

PASTORAL COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES

Tuesday, January 6th, 2026 - 6:30 PM
St. Gabriel the Archangel Parish Hall

Attendees: Gaby Andrea, Fr. James Belogi, Terri Bouchard, Eleanor Bradley, Christine Cioffi, Justine Crevatas, Bob DiCostanzo, Joan Duda, Arthur Foo, Betsy Glasser, Teshia Gutchell, Anna Hartz, Richard Leet, Fran Mitchell, Fr. Anthony Onu, Julius Pasquariello, Kathleen Riordan, Kelly Sloan, Gloria Towle-Hilt, Joanne Tuchovsky, Christopher Wertman, Bruce Smith

Excused: Debbie Fontes, Nancy Lussier, Nancy Moscheo, Thomas Poznanski, Joanne Russell, Donna Simone, Alyssa Sarrosa

The meeting was called to order by Richard Leet at 6:31 PM.

Opening prayer by Fr. James Belogi and all.

1) Present Mission Statement (Rich)

2) Approval of Minutes

The November Council meeting minutes were approved with revisions by Teshia Gutchell and seconded by Fran Mitchell. Motion carried.

3) Ministry Updates

a. Faith Formation (Donna Simone/Terri Bouchard)

Advent Highlights:

- Joyful Hands, Hopeful Hearts Advent Adventure held Nov. 23 at the SMS Parish Center.
 - First annual event with ~70 participants and volunteers.
 - Activities included Christmas cards for homebound parishioners, Advent wreaths, calendars, and Advent Bingo.
- Faith Formation and School children created Jesse Tree ornaments for the Giving Trees.
- Families donated gifts and gift cards for the SMS Christmas Giving Tree; gift cards were especially appreciated.
- Middle and high school students visited Carman Living Center on Dec. 15 to sing Christmas carols and deliver treats.
- St. Gabriel's Living Nativity held Dec. 16 with Faith Formation children participating.

Sacrament of Confirmation:

- 42 youth and adults received the Sacrament of Confirmation on Nov. 18 at St. Madeleine Sophie Church.
- Confirmations included members from St. Madeleine Sophie Parish, St. Gabriel the Archangel Parish, & Three candidates from St. Mary's Parish and Holy Spirit Parish (East Greenbush).

Called to Serve Family Sunday:

- Held Nov. 16, 2025 at St. Kateri Tekakwitha Parish.
- Theme: Pilgrims of Hope
- Service projects included:
 - Sock and underwear collection for the Good Neighbor Program.
 - Cards and ornaments for the elderly.
 - T-shirt tug toys for shelter dogs.
 - Brown bag lunches for those in need through the Salvation Army.

OCIA (Order of Christian Initiation of Adults):

- OCIA participants from St. Madeleine Sophie, St. Gabriel's, and Our Lady Queen of Peace.
- Catechumens (not baptized): 9 participants
- Candidates (baptized): 4 participants
- Rite of Entrance/Welcoming celebrated January 4.
- Weekly formation meetings ongoing since September.
- Rite of Election: February 22 at the Cathedral in Albany with Bishop Mark.
- Easter Vigil (April 4): Catechumens to receive Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist; Candidates to receive Confirmation and Eucharist.

b. Christian Service SGA (Teshia Gutchell)

Food Pantry Ministry:

- Continued collaboration with SMS Food Pantry.
- "Say Thanks by Giving" project was very successful for both parishes.
- Provided Thanksgiving groceries, gift cards, and turkeys to families in need.
- 11 St. Gabriel's families (~50 people) benefited.
- Price Chopper donated paper bags and additional food in November.
- Pantry now ~90% stocked due to parishioner and ministry donations.
- Items still needed: cereal, hygiene supplies, coffee, cleaning supplies.

Faith & Spiritual Study Group:

- Donated to the St. Gabriel's Food Pantry in October.
- Adopted a family in need (single mother and two daughters) through the City Mission.
- Provided requested Christmas gifts.

Hospitality Ministry:

- Strong attendance after 7:30 AM and 10:30 AM Masses.
- Ministry promotions resulted in new volunteers for parish ministries.

Women's Club Ministry:

- Provides ongoing financial support to parish and community organizations.
- Recent donations included: Food Pantry support, Faith Formation (Bibles for OCIA), Confirmation reception support, Thanksgiving and Christmas parish donations, Crop Walk donation.
- Cookie Walk & Christmas Craft Fair raised \$6,000.
- The next meeting is scheduled for February 11.

c. Christian Service SMS (Gloria Towle-Hilt)

St. John / St. Ann's Welcome Table (Anna Hartz):

- Parishioners serve meals every 4th Saturday of the month.
- Meals served on Sept 27, Oct 25, Nov 22.
- Next service date: January 24.

Twining Ministry (Joan Duda):

- Meets every other month in the SMS Parish Center kitchen.
- Prepares two meals for the Welcome Table.
- Meals served in October and November.
- The next cooking session is scheduled for January.

SMS Food Pantry (Georgianna Pennacchia):

- Thanksgiving Food Drive served 102 families with full holiday meals.
- Christmas Food & Gift Drive provided:
 - Gifts to 103 children.
 - Food gift cards to 10 adopted families.
 - Gifts to 19 foster children (Northern Rivers & St. Catherine's).
- The pantry is fully stocked.
- Donated ~\$800 to Fr. Jim's Charity Account.
- Success made possible by parishioner generosity.

Red Cross Blood Drive (Cookie):

- Drives held Oct 13 and Dec 15.
- October drive exceeded goal.
- December goal: 100 units | Collected: 95 units (record high).
- Thanks to Teresa & Mike Rossi (donor recruitment) and Montone & Doyle Families (baked goods).

- Next drive: February 16.

Visitation Ministry (Cookie Towle-Hilt):

- 8 parishioners serve homebound members with weekly visits.
- Eucharist provided upon request.
- Monthly coffee hour with shared discussion and guest speakers.
- Fall speaker: Alzheimer's Association.

Family Promise (Anna Hartz):

- Network parishes scheduled to host January 25, 2026.
- Currently no families enrolled.
- The Day Center has been closed since November for cleaning and painting.
- Program ready to receive families at any time.
- Ongoing rental assistance provided to help families remain housed.

Hospitality:

- Volunteers needed: substitutes for 9:00 AM Sunday Mass.

Parish Activities:

- An evening program was held on November 11 on the topic of Alzheimer's. The Albany director for the Alzheimer's Association came to speak about the challenges of living with Alzheimer's for the entire family. She also spoke about the new treatments that are now available to help to ease the progression of the disease. The program was well received.

d. Finance & Administration (Fr Jim and Kathleen)

SMS Kathleen:

- Kathleen is in the process of compiling 6 month numbers July- December:
 - Regular offertory collection 7/25-12/25 \$310,491 (This is an increase from years past).
- 12 out of the last 15 weeks the parish has met or exceeded the budgeted offertory goal.
- 2025 YTD Christmas Collection: \$22,584 (goal \$30,000) (still receiving collections in the mail).
- \$26,000 collected thus far towards Diocesan Appeal.

SGA Fr Jim:

- The Christmas Collection was good.
- SGA Collections have been good.

4) Old Business

Mission statement revision:

- Any council members interested in aiding in the revisions of the council mission statement please speak with Anna Hartz.

5) New Business

Easter Egg Hunt:

- Anna Hartz inquired if the pastoral council will be sponsoring the Easter Egg hunt again this year 1-3 pm on Palm Sunday.

Bulletin:

- Arthur Foo inquired about repetitive information in the past week's bulletins.
- Due to the office being closed for Christmas Break.

6) Community Events & Devotions

Red Cross Blood Drive:

- The next blood drive will be held February 16.

7) Pastor's Comments (Fr. Jim)

Bishop Mark:

- Put a pause on Remade For Mission.
- Each parish needs to submit plans of future ministry, referred to as survivor plans.
 - How do we plan to sustain ourselves and remain a viable community?
- He is not anticipating any closure of parishes.
- Looking to increase the number of priests in the Diocese.
- SMS and SGA need to begin developing “survival plan”
 - SMS Finance committee will meet January 20th.
 - Discussion of Capital Campaign to address deficit.
 - In the past SMS has implemented a debt reduction plan.

8) Adjournment

Motion to adjourn by Fran Mitchell seconded by Gloria Towle-Hilt. Motion carried.

9) Closing Prayer

Read by all.

Meeting adjourned: 8:00 PM

Respectfully submitted,
Christopher Wertman