, as I have said repeatedly, and as I shared with the community expressly when we released the annual parish report that included the finances, these numbers are deceiving. As you can see in the Fiscal Years 2016 and 2017 we show a much lower number for the expenses. This is due almost entirely to the fact that we are not paying the salary, benefits and expenses of the pastoral leader. As part of the pastorate, this will change. Saint Francis – Saint Mary will pay 30% of the costs for all staff salary and benefits and 50% of my salary, benefits and living expenses.

- **Many years ago, in looking at our needs, St. Francis-St. Mary determined that we needed a new hall so we started to raise money for it. Where did that money go?**

The group called Friends of Mary Francis was made up of parishioners who were looking to raise money to build a hall. The group was not allowed to continue because it did not follow Archdiocesan procedures on raising money. The group designated that the money already raised would go to Saint Mary's cemetery so that it would not be used for ordinary parish expenses. This money is still in one of the parish's inter-parish loan accounts and will be used to help fix up the cemetery.

## **CHANGES TO SAINT MARY CHURCH BUILDING**

- **You mentioned a chapel and building another church. Do you really need another church? Seats are empty. We do not want a mega-church, we want a small community where people know one another. Can you talk more about changes to the interior of St. Mary's? Will parishioners have a say in those changes? Will there be changes in the sanctuary? Will there be changes around the altar? I do not think any changes should happen to this church. Will St. Mary's be closed during renovations? If we do renovations, will you find problems because this is an old building? Physical changes to St. Mary's are disturbing to me. The new families are not coming. Every new pastor seems to come in and want to make changes. Then they leave and the next guy comes in with different changes. Is this any different? How is making the changes to the interior of the church building going to draw people in as you say is a priority? Why are we changing the building? Is that really going to make a difference or change anything? You talked about changing the interior**



**of Saint Mary church building to help meet the needs of the community. Would you put that to a vote? Or, at least do a survey of what people feel the needs are?**

Currently, the parish of Saint Francis - Saint Mary does not need another church building. As was mentioned, there are now empty seats. However, the goal of the pastorate and the planning involved, builds on what our Pastoral Council was already doing. They were looking to reach out to the newer developments and communities to see how we can make the parish better known and better attended. The goal, though, is not simply about increasing our membership so we can afford what we already have and expand to a bigger church. I do not believe that any changes to the church building are going to attract more people. The goal for the parish community is not about enduring the changes of a new pastor but about responding to the call of Jesus to become Missionary Disciples, focused on those who are not present, who are estranged from the Church, who do not yet know Christ or understand the need for Him in their lives. When we focus in this way, I think that we will grow. It will involve sacrifice and may be difficult, but we must respond to the call of Christ.

I realize that other pastors and pastoral leaders have come in the past and made changes. And I bet that my successor will make changes from what I am doing. I am not merely making changes to show that I am in charge or to feed my personal wishes. However, some change is necessary to address the needs of some in our community (myself and Fr. Limmer included) and others who have expressed them. This process will be different because it will not be just surface changes such as to buildings, administration, staff or processes. The changes envisioned by the pastorate planning process go to the core of who we are as a community, how we see ourselves and how we respond to the call of Jesus and the needs of others. I would not waste my time on surface changes.

Now, onto the changes I look for in the structure itself. As I mentioned in February, we also did a structural analysis of Saint Mary church building as well. Overall, the structure is sound and we are blessed to have a place to worship even on the closing of Saint Francis. The report did point out many issues, which, while not urgent, must be addressed eventually to maintain this church building, including some minor safety issues (such as a railing for the portico) and some exterior needs (repainting, mortar work) - about \$500,000 worth of repairs to be addressed over the next ten years. We are looking to do now only what is necessary to maintain the building and to address those safety issues. We are holding off on making any changes to the rectory until we know better what is needed in the church and until we get a better sense of other needs.

We are working with the liturgical consultant, Gardiner and Hall to develop a plan that will make the best use of the space we have. We need to make the sanctuary more useable (user friendly for priests and others) and to increase space for liturgical functions. We also look to increase storage and make better use of spaces such as the sacristy and the other areas in the back. We look to integrate some of the furnishings from Saint Francis and to paint the interior. We are looking to make as little change as possible while still addressing the needs above. These may not be the needs of many here, but they must be addressed for those who already serve (again, myself and Fr. Limmer along with others who have expressed them).

I do not know about any closures when the renovations are made in Saint Mary. I would assume that there may be some, but these would be kept to a minimum.

I will try and change as little as possible and be transparent about what I am doing. I cannot, however, put this to a vote or send out a survey. I must consider not only those who vote or would fill out a survey, but the needs of the whole community, including those not yet present, now and into the future.

**Parishioner response: We need to accommodate the needs of the community. We could not use a walker to go to Communion.**

Parishioner response: You spoke about needs for the community. We do not all have the same needs. We don't want to attract others. We don't want a new church. We want this small church and we don't need a nursery. You're telling me that our approach doesn't have value but we think it should be valued even if it is different from your cookie cutter approach to church.

Parishioner response: I have been in many communities over my life and I have seen many different churches. I never went to a church for how it looked. I went because I felt welcomed.

Parishioner response: What mattered to me in coming here was not what the building looked like but that I found God Here.

## **SALE OF SAINT FRANCIS CHURCH BUILDING AND PROPERTY**

- **Who owns the church and its property? Are we going to have the Church, rectory and property assessed? If not, how will we know their value to sell them? Will the church and property be for sale? Where will the proceeds of selling St. Francis property go? It is going to be sold as one property? Do we have to raise the buildings before selling? Is research going to be done as to what the most economical way to sell? (With buildings or cleared lot) How much is the archdiocese involved? And finally, who gets the proceeds from the sale of the property? What about the stained-glass windows? Will those be saved? Do you have a record of all the windows? What about the bell outside? Can that be moved? Does the church itself need to be demolished prior to being sold? Where do you feel the St. Francis parishioners now attend services? Is there any way of tracking this? Who has the say as to when and if it's sold?**

The Saint Francis church building, rectory and property are owned by the parish community of Saint Francis – Saint Mary. As I made known in February, there are significant and severe issues with the foundation and the exterior facing making the church unsafe for occupation. The cost even to prepare a complete assessment and plan for would cost tens of thousands of dollars and the repairs just to make the building safe would be several hundreds of thousands of dollars if not close to \$1 million. This was confirmed by two independent local engineering firms. The second was hired to substantiate the first, but submitted an even more emphatic report that the building should not be occupied.

We have contracted with Gardiner and Hall, one of the premier liturgical consultants to inventory and appraise all the contents of Saint Francis church. The goal is to get a solid inventory so we know what is there. They are also appraising things and offering recommendations on what is of liturgical, historical and financial value. We look to combine and use some of those resources immediately here at Saint Mary church to help maintain the identity of our whole community. For example, the statue of Saint Francis will be an excellent addition to this church and a constant reminder of the presence and intercession of our beloved patron. The remainder of the inventory will go into storage until we are sure of what our needs are. Some asked particularly about the bell outside of the church building and the stained-glass windows. Once the full report from the liturgical consultant is complete, we will be able to determine based on value and of removal and storage, what will remain with the building to be sold with it, and what can be removed.

With regards to the disposition of the church building itself along with the rectory and property, I have petitioned the Archbishop to remove from the church building the sacred designation and to allow us to proceed with putting the building up for sale. We are looking to prepare the church building and rectory for sale "As Is." The goal (determined mostly by minimizing cost now that the building is unusable) is to sell the church building and rectory (without making any substantive change) along with the two plots behind them. We looked at other options but this is the most financially feasible and beneficial to the community.

All proceeds of the sale will go to St. Francis – St. Mary. I know that this is a painful chapter in our history. It has not been easy on anyone, but it is truly a blessing that no one was hurt. We are looking to have some type of recognition- decommissioning service in the Fall or before sale.

With regard to the involvement of the Archdiocese in this process: Please remember that we were the ones who discovered the problem as we sought an analysis of the structures and the cost of any necessary repairs. Seeing those engineering reports, I am grateful that we did, even painful as it is. All of that said, we have been assisted by the Archdiocese at every step of the way, including the Facilities Department and the law firm helping us to see about moving forward with a new church building.

## **COMMUNITY OF HFCC**

- **For things we plan here, do you think we are on track of financial income to fund a new mortgage or other projects? Will the present rate of mortgage donations and excess from the offertory be sufficient to repay the present mortgage and cover the new loan from the archdiocese to do the upgrades over a ten-year period (I.e. will a separate new funding campaign be necessary? When will the current mortgage of the Father John Charles Moore Center be paid off? Are we going to have a mortgage burning party?**

The mortgage for the first phase of the Father John Charles Moore Center was paid off May 2017. However, this does not mean that our financing of the center is complete or that our capital needs are finished. Therefore, I have a great hesitation to hold a mortgage burning celebration.

We need to complete the lower level and build up capital reserves as we approach the end of the useful life of the systems of the parish, especially the HVAC system. Therefore, when we embarked on the Embracing our Mission Campaign in 2013, we stressed the need for a three-pronged approach to our financial needs:

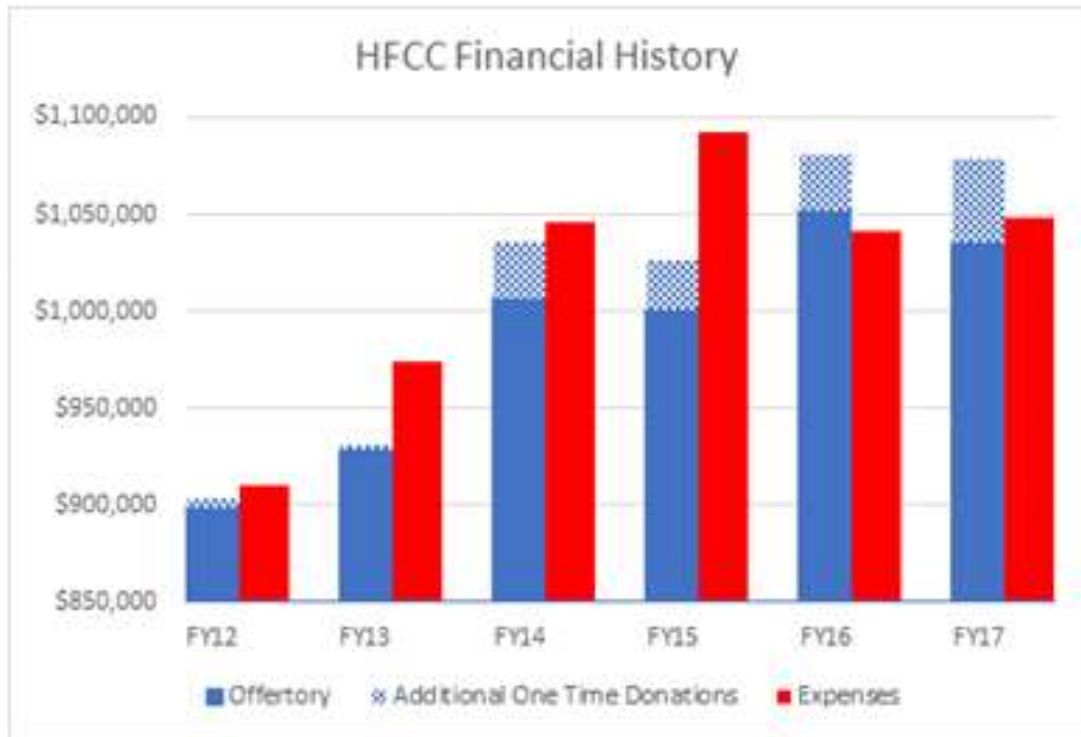
1. We needed to continue to increase the offertory to meet our daily needs
2. We needed to continue to donate to capital to pay off the mortgage and, beyond that, to build up capital reserves;
3. We needed to contribute to the needs of the Archdiocese and raise funds for the lower level through the Archdiocesan campaign.

We are still collecting on pledges from the campaign and have asked people to continue to contribute to our capital expenses and reserves through the end of the campaign (2018). This helps us to build the reserve and have funds on hand to make capital improvements. If people continue to give at this rate, or even increase giving, we are very much on track to fund the note from the Archdiocese to finish the lower level. No separate campaign is foreseen for the lower level. This does not mean, though, that we may not have a campaign to help build reserves and to address other needs that may arise. At some point, I would also like us to focus less on buildings and capital, important as they are, and put more attention and funds on the different programs and ways we can reach out.

In summary, while the mortgage for the Legacy Room and the outer construction of the Moore Center is paid off, we still have many additional capital needs even as we address the lower level. While we can celebrate the payment of the mortgage, we cannot rest on our laurels.

- **We don't know how we got from being in a crisis mode 2 years ago to finishing the lower level. Being informed of the parish finances on a routine basis would be helpful.**

# Pastor's Update



As you can see in the slide, in the years leading up to 2015, expenses exceeded offertory. This was true in the years before I came as well. This was not because we were living “high on the hog” but because we’re building bigger, better, more diversified programs to reach out and attract more and more people. We made the Youth Minister full time and we hired a new Director of Faith Formation expecting that he could increase offerings for Adult Education. I did this in the hopes of “If you build it, they will come.” In some ways, we were successful. The revised faith formation program offered new possibilities with a second day for classes offered at an earlier time in the day.

When I hired Terry Kirby as Director of Parish Operations, he, along with our Finance Committee, determined that the expected increases in membership and offertory would not be coming and, in fact, we were close to a crisis. Immediately we cut expenses to the bone and asked people to step up through giving in our first Town Hall. We were able to realign the staff due to the departures of Lowell Jensen, Jean Rhoades, and Cathy Todt.

Unfortunately, we did not experience many people increasing their regular offertory but we were blessed with a few people who made one time gifts in addition to their regular giving. This allowed us to weather the crisis and get us back on track.

We still need to do better. To that end, we will be addressing stewardship in both parishes in the fall, looking to increase regular offertory giving, and the number of those who give on a regular basis. This hasn’t been done in either community in a number of years.

- **What’s the story on the lower level? How much is it going to cost? Is there enough money from the previous campaign to cover the cost? If not, where do we get the funds? Is a loan being taken out for the lower level? Is the current mortgage payment being used to pay for the lower level? Does that mean another campaign to finish the lower level? Did we solicit bids for the lower level? How long will the pods be here? How much do they cost?**

The completion of the lower level was raised by many as a primary concern when I arrived. The Father John Charles Moore Center had been designed to meet the needs and desires of the community by housing both the Legacy Room for large meetings and for community affairs and the lower level for smaller meetings and faith formation. However, we were not able to raise the funds at that time for the whole project, so it was scaled back to include only the Legacy Room. It became part of our case statement when we were asked by the Archdiocese to participate in the capital campaign, Embracing Our Mission Campaign. The goal, with the parish portion of this campaign, was to complete the lower level and to finish our building needs. This would allow us to focus future giving on programs and capital reserves.

The need for the lower level became more acute when we added the second day of Faith Formation Classes and then when we stopped using Middletown Elementary School for the Monday night classes. Based on parishioner input, we returned the plans to the original project (I had amended them to increase useable space but there was great concern over increased costs and needed space for storage) and examined how we could finance it. Once we had a handle on the finances, we put the project out for a bid as required by the Archdiocesan procedures. 4 bids were received when planning the lower level and the contract was awarded to Bruchey who also built the Church and the 2007 addition.

With some funds from the original campaign for the Moore Center (a few gifts were designated specially for the lower level) along with the money already received from the Embracing Our Mission Campaign and some money from our capital accounts, we have enough money on hand to begin the project. For the remainder, we could secure from the Archdiocese a note payable over 10 years for \$250,000. This will result in a monthly payment of about \$3,300 which is significantly smaller than the current monthly payment of \$19,000 for the mortgage. It does mean that we will be reaching out to those who made pledges to the Embracing Our Mission Campaign as most of this money now comes back to us.

The cost of \$410,000 is higher than originally expected as the HVAC, which was thought to be adequate in the original bid for the lower level, was deemed insufficient. This is due to new regulations from the Environment Protection Agency regulating what coolants can be used. Also, the original HVAC plans for the Moore Center were scaled back when only the Legacy Room portion of the Center was finished. The capital funds currently being received have been expressly classified since at least 2013, as Capital Reserves and Mortgage. Now that the mortgage for the Moore center is paid off (see above), those funds are being put aside in savings as Capital Reserves. The funds can be used to cover the lower level and for future repairs throughout the property, for example, repaving the parking lot, HVAC replacements, and other capital issues.

There is no plan to begin another campaign for the Lower Level. However, this does not preclude a Capital Campaign for the Parish needs in the future.

The POD storage units will stay until the lower level construction is complete. The estimated completion of the lower level is the end of October at which time the PODs will be removed. The monthly cost of the PODs is approximately \$900.

- **Why isn't the budget and attendance information put in the bulletin?**

Last year, with the council and approval of the Finance Committee, it was decided to alter the frequency and level of detail presented in the bulletin. This is being reviewed and a new approach will be tried. The goal is to provide the information in a way that is both informative and digestible. As always, anyone with specific questions can ask the Director of Finance or me.



- **Where do we stand with the rectory? You talked about selling the current rectory. Is that to help with the finances of the parish? How much will it cost? Will the sale of the rectory cover the purchase of the rectory? Will this go out for bid?**

Any change in the rectory is not driven solely by cost and is not about solely helping with the finances of the parish. The rectory is a great house and I am happy to live there. It is more than comfortable and I can have family and friends join me for visits. Some of my priest friends and others from the Archdiocese have made visits either to get away from their own parish or as a rest stop on the way to and from western Maryland. I am happy to cook and host people and even hold some informal meetings there.

All of that said, the house is almost 60 years old and in need of some major repairs. Bathrooms and the kitchen have the original fixtures and need updating (Kitchen appliances were replaced in 2010). Pipes freeze during the winter and we continue to struggle with water in the basement. These could be addressed, if the current rectory met the long-term needs of the parish. The house, though is not well suited for more than two people and certainly not if one is elderly or handicapped. The hope is to build a new rectory on the Holy Family property that will provide housing and space not only for me as the pastor, but for additional clergy as well. I hope to be able to draw a retired priest (many of the priests who retire from Frederick County stay right here and often help in local parishes) to live here and help with the pastoral needs of our people including visiting, pastoral counseling, and celebrating the sacraments.

Through the generosity of Mark Lancaster, chair of our building committee and owner of Lancaster Builders, we have designed a house that will meet those needs and, using an elevator, be accessible for all.

Most of the funds necessary for the new rectory will come from the sale of the current rectory. The house has been appraised at \$350,000. We also have some funds already on hand given by a donor who designated that they be used only for the Rectory. The remaining money will be from our capital reserves.

One option that has been put forth will provide the needs that have been identified for the future. The current project cost (since it is a cost only bid) is \$ 550,000. There may be an opportunity (approved by the AoB) to go with a 'cost only bid' offered by a developer that would save the parish over \$ 100,000.

- **What was this trip to London? Were all expenses for the London trip paid for by the donor(s) or were some paid by Holy Family? What did the staff/volunteers learn in London?**

The trip to London for the Alpha leadership conference was an unexpected blessing for our community. As I mentioned, Alpha is a great tool for evangelization and has already borne much fruit for the communities. We were excited to see how we could develop the potential we have already experienced in Alpha. Truly the conference was a blessing.

It was a powerful, inspiring, and reinforcing conference on Alpha leadership. Participants came from all over the world and the Holy Spirit was the driving force for the conference. Can you imagine a whole concert hall, almost 6,000 people praising God and calling on the Holy Spirit? Only time will show the sustained impact the conference will have, but some things were immediate. Just being together as parish leaders but apart from their parish to hear new ideas, was the first impact. I learned last summer of the value of going away, being together and hearing other perspectives. The blessing came not only from the talks, but in the opportunities to be with one another, focused on Alpha, meeting people from all over the world and from right here at home in our diocese (St. John's Parish, Severna Park, Maryland). We also had the opportunity to hear and to greet the founders of Alpha, meet with our counterparts in the Divine Renovation Network and get to know better people from Alpha, USA. These are resources to draw on as we make our way, learning from one another.



Still, the blessing almost didn't happen. Encouraged by the Divine Renovation Network, we considered the idea very seriously. Because of the cost, we had intended to send only 1 or 2 people, those immediately involved with Alpha. Then, I was approached by a donor who is a strong believer in the fruits of Alpha and the opportunities for the people involved to develop their leadership skills. The donor, who wished to remain anonymous, wanted to donate money for many people to go with the stipulation that I go as well. I was somewhat hesitant. After all, an expense paid trip to London sounds great, but it came right after Easter and at one of the busiest times of the year.

I am so glad the donor convinced me to go. In all, 10 people from Holy Family traveled to London. These included Terry Kirby, Karen Nelson, Laurel Swencki, Caroline Rohr, Dan Prendergast, Bryan Casey, and me. Also, paying their own way were Dave Swencki, Lynn Kirby, and Mari Prendergast. The total cost of the trip was \$15,769 which included airfare, lodging, meals and admittance to the conference. Again, this was paid by a donor and did not come from offertory or any other operating or capital accounts.

- **Are there plans to hire a Director of Adult Faith Formation to oversee RCIA, Adult Catechesis, Bible Study, Small Groups, etc.?**

Not at this time; the areas referenced will be directed by the Director of Mission, Karen Nelson.

## **LITURGY**

- **It is in the spirit (1) of the Town meeting format, (2) your encouragement to enter questions of concern or information, and (3) a meeting with Deacon George that I pose this question. I have written about this matter (use of the bells discussed below) at HFCC before at least twice but with no reply. I have written the Archbishop in Baltimore on the same subject but with no reply. A lack of reply to a simple question on this matter is frustrating. My story: I have seen Father Scalia officiate at his former Supreme Court Justice Scalia's celebratory mass, nationally televised, in the Washington Basilica. I noticed that he used the bells to announce to the attendees the certain important parts of the mass. In my personal travels, I have heard the bells at Masses in a Gettysburg, PA parish, in California, in Michigan, in Indiana, in Italy, in Switzerland, in England, in Poland, and in Germany. As an altar boy at daily masses from age 10 to age 24, I rang the bells at our home parish at masses in Simpson, Pennsylvania and later in university chapels and churches. No one in our parish responded to my requests on this matter to explain why our parishes embraces a no-bells policy while use of the bells is widespread in other local US parishes at masses and in all the European parishes that I visited. I even understand that the other parishes in Brunswick and Petersburg have bells but I am not certain whether they were "retired," or simply not used by fiat. I am mystified why HFCC embraces a no-bells policy while many parishes in the rest of the world rings the bells, and do the exact opposite (i.e. ring bells) with great parishioner approval, with no ostensible objection and no official dictate from the Holy Father to discontinue this practice**

The question refers to the practice of ringing a bell at the consecration of Mass when the priest elevates the now consecrated Host and the now consecrated Precious Blood of Jesus. This practice began probably somewhere around the 13th century and had more to do with the situation in which Mass was then celebrated. Mass was celebrated in Latin, often unfamiliar to most people. In addition, the Mass was also celebrated by the priest in a low voice. Both made it necessary to indicate to the people that something important was

happening. Further, church architecture was such that the people were often more physically separated from the altar by the choir — and in some cases a significant number of faithful were impeded from seeing the altar during Mass. In larger churches and cathedrals there was often activity in addition to the Mass. Again, the practice of the bell was to alert the people that something important, indeed the most important action of the Mass, was taking place.

None of these reasons remain pertinent. The Mass is celebrated in the vernacular and facing the people. The voices of the priest and other ministers are audible and are even amplified by microphones. There is minimal separation between the priest and the people. The bell is not needed to call attention because all people should be paying attention, especially at the Consecration. In addition, bells have never been used at Holy Family since our founding.

The recently revised General Instruction of the Roman Missal refers to bell ringing in No. 150: “A little before the consecration, when appropriate, a server rings a bell as a signal to the faithful. According to local custom, the server also rings the bell as the priest shows the host and then the chalice.” The text makes it clear that ringing a bell at the consecration is an option, not an obligation.

With all of that said, I do not object per se to the use of bells and the practice continues at Saint Francis – Saint Mary where, I understand, it has always been the practice. I do think we need to address the underlying reality that many people, even some who come on a regular basis, do not understand the gift we have in the Eucharist and in the celebration of Mass. This is certainly not unique to Holy Family and is a much deeper challenge than whether we ring bells. We are looking to provide formation and a place where Mass is celebrated reverently and attentively while still being warm, inviting and inclusive. The ringing of bells can still serve a purpose as an audiovisual means of communication to call attention to the moment of the consecration, as a jolt to reawaken wandering minds, and a useful catechetical tool for children and adults alike. However, until we can help people to know and understand better the reality the bells signify, they will not be helpful.

I am sorry to the questioner that he has not received a response from me. As I have mentioned several times, I still struggle with balancing the many demands of my role as pastor. Often, even important things, such as responding to parishioner questions, are overlooked unintentionally.