

**Our Lady on the River Parish Council Minutes
Monday, October 12, 2009**

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Fr. Jim Lopez	David M. Schwehofer (Pres.)	Stephanie Spencer
Fr. Matt Ellis	Mary Patrick (V-Pres.)	Barbara Persyn
Sr. Mary Ann Ankoviak, CSJ	Catherine Nutter (Sec.)	Bev Simon

MEMBERS EXCUSED: Charles Ongena

OTHERS PRESENT:

Judy Beauvais	Carol Fett	Sandy Schwehofer
Sid Browne	Amanda Lund	Tom Schwehofer
Dave Dziedzic	Jeannie Rhodes	Don Smith
Sheila Dziedzic	Norman Rhodes	Margie Smith
Mary Endres	Dave C. Schwehofer	Norma Steven
Midgie Fannon	Dorothy Schwehofer	

OPENING Fr. Jim opened the meeting in prayer at 6:35.

APPROVAL OF PREVIOUS MEETING'S MINUTES Mary Patrick motioned to approve the September 14, 2009 minutes; Stephanie Spencer seconded; all assented.

AUDIENCE ADDRESS

Several audience members addressed Fr. Jim with their questions and concerns. Fr. Jim listened and responded to each issue.

Regardless of the topic being discussed, the overwhelming message from the audience members was that **they would like an increase in communication from the parish office** regarding all parish affairs, financial or otherwise.

The topics raised were as follows:

Topic and Parish Member	Specific Question or Concern	Fr. Jim's Response
1. Permission for Bulletin Insert <i>Midgie Fannon</i>	Midgie asked if the Christian Service Commission (at St. Mark) could insert a flyer in its Sunday bulletin encouraging people to donate to the food pantry. She further asked if a food collection basket could be placed on the altar as a visible reminder for people to donate.	Fr. Jim approved the flyer and said the basket could be on the altar as long as it was okay with Fr. Sig and wasn't in his way.

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<p>2. Accessibility of Fr. Jim</p> <p><i>Barbara Persyn</i></p>	<p>Speaking on her own behalf as well as other Harsens Island parishioners, Barbara asked Fr. Jim if he could make himself available to parishioners before and after the Mass.</p>	<p>Fr. Jim said "of course" (as long as he doesn't have some other commitment).</p>
<p>3. Decision-making Authority at Harsens Island Site</p> <p><i>Barbara Persyn</i></p>	<p>A. Barbara asked Fr. Jim how much authority the staff member at the Harsens Island site has when it comes to making minor decisions at the church.</p> <hr/> <p>Barbara Persyn and Norman Rhodes listed some of the decisions that lay people had tried to make regarding decorating, the placement of the food basket, and the maintenance of the choir area.</p> <p>B. Norman Rhodes specifically discussed the problem with the sound system's wiring shorting out and not being properly fixed.</p> <hr/> <p>C. Barbara Persyn said one of the decisions made by the staff person that is upsetting another parish member concerned a crystal chalice (brought from Ireland and donated to the church in memory of one of its members). The chalice is no longer being allowed to be used for Mass, even though Fr. Jim had promised it would be used once a month.</p>	<p>Fr. Jim said that ultimately he has final say as to what happens at the Harsens Island site, but that Celeste Salvador is the initial contact person for that site. She keeps him informed about the day-to-day operations.</p> <p>Fr. Jim asked Barbara to be more specific about what she was asking.</p> <hr/> <p>Fr. Jim said that had not been aware of these conflicts at the Harsens Island site before now and needed to be made aware of situations in order to address them.</p> <hr/> <p>Fr. Jim said that only precious metals were supposed to be used to hold the precious blood.</p> <p>After further discussion, Fr. Jim said that the crystal chalice would no longer be used since Fr. Sig feels it is too heavy for him to hold. Fr. Jim had only okayed its use before because he thought Fr. Sig wanted to use it.</p> <p>Fr. Jim told Barbara that the parishioner who donated it may take it back again.</p>
<p>4. Questions about Parish Financial Decisions and Mass Changes</p> <p><i>Dave Dzedzic</i></p>	<p>A. Dave asked how the parishioners could see the financial statements and expenditures of the parish.</p> <hr/> <p>B. Dave said one of his concerns was about the work done on the windows at Holy Cross; he wondered why the parish spent that money. He requested to see how the money was spent and the warranties that went with the work.</p>	<p>Fr. Jim said that he wanted to wait until after the parish's audit was done by the AOD before he provided the parishioners with the financial statements. Our parish was supposed to be audited last month, but Fr. Jim received word that we have been put on hold.</p> <hr/> <p>Fr. Jim explained that the work done on the windows was part of Holy Cross's Capital Campaign (which was decided before his arrival). The Stewardship Commission was a part of the decision-making process; and the company that did the work was the same company that the parish had used 15 years earlier—a company approved of by the AOD.</p>

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<p>4. (cont.) Questions about Parish Financial Decisions and Mass Changes</p> <p>Dave Dziedzic</p>	<p>C. Dave asked Fr. Jim to explain the reasoning behind the parish buying a home to be used as a new rectory. He was concerned about the parish spending \$150,000 for a home down the street for the priests when a home already existed that was attached to the church itself. Dave said that he had heard the reason was the need for more office space; if the choice were his, he would want to move the office space and not the pastor. He wondered if office space at one of the other sites could be utilized better. He was bothered that the parishioners were not notified about the purchase while it was occurring.</p> <hr/> <p>D. Dave asked Fr. Jim to explain the reasoning behind the Mass changes, in particular the fact that Holy Cross would no longer have a Saturday Mass. As the oldest and biggest site, he felt that they deserved a Saturday Mass. When asked for their input for a new Mass schedule, Dave stated that the parishioners were not informed enough about the extent of the changes that were going to be made. He said if the problem is the music minister's schedule, then he and others would be happy to have a Mass without music.</p>	<p>Fr. Jim said that the AOD recommended the purchase of the house. Purchasing a house not attached to the church makes it possible for the priests to actually live away from their office and not always think about work. It was the AOD that bought the house, and the parish will lease to own it at low rates over an extended period of time.</p> <p>The entire first floor of Holy Cross's rectory has been converted into necessary office space. The old convent is being utilized by the school.</p> <p>Fr. Jim and Judy Beauvais explained that the St. Catherine site would not work for office space—it's smaller, the rectory now serves as the sisters' home, and the school has been gutted.</p> <hr/> <p>Fr. Jim said that he did not want to get rid of Holy Cross's Saturday Mass, but he took the advice of the Transitional Team and the Stewardship Commission, as well as Bishop Flores and our Vicar, Fr. Zukowski.</p> <p>The main reasons for the current Mass schedule are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. It has to be a schedule that can be sustained by a single priest. (Fr. Matt will probably leave in June.) B. It has to be a schedule that one music minister can do. C. It offers a variety of Masses within our parish. However, if parishioners are not happy with the choices in our parish, they can take advantage of the different Mass schedules of our entire Vicariate.
<p>5. Communicating with the Parishioners</p> <p>Sid Browne</p>	<p>Sid continued the Mass schedule discussion. He asked Fr. Jim if he felt like he were slighting the Marine City people by taking away their Saturday Mass. By suggesting people go to other parishes in the Vicariate, it makes it seem like Fr. Jim doesn't care where people go or whether or not they leave the parish.</p> <hr/> <p>Sid encouraged Fr. Jim to communicate his intent to the people more effectively. He said that they need to know that he is not trying to chase them away. He stressed that the pastor needs to communicate more with the people.</p>	<p>Fr. Jim said that the parishes of the Vicariate want to work together. Changing the Mass schedule was not done with the intent of losing people.</p> <hr/> <p>Fr. Jim said he would take Sid's words under advisement.</p>

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<p>8. Maritime Days & Harvest Dinner</p> <p><i>Don Smith</i></p> <p><i>Sid Browne</i></p> <p><i>Dave Dziejdzic</i></p>	<p>Don Smith requested a timely publication of the financial reports from Maritime Days and Harvest Dinner. He said the volunteers who give of their time really appreciate getting the feedback. He also asked Fr. Jim if there <i>would</i> be another Maritime Days—it requires a lot of money and time and help.</p> <hr/> <p>Sid Browne explained the history of the Maritime Days to Fr. Jim.</p> <p>He commented that Maritime Days and the Harvest Dinner used to make a lot more money than they do now.</p> <hr/> <p>Dave Dziejdzic suggested Fr. Jim post his questions in the bulletin if he needs information about past events and parishioners would be happy to come forward to help him.</p> <hr/> <p>Don Smith said more volunteers are needed to make the event run and that volunteers should be accepted from outside the parish.</p> <hr/> <p>Sid suggested Maritime Days become a community event again under the guidance of Holy Cross.</p> <p>Sid offered to help with Maritime Days again (even if his wife kills him).</p> <hr/> <p>Dave Dziejdzic said it used to be “Maritime Days” because they used to have tall ships come in. If the date were moved back to August, he would be able to get something like the ships as a draw for people.</p> <hr/> <p>Sid told Fr. Jim that he needs to send a letter to the city asking for permission to change the date. Then Fr. needs to appoint a couple of chairpersons.</p>	<p>Fr. Jim has been in communication with the mayor, trying to find out the history of Maritime Days and figure out how to better work together with the city. Fr. Jim has faced obstacles—being denied a liquor license for the last two years and charged a fee for police protection this year.</p> <p>Fr. Jim said he has not gotten much support for Maritime Days from the mayor or other organizations because it is now held on Memorial Day Weekend.</p> <p>Fr. Jim tentatively agreed to change Maritime Days back to August. He asked what needed to be done first.</p> <p>Fr. Jim said he was open to a change. He asked Don Smith if he would chair one more year. Don said he would do it if Sid Browne would co-chair.</p> <p>It was tentatively agreed that Maritime Days would be moved back to the third weekend in August, with Don Smith and Sid Browne co-chairing the event.</p>

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<p>9. Holy Cross's Organ</p> <p>Sandy Schwehofer</p>	<p>Sandy asked if an "Organ Fund" actually existed and whether or not the organ at Holy Cross were there to stay. She worried that now that Daniel Susan is gone, if the organ breaks, it might just be sold.</p>	<p>Fr. Jim assured her that the organ is there to stay.</p> <p><i>Judy Beauvais</i> said that there is an organ fund—money left to the church under the explicit instructions that it only be used for the maintenance of the organ. So far, only the interest from the money has been used to maintain the organ.</p> <p>Fr. Jim said that both the organ and the piano would be used for the music. He was happy that the choir was moved down front; people who previously couldn't join because of the difficulty of getting up to the choir loft now felt welcome to sing in the choir.</p>

VICARIATE PARISH COUNCIL No report. Next meeting is this Wednesday, Oct. 14.

PASTOR'S REPORT

1. Boyne Convocation: Fr. Jim reported on the Priestly Convocation that he attended. He specifically commented on Archbishop Vigneron's address to the priests:

a. Catholic Education System: (schools and religious education) The archbishop's fear is not that we're losing our children to Protestant religions; it's that we're losing them to paganism. We're losing our youth to popular culture—materialism, iPods, internet. The archbishop said the priests need to get the youth back. They are our first priority.

b. Reinvesting in the Archdiocese of Detroit: The archbishop told the clergy that we can't forget the city we're named after and we need to support the AOD. The archbishop wants to take those things that are working and are strong and reinvest in them.

Things are not working should be removed. For example, the Gabriel Richard building in Detroit should be sold, its staff down-sized and moved to other diocesan buildings.

c. Welfare of Priests: Archbishop Vigneron is concerned with the way priests have been overburdened. We have seen an increase in Catholics in our area and have maintained the services for the increase, but have seen a decline in the number of priests providing the services. The archbishop is concerned about the physical and spiritual well-being of all the priests in Detroit.

Fr. Jim said we are losing more priests. Our older priests are getting older and our younger priests are getting sicker—high blood pressure, hypertension, heart disease.

COMMISSION REPORTS

1. Education

a. Holy Cross: Amanda Lund, the principal of Holy Cross School, reported 87 students are enrolled in grades K through 8 at Holy Cross school, and 10 students are in the pre-school program.

Enrollment dropped this year due to a large exiting 8th grade class and a smaller incoming kindergarten class. The public schools in our area experienced the same decline. In addition, 6 students dropped due to financial burdens in these tough economic times.

Despite not receiving raises and taking pay cuts, the **morale of the teachers is high**. They remain dedicated to the students and their families. Mrs. Lund said that this is the best year yet for her at Holy Cross School.

b. Religious Education: Margie Smith, the director of religious education, reported that the religious education program will run from Sept. 14 through April 20. The program has 327 students enrolled with 25 teachers.

First Reconciliation will be celebrated on March 1 and 2; First Communion will be celebrated on April 24.

The Confirmation date has not been set yet; it's dependent on the bishop's schedule. The Confirmation retreat will be January 10 at Holy Cross Activity Center.

The tuition is the same now for all three sites.

2. Stewardship:

Fr. Jim reported that the Stewardship Commission met at the end of September.

The commission discussed the **parking lot** work being done at Holy Cross and the **new cement of the front steps** for Holy Cross Church.

The **parking lots of all three sites** will be looked at in the spring. The commission would like to get all the lots done by one company at the same time; hopefully, there will be some savings from that decision.

The next stewardship commission meeting will be at the end of October. Fr. Jim said he would like the meeting to have more structure: agenda, notes, etc.

OLD BUSINESS None.

NEW BUSINESS/MEMBER REPORTS

**Sr. Mary Ann asked for continued prayers for Sr. Geraldine, who had to be transported to the hospital due to an electrolyte imbalance. She is doing better.

CONCLUDING PRAYER At 8:30, Mary Endres read from Ephesians:

*Glory be to Him Whose power working in us
can do infinitely more than we can ask or imagine!*

Respectfully submitted,
Catherine Nutter
Parish Council Secretary

**NEXT MEETING: November 9, 2009
6:30 p.m. at St. Catherine Church
in the chapel area.**

**Anticipated Commission Reports:
Christian Service, Stewardship, Worship**