

St. Michael's Parish Council Meeting

August 18, 2026

I. Call to Order & Opening Prayer

President Laurie Kraemer called the meeting to order.

Fr. Courtright said the opening prayer.

II. Organizational & Routine Matters

- **Roll Call: Present:** Fr. Courtright, Fr. Aberle, Laurie Kraemer, Janet Burns, Rhonda Varriano, Brent Lahr, Jason Riter, Sarah Wocken, Marie Vetter, Lori Swinney, Erin Perronteau, Sara Dudley, Mary Ann Whalen
Absent: Ken Vasek, Craig Pfau
- **Approval of Minutes:** A correction was made in the minutes from the last meeting (June 2) under the Beautification Committee report: Conrad Schmitt Studios is giving us a quote on *just* the Walls & Ceiling. We will need to go to other contractors for quotes on Floors & Lighting. Janet Burns then motioned to approve the minutes. Seconded by Lori Swinney. Motion passed.
- **Election of Officers:** The Parish Council needed a new President and a new Vice-President. The term would be for just one year. Brent Lahr volunteered to be Vice-President and Rhonda Varriano volunteered to be President. Janet Burns then motioned that they both be elected unanimously. Seconded by Fr. Courtright. Motion passed. The names of these new officers should be put in the bulletin and Flocknote.

III. Reports of Representing Organizations

- **Altar Society:** Janet Burns reported the Altar Society held its first meeting the previous week. The updated By-Laws are being finalized (last updated in 1978). The Altar Society committees will be posted on the parish website. We're hoping this will attract younger women. Members will be allowed to join the meetings by Zoom in the winter months.
The Altar Society will not be having a Fall Breakfast or Bazaar this year. Instead they'll have a Bake Sale (including homemade donuts) on Sat., Oct. 17, from 2 to 5 pm. This will coincide with the KC Ladies' Pie Social. The Altar Society will again be selling raffle tickets this fall. Tiffany Goulet is the new Vice-President and Colleen Lunski is the new Treasurer. The Altar Society meets the 2nd Tuesday of every month except for January, July, & December.
- **Knights of Columbus:** No report.
- **Bridge Builders:** Lori Swinney reported they had not met recently. The next meeting is scheduled for Sept. 10.

IV. Reports from Parish Boards and Councils

- **Education:** Sara Dudley reported the first Professional Development Day had taken place that day—Aug. 18. There are no new teachers this year. The first day of school will be Aug. 26. Enrollment is down a little. Four families have chosen to home-school and two families moved away. There will be twenty-three middle-schoolers this year. The Capital Campaign for the new St. Carlo Acutis Middle School has now reached \$6.2 million--75% of its goal. (This is up from 40% at our last Parish Council meeting.) Construction on the new building is coming along. It should be done by October 2027. The teachers have a monthly rotation of where they can park while the construction is going on.

The School Gala will be held October 23 at the Ralph Engelstad Arena.

- **Finance Council:** Erin Perronteau reported the Finance Council had met earlier that day. They went through the June financials and we're in the black. However, the fiscal year "Finals" are not yet done. The courtyard parking lot has been black-topped. People can now park near the gym where the old coal bin had been.
- **Pastor's Report:**
 - A new choir director has been hired: Angela Schmaltz
 - There will be a Women's Bible Study on Sunday evenings.
 - There will be two sessions on Thursdays of Jeff Cavins' "Bible Timeline" study program
 - OCIA will be on Monday evenings. Fr. Aberle will be directing it. Currently there are 13 people signed up for it.
 - Our celebration of St. Michael's Feast Day (Sept. 29) has been moved to Sunday, Sept. 27.
 - A Young Adults Group might be started here at St. Michael's
 - Fr. Courtright said some people in the area would like to set up a local chapter of St. Vincent de Paul. (This would be separate from St. Joseph's Social Care & Food Pantry which is already here in Grand Forks.) There had been a request to get the email addresses of our parishioners. Parish Council members said "no."

V. Old & Current Business

- **Beautification Committee Update:** Work is still in progress. Conrad Schmitt Studios had sent an email on Aug. 17 that they are still working on a quote.
- **Parish Council By-Laws:** The revision is now complete.

VI. New Business:

- **Youth Ministry (XLT) Update:** A guest speaker at the meeting was Blaise Wocken (age 20). He is the son of Sarah Wocken and has served with NET Ministries for the last two years. He spoke about how he'd like to bring "Praise & Worship" to St. Michael's for the youth. It's for the youth but open to everyone to come. It incorporates contemporary music & Adoration & he's been leading this type of worship for about a year now. RE Director Marie Vetter said she'd like to integrate this with the Faith Formation for our youth. Lynnae Braun (Blaise's aunt) of our parish also spoke about the XLT Program for the youth that she's been involved with in our Deanery. She'd like to do something quarterly—perhaps on Sunday evenings. It was reported that 19 students went to the Steubenville Conference this year.
- **Faith Formation:** Marie Vetter reported that Religious Education (RE) is now being called Faith Formation. St. Michael's is one of two parishes in our Diocese to implement a new curriculum this year called "Word of Life" from the Augustine Institute. Marie said we should let parishioners know St. Michael's is subscribed to "Formed"—a digital platform that offers Catholic Faith Formation. There will be no kindergarten RE this year because the catechist was not available. However, there is a Catechesis of the Good Shepherd session on Thursday afternoons.

The Opening Faith Formation Mass will be on Wed., Sept. 23, with a meal afterwards. Perhaps Parish Council members could help with that meal.

- **Ministry & Liturgy Training:** Marie Vetter reported that she is setting up mandatory training sessions for volunteers in areas such as Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion, Proclaimers, Ushers & Greeters, Altar Servers, etc. Dates & times will be announced.
- A Parish Council member asked who will be in charge of the Christmas Baskets since Deacon Bredemeier won't be here. It was mentioned that parishioner Mary Giltner has been involved in organizing this in recent the years.
- Some Parish Council members mentioned that maybe our Parish needs to have more social functions so that people feel that they are a part of a "community." That aspect seems to be missing from parish life compared to years past.
- Lori Swinney brought to the meeting an interesting booklet from 1977 that St. Michael's Parish had printed for a fundraiser.

VII. Adjournment & Closing Prayer:

Fr. Aberle led the closing prayer.

Out-going President Laurie Kraemer then gave an orientation to the new President & Vice-President.

The next meeting is scheduled for September 15.

Respectfully submitted,
Mary Ann Whalen