

January/February 2026 Pastoral Council Meetings Summaries

Finance and Administration Commission: It was announced Courtney Burmester has agreed to assume the position of Music Director. It's been a process, and the commission could not find someone with the "traditional skill set" for this important role (she's not an accompanist). However, her background and organizational skills are expected to greatly enhance the goal of improving church music.

Social Justice and Community Outreach Commission: The Missions Executive Committee report included a reference to Denay Minett writing welcome notes to new parishioners on behalf of Missions Outreach and for assistance with the Parish Volunteer Day. The Delta Disciples project was confirmed for March 12-15, 2026. The Mission Belize trip for 2026 was cancelled due to lack of interest but will reschedule for January of 2027. The Lenten Supper for February 25 is confirmed with Ron Gatto and team preparing gumbo for the meal. Graydon Carter was to contact SJS Principal Dr. Matthew Tucker about getting a date for 10th-12th graders to participate in a Poverty Simulation event this year. That was subsequently set for March 16th from 8:00-11:00 a.m. in the back side of the Spiritan Center dining area. The Community Volunteer Day is March 7, 2026. There will be 10-11 worksites. An email was received from UCA inviting St. Joseph and other churches to be involved in its "Big Event" on February 28. This is UCA's version of a community day of service. The work day will likely include Conway Ministry Center activities at its Refuge Shelter where the new laundry room is a big hit thanks to the help from the Handyman Crew. The Divine Mercy Medical Mission is planned for March 14, 2026. Some of the unique services that will be offered include a hot meal, bags of groceries and gift cards. The Harbor Home for Women is filled with clients and current needs are cleaning supplies and a blender.

Education and Formation Commission: National Catholic Schools Week was to have been celebrated January 25-30 but was pre-empted by frozen ground and temperatures. The Living Rosary was rescheduled for February 11 and the Pep Rally was made up on February 12. SJS Principal Dr. Matthew Tucker reported that teachers on all campuses are making plans for Lenten commitments to prayer, fasting and giving. Winter MAP Testing for grades 7 and 8 was to be held February 12 and 17. New student applications were to open on February 2nd. Student enrollment stood at 581 PK-3-12 which is 73% of capacity. K-12 was 513 or 72% capacity.

Stewardship Commission: Members reviewed the free Will program from the Diocese of Little Rock. It will likely be rolled out in the spring. Plans for this year's stewardship month were discussed. Its focus will be treasure and the new campaign for the K-6 building. The talking points will be taken directly from the school. Packets will go out in the mail as has been done in previous years. Discussed potential charities for the Children's Collections. Historically, between \$13,000 and \$16,000 has been raised. Outside organizations were considered as recipients such as Coats for Kids, military children in need, the Arkansas Food Bank to supply food in backpacks for kids facing food scarcity. Such donations can be split amongst multiple charities.

Old/New Business: FreeWill, a DOLR program, that allows parishioner to create a will at no cost and which can include provisions for bequeathing funds or property to individual parishes or the diocese. St Joseph will make this information available through various means which should be rolled out in April. All-new tables and chairs have been purchased and placed in the Spiritan Hall dining area. New heating and air units for the Adoration Chapel were needed and priced at \$19,000 were approved. Bishop Taylor had signed contract for beginning the Capital Campaign for building a new K-6 school building and Petrus has been hired to lead the campaign. The building, in round figures, will cost about \$18,000,000. It's going to require a lot of work to achieve this, Father John said, but he believes it can be done. A quiet campaign would probably start fairly soon and a more active public phase would commence in summer. By Labor Day or shortly after we should know where we stand. Father John also talked about two other projects; celebrating the 150th anniversary of St. Joseph Church which will fall on February 29, 2029. A committee will be formed to determine the different ways it could be celebrated. Father also thinks the church sanctuary needs renovation after more than 30 years. Those needs will also be examined, and what work is done can be accomplished with current assets without any fundraising.

Pastor's Report: Transitional Deacon Booker, who's residing here until he's ordained in May, is one of four other deacons who will become priests at that time. While Deacon is here, he's adjusting to having been a student for years and soon moving into the stage of what it's like living in a parish. Father John will be spending time mentoring him about this transition. Deacon's calendar is beginning to build. He will be preaching periodically. He loves sports, particularly football, and will likely be seen at various sports activities throughout the spring. Father met with Decorating Committee regarding new ideas Christmas decorations in 2026. This will be phase three of his plans in this regard, and the final phase will be implemented a year later. Father's diocesan work is ever-increasing but, a lot of good things are happening. Right now, he's involved with upcoming assignment changes for the priests in the diocese. He asked that we keep him and others making these decisions in our prayers. These assignments will go public April 10. Sub-committees on church renovation and 150th Anniversary of the Church will be created to share their thoughts on these matters. Council members were asked to be thinking about parishioners who'd be good candidates to serve on these committees and make such recommendations in coming months.