

Pastoral Council Minutes

Wednesday, March 10, 2026 | 7:00 pm – 9:00 pm
Parish Life Center Gym – Church of the Transfiguration

Pastoral Council (PC) Members in Attendance: Kristen Graham, Rebecca Hartman (*chair*), John Hurley (*lay trustee*), Erica Jones, Skip Lehman (*vice chair*), Michael Musa (*youth rep*), Lindsay Ricci, Tracy Volkmann, Charlene Weeks

PC Members Excused: Bob Ciccone, Tom Cincebox, Marissa Phelps, David Pritchard (*lay trustee*), Kasey Wise (*youth rep*), Mike Schell, Diane Yacoby

Ministry Representative/s: Bob Goldbach, Kathy Kyhos

Staff: Margie Benza, Fr. Rob, Anne Gallagher, Dan Hofford, Meg Kastner, Karen Luke, Karen Rinefierd, Nancy Wahl

Recording Secretary: Donna Mihalik

Opening Prayer

Fr. Rob offered a spontaneous prayer for peace in all our lives, for everyone on their Lenten journeys, and for the fruitfulness of the evening's meeting.

Approval of Minutes

Motion by John, second by Skip, passed unanimously.

Welcome & Opening Comments

Rebecca welcomed everyone and expressed gratitude to all able to attend the evening's meeting.

- There was a request for everyone to speak louder at meetings due to the challenging acoustics of the meeting rooms
- Discussion followed regarding the process for opening prayers. Two options were outlined: to have one standard short prayer for the opening of every meeting or individually selected prayers for each meeting.
 - Consensus reached on second option as different prayers for each meeting can relate to the world/environment around us
 - Suggestion was made to add a time limit to the process – a maximum of anywhere from 2-5 minutes; Rebecca agreed to include this in the process

Old Business –Joint Mission/Vision Project

Tracy updated PC on the work being done regarding the single mission/vision project for our two parishes. She passed around copies of the 6-page report that was included with the emailed agenda for this meeting. The goals for tonight's meeting are to:

1. Ensure that the committee's plan is aligned with PC
2. Review recommendations for the timeline of outlined phases and steps so PC is clear on the committee's plan
3. Provide the committee with thoughtful feedback

A robust discussion followed, including highlights of:

- The summary of the strategy being recommended as the basis for the committee's work
- Milestones of every month's activities from February 2026 through January 2027
- Committee would like to have March milestones completed on time though it was admitted that this might be a stretch

Feedback included the following suggestions:

- **Communicating** about the plan
 - Coordinate all communications of the plan with all other activities happening simultaneously within both parishes, especially during busy liturgical seasons

- Though many other things are happening during these liturgical seasons, there was consensus that people often pay more and closer attention to communications in November and December
- Keep in mind critical dates of the CMA beginning in October and Advent beginning November 28-29
- Create synergy between the staff's current plan of work, activities and communications and the mission/vision committee
- Tracy asked what the next step is to work with staff on communications; the answer is to email Nancy, who is now our joint parish "one-stop shop" for all areas of communications
- To incorporate information on the project throughout all the various formats, which have varying deadlines, Nancy explained that she needs 4 weeks' notification
- There was much discussion about **timing**, and how much can be accomplished promptly without rushing the process.
 - It was agreed that a significant project like this deserves a year for parishioners to think about and digest
 - Finance perspective – the parishes have been asked to consolidate services; we would like to be pro-active as it remains unknown what hard decisions the new bishop may want/need to make
 - We have the opportunity to build community and mold our own destiny if we pro-actively work together
- **Soft launch** possibilities suggested:
 - In November, with inclusion in website, seasonal mass mailings, other announcements, and events the launch could be tied into; Tracy feels the plan could be adjusted and will have the committee review this
 - Possibly extend the timeline through next April, with a soft launch this Easter
 - Consensus on the second option: John motioned to extend the timeline through April 2027, seconded by Erica; Tracy and Kristen will take this back to the committee and send their revisions to PC
- Several **informational items** we should all be aware of:
 - Our **new bishop** may announce additional diocesan-wide communications, activities, or other plans during the same timeframe; the new bishop may go in entirely different directions
 - The **staff** is currently working on a joint mission statement; questions were asked about the logistics of the draft process. Input could include collecting feedback from Faith Formation parents, vacation bible school, other ministry meetings, a town hall, youth meetings, women's group, heads of all ministries and activities. Dan will send the committee and PC the names of everyone who is a volunteer leader in both parishes.
 - The **priest situation** is being scrutinized; as times are changing, there will no longer be just one pastor per parish; much of the rest of the diocese has already gone through serious restructuring
- **Research** – The committee has researched extensively what other parishes have done and staff will provide a compilation of their ideas to share with PC
- **Gratitude** – PC members praised the work of the committee, saying the plan was very thoughtful and it not only holds the committee accountable but PC as well

New Business - Website

Nancy presented an update on the development of our new website platform, providing a 5-page handout and noting that it is more cost-effective to have just one set of communications elements for both parishes.

- LPI, the company that prints our weekly bulletins, was chosen to provide the platform; pro: their system offers a lot of analytics, con: the site is not as searchable
- Putting the analytics into a readable form from the site takes the most amount of time because the platform does not have an automatic download format for them

- Goal was to keep the website simple and easy to navigate, especially since half of our viewers look at the website on their cell phones
- Nancy is the only one with editing capabilities right now since it is too easy to make mistakes (as she's learned the hard way – she is still on a learning curve, she says); eventually she will have a back-up, preferably someone who is in the office on a regular basis
- She works part-time, often at night after she gets all her requests from throughout the day; realistically, she can't possibly keep up with everything that goes on with every ministry
- Nancy sends out one weekly email, while Anne & Karen L send out more targeted emails

Attendees gave many thanks to Nancy for her extensive efforts and time in getting the new website up and functional.

New Business – Welcoming New Parishioners

Skip has volunteered to spearhead a PC committee on welcoming new parishioners. He asked for volunteers from PC to help work on events/activities to welcome our new parishioners– not complicated ones, he emphasized, with the main goal to plan the reception. It would be good to have PC members from both parishes participate on the committee. He offered 3 recommendations, then opened the topic up for discussion:

1. Request that Fr. Rob to recognize new parishioners at the “beginning joys” at Masses
2. Announce at Mass that PC members wearing nametags will be at the back of church after Mass for any new parishioner to introduce themselves
3. Host 1 or 2 welcoming events per year for new parishioners

Feedback:

- It was agreed that PC members should try to introduce themselves to people they don't know.
- Currently, a welcome letter goes out to all new parishioners, but the contact info is for staff only so we could do more with that communication format.
- Consider this welcoming effort to be a part of the new integration phase of the mission/vision project

To volunteer, or to recommend someone who would be good to serve on this committee, contact Skip either by phone or email. Volunteering at the meeting: Marissa, Lindsay, Donna; Erica will consider it.

Open Forum

- **PC Nomination and Selection Process** – We are in the season for recruitment of PC members for the next cohort, with Karen R organizing the process. The timeline has been developed; please refer to the Pastoral Council Selection Process handout from Karen R: Easter weekend announcement through Pentecost selection. Members whose terms are up this June: Bob, Tom, Rebecca, Charlene. PC members are eligible for nomination for a second 3-year term. Michael is graduating this year so another Youth representative will be selected. Karen R will check with the lay trustees to see who will represent each parish for the coming year.
- **Miscellaneous**
 - Margie had an update to her report for Meg (page 2, 14 participants instead of 10)
 - Transfiguration's projectors will arrive on St. Patrick's Day
 - The pilot project of using a Google doc for PC members to propose topics for meeting agendas is working well so far. This allows all PC members to have input into agendas set by PC leadership with Fr. Rob at a planning session two weeks prior to each full PC meeting.

Closing

Fr. Rob thanked Tracy and Kristen, and Skip and Erica for all their efforts and input. He is a big proponent of knowing people in the parishes, there's always somebody new you can meet and it helps build community.

Lindsay presented a closing prayer, inspired by the faith of her grandfather and reminiscent of Psalm 23:5 (*You set a table before me in front of my enemies; you anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows.*) She is thinking of him on his 99th birthday, a man who had been in the seminary before he married his neighbor. He encouraged her to re-connect with her faith. This poem, recited at a previous birthday celebration for him, is "*Drinking from the Saucer,*" a popular Christian poem about gratitude written by John Paul Moore in the 1970s.

*I've never made a fortune and it's probably too late now.
But I don't worry about that much, I'm happy anyhow.
And as I go along life's way, I'm reaping better than I sowed.
I'm drinking from my saucer, 'cause my cup has overflowed.
I don't have a lot of riches, and sometimes the going's tough.
But I've got loved ones around me, and that makes me rich enough.
I thank God for His blessings, and the mercies He's bestowed.
I'm drinking from my saucer, 'cause my cup has overflowed.
I remember times when things went wrong, my faith wore somewhat thin.
But all at once the dark clouds broke, and the sun peeped through again.
So God, help me not to gripe about the tough rows that I've hoed.
I'm drinking from my saucer, 'cause my cup has overflowed.
If God gives me strength and courage, when the way grows steep and rough,
I'll not ask for other blessings, I'm already blessed enough.
And may I never be too busy to help others bear their loads.
Then I'll keep drinking from my saucer, 'cause my cup has overflowed.*

Motion to adjourn by John, seconded by Erica, meeting adjourned.

Next PC meeting: Wednesday, April 8, 7 pm, Parish Life Center Gym, Church of the Transfiguration