

St. Michael Parish Pastoral Council

October 14, 2024 Minutes

Members Present: Fr. Marty, Fr. Robert, Mick Adamson, Lou Bufano, Lisa Codo, Nancy Finley, Barbara Judge, Linda Kinzer, Martha Kozub, Alice Lewinski, Mike Morley, Bob Solorio, Connie Solorio

Much to the delight of at least one person in the room, Fr. Marty opened the proceedings by reading from St. Fulgentius's treatise on the Eucharist. An opening prayer followed.

Those present at the council's retreat on September 6-7 discerned for the positions of chair, vice-chair and commission liaisons. As a result of that discernment, Bob Solorio will serve as chair, and Mike Morley will serve as vice-chair. Barbara Judge and Linda Kinzer, who will serve a special one-year term, will be liaisons to the Education and Formation Commission. Martha Kozub and Nancy Finley will be liaisons to the Parish Life Commission. Alice Lewinski and Connie Solorio will be liaisons to the Spirituality and Worship Commission. Barbara Anderson and Lisa Codo will be liaisons to the Peace and Social Justice Commission. Mick Adamson and Lou Bufano will be liaisons to the Stewardship Commission. A list of council members and when their terms expire appears below.

Through June 2025: Barb Anderson, Nancy Finley, Linda Kinzer, Mike Morley

Through June 2026: Lou Bufano, Martha Kozub, Bob Solorio, Connie Solorio

Through June 2027: Mick Adamson, Lisa Codo, Barbara Judge, Alice Lewinski

Linda recapped the parish's 150th anniversary by discussing what happened at the anniversary committee's meeting on October 7. At that time, the committee discussed what went well during their year of planning and what challenges they faced so that similar committees can have an enjoyable experience while planning major events for the parish.

The parish's 150th anniversary Mass and celebration on September 29 was just one of many events during that month. A wine tasting event on September 8 resulted in \$12,000 profit toward the GIFT campaign. A similar event is planned for April 27, 2025, which is the Second Sunday of Easter. The wine tasting planning committee considered having an event in winter, but the winter calendar already contains the Super Raffle, the Valentine's dinner/dance and the School's annual Passport event. Fr. Marty said everyone who attend the wine tasting event had a good time, and those present at the council meeting said they particularly enjoyed spending the afternoon with priests who had once served at St. Michael but who returned to the parish to host special tasting rooms at the event.

The 5K run on September 14 was also deemed a success, and a final report of the financial impact of that event will be available soon. Money raised at the 5K run will be given to the parish to cover a portion of the 150th anniversary celebration costs and to local veterans' charities. Lou shared thoughts on gift baskets which were up for bids on the day of the run, and those present discussed the presence of gift baskets at various events and how donations are obtained for them.

The parish held a ministry fair the weekend of September 14-15, and Bob reminded commission liaisons to make sure ministry leaders in their commissions contact potential new ministry members as quickly as possible. Mick said that some parishioners have come up to him at Mass and asked when they will be contacted for more information about a ministry for which they requested information, and so those present felt that Bob's reminder was especially timely and important.

As busy as the parish was during September and continues to be into October, the work of the GIFT campaign rolls on. Fr. Marty said that in the fall the Three Wise Men will return to their familiar position in the gathering space to answer questions from parishioners, and parishioners who have made pledges will receive thank you cards for their timely payments or gentle reminders that they are behind in making payments, whichever is more appropriate for their giving history. The parish is also preparing a booklet which will detail giving opportunities should individuals or families wish to sponsor a stained glass window which will be installed as part of the new parish office project.

Preliminary planning and work on the school portion of the GIFT campaign is now underway, and Mike led a discussion about tuition at the parish school. Families have access to several scholarship opportunities, including the state's Choice Scholarship and the parish's St. Michael the Archangel Scholarship, which can greatly reduce the cost of tuition. Those present learned how tuition is determined for each year and what options are available for non-Catholic students or for students who are Catholic but whose families do not belong to St. Michael Parish. Barbara asked about 2024-2025 enrollment numbers, and Fr. Marty said the school is serving 204 students in grades K-8 and has approximately 30 students in its preschool program. The numbers represent a slight increase in enrollment, which pleased everyone, and Lou wondered if the Choice Scholarship had anything to do with the increase. Fr. Marty gave the state's program some of the credit but also credited the parish's marketing events for the increased enrollment. Those present appreciated Mike's presentation and were glad the school year has gotten off to a promising start.

In liturgical matters, Fr. Marty reported that Bishop McClory recently asked St. Michael to host a monthly Mass in Vietnamese. The Mass would serve the Vietnamese community from the entire diocese, including those in Merrillville, Munster and Valparaiso, and beyond, and the first Mass in Vietnamese, which was celebrated in the chapel on October 6, exceeded expectations. More than 200 people attended, including a visiting priest who celebrated the Mass and numerous religious sisters who provided music for the liturgy. Fr. Marty was particularly impressed by the piety of those who attended Mass, and many of them gathered in St. Patrick Hall for a social event following the liturgy. The parish plans to continue hosting monthly Masses in Vietnamese on the first Sunday of the month at 6 p.m. in the church. The 6 p.m. start time works well for many people who attend the Mass due to their careers in the beauty industry, and Fr. Marty said that the Mass is open to all parishioners even if they do not speak Vietnamese.

The diocese's Office of Intercultural Ministries invited the parish to participate in the diocese's series of Masses for migrant workers in 2025. Those present felt that the parish's Good Samaritans ministry would be well-suited to provide food and personal hygiene items for migrant workers, while Lisa and Barb, as liaisons to the Peace and Social Justice Commission, will work to determine if the parish can fulfill any liturgical needs for the migrant workers next year.

Those present at the council's retreat in September had a preliminary discussion about updating information on the parish's web site, and that discussion continued at this meeting. Connie noted that

having area codes listed as parts of phone numbers throughout the web site would be helpful in this age of cell phones. Fr. Robert discovered one way for parishioners to make donations, but Lou noted that it could be difficult for parishioners to find appropriate links to make donations online. Linda questioned the order of commissions under the “Ministries” tab on the top of the home page. Parish Communications Director Elizabeth Munoz will receive a list of suggestions from council members in the coming weeks and plans to update the web site later this year.

The top of the home page also contains an “I’m New” tab, and since April, 119 people have joined the parish. They have been invited to a semi-annual dinner at the rectory, and thus far four of them have accepted an invitation to an October 25 dinner with Fr. Marty and other parish leaders. Those present were pleased to hear that the parish is growing.

As parishes continue to grow and evolve, sometimes their strategic plans need to do the same. Bob noted that the parish’s current strategic plan, which has been reviewed and updated as needed over the years, was created in 2007 and that now might be the appropriate time to create a new one. The process of creating an effective strategic plan can take up to 2 years, and Bob would like to have a draft of the new plan ready in spring 2026 for approval by the council and submission to the pastor of the parish following the council’s retreat in fall 2026. Fr. Marty suggested having a retreat for current Parish Pastoral Council and Finance Committee members on January 17-18 and will invite Ted Markiewicz to help facilitate that event. The council’s November meeting is likely to include a discussion of what the parish has accomplished in its current strategic plan.

As the meeting drew to a close, Bob reminded commission liaisons to review commission charters with leaders of ministries within their commissions. It is possible that some commissions will have completed this task by the time of the council’s next meeting, which is scheduled for Saturday, November 9, at 9 a.m. in one of the meeting rooms of St. Patrick Hall. Additional meetings are scheduled for December 17, January 13, February 10, March 10, April 7, May 12 and June 20. After Fr. Robert led those present in praying the Glory Be, the meeting adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Jeffrey Cox