

## Saint Jude Pastoral Council Meeting

Wednesday, November 19, 2025

Activity Center - 7:00 PM

Annual Meeting

Approved Minutes

**Attendees:** Fr. Weber, Julie Barber, Peter Benz, Greg Branson, Susie Cabrera, Alvaro Garcia-Velez, Steven Gorzek, Andrew Meindl, Tom Mullooly, Susan Ray, Andy Schmitt, Mickie Steldt, Annie Tower, Tim Weiss

**Absent:**

No Youth Reps were in attendance

Opening Prayer: Peter Benz

Approval of Minutes:

The minutes were approved with the noted correction; Toast Food Pantry was corrected to Tosa Food Pantry. following a motion by Julie B. to accept and a second by Greg B.

Pastor's Remarks

Father Weber opened with a "State of the Parish" address, emphasizing a prevailing and "well-placed optimism" within the community despite facing the same headwinds as other organizations. He described this optimism as a gift the parish can offer to the wider, less-optimistic society. He officially began his six-year term as pastor on June 1st, a term renewable once, ensuring leadership stability through the parish's upcoming centennial and until at least 2031. He extended his gratitude to the parish's "incredible staff," trustees, council members, and volunteers for their dedication.

A review of key metrics for the fiscal year ending June 30th was presented:

- **Sacraments:** Baptisms were higher than in recent years, while First Communion and Confirmations saw slight downturns but remained within expected ranges. Marriages held steady at a number lower than desired. Anointings increased, though primarily due to proximity to the Zilber and Froedtert facilities rather than parishioner needs. Funerals were consistent at 18.
- **Mass Attendance:** Data from September to November showed a consistent rise in average attendance over the past three years. Father Weber noted this growth occurred organically, without specific programming, and invited parishioners to reflect on why they attend Mass and how they can share that joy with others.

The parish's activities were framed around the three pillars of a healthy community:

- **Worship:** Enhancements include the Children's Choir performing at the 11 a.m. Mass every other week, and a well-attended Tuesday evening Adoration and Confession service, for which time may be extended. The Saturday morning Mass continues to draw a strong crowd of 50-60 people, many from outside the parish. Distribution of the chalice will continue on major feast days like Christmas, Easter, and Corpus Christi (excluding the 4 p.m. Christmas Mass).
- **Service:** The parish maintains strong local engagement through its recently expanded food pantry, drives for organizations like Allie's Hospice, and the upcoming Advent Giving Tree. A robust relationship with the MacCanon Brown Homeless Sanctuary continues, and Father Weber challenged the community to increase its involvement with the local St. Vincent de Paul society.
- **Community:** Six new individuals are preparing to join the Church at Easter. Community-building initiatives have been successful, including a speaker series (Jude 20), a pilgrimage to Holy Hill that drew over 40 participants, the "Love Begins Here" mission trip for middle schoolers, and the CORE men's group. The council is also promoting parishioner-led retreats.

Collaborations with other parishes are thriving. These voluntary partnerships include a successful "Just Older Youth" (JOY) group with St. Vincent Pallotti and St. Therese, hosting religious education for those parishes, and joint youth outings with St. John Vianney. St. Jude also serves as a teaching parish for seminarian Joshua Miller, who is now in his first year of formal formation.

The school principal, Catherine LaDien, reported a successful year with 423 students from 237 families across 14 communities. The school is undergoing its accreditation year, with surveys showing highly positive feedback. This year, the school welcomed 30 new families and 62 new students.

A significant youth ministry event was highlighted: Pope Leo will deliver a historic, live-streamed address in English to 15,000 teens, with 30 students chosen to ask him questions directly. Youth from the parish are attending this leadership conference and will return "fired up" about their faith.

Finally, the "Love One Another" campaign successfully funded the playground structure and church sound system. Having paid back the initial internal loan, the parish expects a surplus of nearly \$100,000 for future projects as pledges are completed.

Parish trustee, Tom Mullooly, presented a "very healthy financial outlook" for the fiscal year ending in June 2025. Total revenues exceeded \$3.8 million, and the parish operating budget finished "in the black" with a surplus of \$2,011. This marks the third consecutive year of finishing with a positive balance, a success credited to diligent management by the parish office, finance committee, and Father Weber's direct involvement.

### **Operating Budget & Revenue:**

- Revenue is split nearly 50/50 between offertory contributions and other sources like program fees and fundraising, underscoring the importance of events and school-related income.
- Operating expenses are dominated by salaries and benefits for the parish and school's roughly 50 employees. In the fiscal year ending 2025, salaries and benefits increased by \$100,000, which was offset by other revenues and savings in buildings and grounds.
- The parish maintains a practice of prudent end-of-year financial management, adjusting payments to aim for a non-profit break-even point.

### **Balance Sheet & Endowments:**

- As of the end of the fiscal year, total restricted investments stood at \$2,031,000.
- More recent figures show the educational endowment at approximately \$1.5 million, the congregation fund at over \$800,000, and the Monsignor Holleran fund at \$236,000. These funds provide crucial financial stability for the parish.

### **Stewardship Initiatives:**

- **Purple Envelope Fund:** This ongoing capital fund, designed to replace periodic large campaigns, has raised over \$800,000 since its inception and funded all major roof replacements. In fiscal year 2024-25, it brought in about \$90,000 and spent \$40,000 on capital projects. While the number of giving households increased from 36 to 84, the total amount still falls short of the \$150,000 annual goal. It was noted that awareness of the fund's purpose is a challenge, as some parishioners are unfamiliar with the "Purple Envelope" concept.
- **Teacher Gratitude Fund:** Launched at the November 4<sup>th</sup>, 2024 Gala, this fund raised \$277,000 that evening. Combined with prior funds, its total reached \$300,000. The first payout occurred in June 2024, distributing \$36,500 in bonuses to teachers as a monetary expression of gratitude.

A discussion arose regarding a school advisory survey that identified "awareness of the school's finance" as its lowest-rated area (though still overwhelmingly positive). While financial information is available through the annual report and pastoral council minutes, concerns were raised about transparency versus the risk of misinterpretation. It was explained that the school's revenue is front-loaded at the beginning of the fiscal year, and a mid-year report showing a large surplus could be misleading, as funds are often low by year-end. The consensus was that while more detailed reporting could be complex, improving communication about the parish's strong, break-even financial position is a positive goal to assure families of its stability.

Parish Council Chair Andy Schmitt shared a personal reflection, encouraging all parishioners to step out of their comfort zones to serve in new ways, such as being a server, usher, or choir member. He noted that trying new things opens doors and

deepens one's connection to God and the community, citing his own positive experience of seeing the parish's growth from a new perspective.

### **Sanctuary Reconfiguration:**

Building on the strategic plan initiated in 2021, the council is actively focusing on improvements to the parish space. A significant proposal involves reconfiguring the church sanctuary. The primary goals are to:

1. **Increase the visibility of the baptismal font** by moving the original font from its corner to a more prominent, permanent location.
2. **Balance the sanctuary space**, which is currently visually weighted toward the lectern (ambo) side.

This would involve moving the piano, which is rarely used, to create a more balanced and intimate worship environment, allowing the priest to be physically closer to the congregation. A detailed, three-month communication plan has been drafted by the Liturgical Commission to present the rationale and visuals to the parish before any changes are made. The only identified downside is the removal of one pew.

### **Stewardship and Centennial Committee:**

A major new initiative is the re-establishment of a standing Stewardship Commission, which is being launched in conjunction with planning for the parish's 100th anniversary in 2028. This effort aims to springboard the parish into an era of sustainable stewardship.

- **Momentum:** An initial interest meeting drew 28 attendees, and a follow-up survey garnered commitments to help from 17 individuals, with another half-dozen informally offering support. This strong response is seen as a sign of renewed energy and engagement post-pandemic.
- **Vision:** The centennial celebration is envisioned as a multi-faceted series of events bridging the parish's past and future. It will not be limited to a single party or fundraiser but will include initiatives focused on history, faith formation, new member engagement, gratitude, and future planning.
- **Next Steps:** A leadership group will meet in early December to formalize a structure and strategy. The goal is to have subcommittees and action items in place by the end of January, with a full committee structure established by the end of the fiscal year. The entire parish will be kept informed and invited to participate as the planning progresses over the next three years.
- **Donut Sunday:** The event continues to be successful. The Knights of Columbus will host in January.
- **Advent by Candlelight:** This popular ladies-only event is scheduled for the evening of December 14th at 6:30 p.m. It offers a time for reflection with a short presentation, music, appetizers, and dessert.

### **Faith Formation & Youth:**

- **Children's Liturgy of the Word:** This new monthly offering at the 9 a.m. Mass has started successfully, providing an age-appropriate lesson on the Gospel for children.
- **Religious Education:** The program is running smoothly, with volunteers from St. Therese now assisting with teaching.
- **Youth Ministry:** An open gym event was held with about 20 kids attending. Efforts continue to organize snow tubing with St. John Vianney and to find ways to engage the high school age group. The new Youth Council will hold its first meeting this week.

### **Human Concerns:**

- **Food Collection:** The November food drive was very successful, filling the pantry shelves twice.
- **St. Vincent de Paul:** The group is hosting an upcoming Donut Sunday.
- **Giving Tree:** The annual Giving Tree will launch on November 28th, with donations benefiting the Christ Child Society, Father Gene's, and MacCanon Brown.
- **Toy Drive:** An opportunity exists for Scout troops to spearhead a toy drive for the McCann and Brown Homeless Sanctuary around December 20th.
- **Women of St. Jude:** The group recently held a book review. Upcoming events include the Snowball Dance in February and the Mother-Daughter event in the spring.
- **Men of St. Jude:** The group is organizing a Bingo Night and the Casino Night fundraiser. The annual Daryl Meagle Hunt also serves as a major philanthropic event for the organization.
- **School Advisory:** A key takeaway from the recent parent survey is an opportunity to highlight the achievements of St. Jude alumni on social media to better engage families of graduates.

### **Athletics:**

- **Facilities:** The gym scoreboards are in the process of being repaired, with parts purchased over a year ago by the Athletic Association and other groups.
- **Leadership:** A significant discussion was held regarding finding an Athletic Director. The group discussed ways to make the AD role more manageable.