



St. John Fisher - Parish Council

Minutes from Meeting – November 21, 2024

Parish Staff/Trustees		Parish Council		Other Attendees	
<u>Ex officio</u>		Jim Castellani	√		
Rev. Alvin J. LeBlanc	√	Pedro Cristavao			
Sr. Dcn. Em. John McKaig	R	Barbara Gaudette	√		
Dcn. Bill Gilles	√	Tim Geary	R		
Marlene Luebeck (Trustee)		Nancy Gianetti	R		
Peter Yorio (Trustee)	√	Julie Groene	√		
<u>Non-voting</u>		Trevor Hooker	R		
Janice Reska (DMM)	R	Paul Kriksciun	√		
Cindy Bryan (CFF)	√	Barbara Meyer (President)	√		
Helena Thomas (CFF, DYM)	√	Colin Tracey	√		
Todd Gianetti	√	Nancy Visco	√		
		Christina Warchut	√		
		Matt Wilson (Secretary)	√		
		√=present	R=regrets		

- I. **CALL TO ORDER** – PC President, Barbara Meyer **7:00 PM**
- II. **OPENING PRAYER** – Father LeBlanc
- III. **REVIEW MINUTES** of **September 26, 2024** – All
 - Barbara Meyer provided a markup of the minutes. Jim Castellani made a motion to accept the September 26, 2024 minutes with Barbara’s changes, Paul Kriksciun seconded the motion, and the minutes were approved with changes unanimously by voice vote.
- IV. **PARISHIONERS’ COMMENTS** – All
 - Peter Yorio heard concerns about loud conversations in sanctuary now that the tabernacle is in the sanctuary. Father LeBlanc said he would follow up.
 - Barbara Meyer said that there has been a change in the prayer candle offering box in the Blessed Virgin Mary Chapel.
 - Barbara Meyer said that she heard a positive comment about the 3rd All Souls Event.
 - Helena Thomas noted that the Spaghetti Dinner is the same night as the Tree Lighting/Fireworks.
 - Julie Groene heard positive comments about the coffee after Mass.
 - Peter Yorio said that after reading the ministry and committee reports, he wanted to thank all the ministry and committee members for all the good work they are doing.
- V. **DEACON’S COMMENTS** – None
- VI. **PASTOR’S COMMENTS** – Father LeBlanc
 - Father LeBlanc went to confirmation at the Cathedral, and it was very nice that the confirmation class got to see all the other young people from other parishes.
 - Last Summer Father LeBlanc called to ask Archbishop Coyne to visit St John Fisher. The earliest available date was December 15th. However, Archbishop Coyne couldn’t come on December 15th because of a retreat for vocations at Holy Family, and had to reschedule on the Feast of the Epiphany, January 5th.
 - The portraits of Pope Francis and Archbishop Coyne were moved to the vestibule.

- The goal for St John Fisher's Parish was to raise \$51,000 for the Archbishop's Annual Appeal, but we raised \$62,000.

VII. **OLD BUSINESS** – All

- Barbara Meyer said that we are trying to change the Parish Council by-laws to make youth members voting members.
- Parish Council Communication – Barbara Meyer said that she is creating a flyer to put in the bulletin to communicate about the Parish Council. It will list the Parish Council members and their contact information. There are two options:
 1. Make it an end-of-the-year wrap up, emphasizing the “Year of the Eucharist,” or
 2. In January, welcome to the new theme.

Peter Yorio said he liked the idea of an end-of-the-year wrap up, mentioning the movement of the tabernacle as part of the Year of the Eucharist.

Barbara suggested that Parish Council members could wear name tags and serve as greeters or attend the coffee in January.

Julie Groene said that late December was too busy, and we should keep the wrap-up, but do it in January.

Barbara also suggested a photo board of Parish Council members, and that we could invite people to attend meetings.

Paul Kriksciun suggested that we summarize ministry/committee work, and focus on one ministry/committee each week in the bulletin, and include the website link.

- Welcoming Parishioners Back – Barbara Meyer said we have multiple contact lists (Christmas Card list, registered parishioners list, etc.). Many people are double listed. We are in the process of editing the list, e.g., removing people for whom the Christmas cards were returned, removing people we know left town, etc. Barbara suggested sending out postcards, or a stuffer in the bulletin at Christmas masses with welcoming message.

Peter Yorio suggested sending a postcard announcing upcoming events such as the Spaghetti Dinner, Archbishop Coyne's visit. Include a message saying we would love to see you, and/or come see what is going on.

VIII. **NEW BUSINESS** – All

- Cindy Bryan said that after coffee beginning at 11:30 on Sunday, November 24th, there will be wreath making, advent calendar making, puzzles, games, etc.
- Barbara Meyer sent an email to ministry/committees to call or text Todd Gianetti's cell to let him know what events are happening in the Parish hall, and if set-up or clean-up is needed.
- Theme for 2025 – “Pilgrims of Hope” is the focus for the Jubilee Year. Helena Thomas suggested “I Put My Trust in You.”

Chris Warchut asked if 2025 is the 50th anniversary of the Parish. The first efforts to organize a parish began in June 1972. The Parish was granted Parish status in 1974. Groundbreaking was May 11, 1975, and the church was dedicated November 29, 1975.

IX. **COMMITTEE/MINISTRY REPORTS**

PASTORAL CARE

- **Christian Outreach Updates** - Barbara Meyer from November 2024 Christian Outreach Report:
 - Nancy Gianetti coordinated the **September Sunday Supper at St. Vincent dePaul** where a complete meatloaf dinner to serve approximately 120 was provided by our parishioners - cooked,

baked, prepped and served. We have two dates scheduled for 2025 (April and September) where Diane Borganier with partner with Nancy in leading these efforts.

- Donna Sawan coordinated a very successful **"Make-A-Difference Day" ARC Blood Drive** in October. The amount of blood that was collected exceeded the requirement the ARC needed to make the event effective and they were very pleased that our first blood drive in this location was such a success - not normal for a first time site offering. There are two blood drives scheduled for 2025 - March and October. This blood drive was in honor and memory of Bill Beyerly who passed this year and was a lifetime donor.
- John Noel is managing the **Thanksgiving Food Drive** to benefit the Marlborough Food Bank. John provided bags with items listed for return to church last week and this week(end). There were 70 bags distributed - an increase in the number asked for last year.
- **All Soul's Remembrance Mass and Reception** was held this past Sunday at 10:30 Mass. It was a lovely, touching and meaningful event for all those who lost loved ones this past year. The reception included personalized cards (made by various parishioners and youth artists), given to the families that represented the lives of those who passed. This is the 3rd year SJF has held this event and it remains one that is so enriching for all involved.
- **Christmas Cards to the Bereaved and Ill** will be written and sent the beginning of December. Gale Busemeyer seeks out intentional messaging on cards that "speak" to the hearts of those who are tender - either in grief or in dealing with personal health issues. Sabrina Paradise coordinates this event for the committee.
- The **Christmas Giving Program** will be up the first weekend of Advent (Nov 30/Dec1) and run for 2 weeks with gifts distributed to the organizations shortly thereafter. Projected organizations are: Marlborough Healthcare and By the River, Journey Home, Protectors of Animals, Sacred Sweats (linkage with women released from incarceration), St. Vincent dePaul and Caring Families (same organization we supported with the Baby Shower in May).
- **Monthly events continue** - sandwich making for and delivery to St. Vincent dePaul (Nov and Dec are off months) and weekly food drive for the Marlborough Food Bank.

- **Community Garden** – No report until Spring.
- **Lending Library and Book Club** – Barbara Gaudette from November 2024 Lending Library Committee report
 - The SJF Lending Library Committee continues to process donations. We recently updated the "catalog" list of over 700 books. This list is available in the library. As sponsors of the SJF Book Club (with 19 members) we will discuss The Christmas Train by David Baldacci Wednesday, December 11, 2024. New members are always welcome.
- **Comfort and Warmth (Prayer Shawl) Ministry** – Mary Horrigan from November 2024 Prayer Shawl Ministry report
 - The crocheted baskets we made from scrap yarn are offered for sale in the Marlborough Arts Center's Gift and Art Sale until December 8. Proceeds will be used to purchase yarn for prayer shawls and Baptismal blankets.
 - On Saturday, November 17, five of our members participated in a Fiber Artists Retreat at Holy Family Retreat Center in West Hartford

LITURGICAL

- **Altar Serving Ministry** – No report
- **Ministers of Communion** – Peter Yorio from September 2024 Ministers of Communion report

- Home and Infirm Visits – Marlborough Health and Rehab Center is back on our Friday visit schedule. We also continue with our weekly visits to the By The River and have three home bound individuals that we visit each week.
- We continue with a 5 person/team rotation for the Ministers of Communion coverage:
 1. First Friday on the month, Melissa Jordan/Jen O'Neill,
 2. Second Friday of the month, Sue Hurley.
 3. Third Friday of the month, Peter Yorio.
 4. Fourth Friday of the month, Tom Reiser.
 5. Barbara Myers covers the 5th Friday of the month, when they occur.
- We are still looking for another volunteer or two to assist our team. Please let Tom Reiser or Pete Yorio know if you can assist.

- **Liturgical Committee** – Barbara Meyer from November 2024 Miscellaneous Updates
 - Great progress on the new multi-purpose chapel - with continued thanks to Pete Y., George and Carol Bartok, Jim C., Annie and Tony Mariano and Jean Jacques - please note the newly installed acoustic panels to allow the room to be used for meetings, the newly covered and repaired kneelers, enhancements to the prayer candle display, new lighting being installed and ease of viewing Mass from the room (with speakers able to hear the Mass with doors closed) for those who decide to "take a break" with their children before returning to Mass. The latter is yet to be communicated until the chapel enhancements are complete and the "multi-purpose" usage can be communicated fully.
 - Archbishop Coyne's visit and celebration of 10:30 Mass on December 15th - efforts continue to ready our church and prepare the "flow" of the Mass for all those who will be participating in the service. Chris Warchut is coordinating the reception to follow in our hall.

- **Reader and Greeter Ministry** – Julie Groene from November 2024 Report
 - As of 11/18/24, there are 16 readers and 10 greeters. Moving into the new year, there is a need to recruit for this ministry with a focus to encourage teens to read and families to consider greeting.

- **Music Ministry** – Janice Reska from November 2024 Music Ministry Report
 - Our Adult Choir continues to rehearse on Wednesday nights and sing at alternating Sunday masses. We now have twelve individuals who belong to the Adult Choir, although two of them are currently on leave due to medical issues.
 - The choir will soon begin rehearsing for Advent, Archbishop Coyne's visit on December 15, and Christmas masses. This year, the Adult Choir will be singing for the 4:00 Christmas Eve mass and the Young People's Choir will sing a few songs before mass begins. It may be a challenge getting someone to sing for the 9:00 Christmas Eve mass.
 - I have been working with Carlos Pina for the past two months to improve the quality of our sound. Microphones have been hung above the choir, a defective component for our sound system was replaced, the microphone at the pulpit was replaced, and the overall sound was balanced to eliminate any feedback. We still need to extend the microphones above the choir further out, and purchase a new condenser microphone using the funds donated by the Wilcox family this past summer. Since Carlos is volunteering his time at no charge to the church, I have to be patient with his availability, but am very grateful for the many hours that he has spent on this project to date.

EDUCATION & FAITH DEVELOPMENT

- **Faith Formation (Grades K,1,3,4,5,6)** – Cindy Bryan from November 2024 Faith Formation Report
 - We started our first family session the first Saturday of October. We had 13 of 22 children attend with their parents. Our Thursday session had 16 of 22 children in attendance. The new program, Finding God, seems to be well received. Our first session was an invitation to form a relationship with God. On Thursday of the third week, we divided the children by age to have a more targeted learning. They

were all very engaged in the activities. It's a nice feeling when the parents come to pick up that they want to stay a little longer.

- On the first Saturday of this month, we discussed Jesus, his life, teachings, and his death. What it all means for us and how we can honor him every day by the way we live. The children were asked to add a small basket to their prayer tables and each day write down something they are thankful for. Each child was also given 2 small Jesus. They had a card attached that says, "Everyone needs a little Jesus". They could keep one for themselves if they so choose. After all, everyone needs a little Jesus! The second, they were asked to pray that God will guide them to give it to someone that could use a little Jesus too. Then continue to pray for that person. And lastly, they made good deed fish with activities and were supposed to pick one each day and act on it.
- Our Thursday will be dedicated to fulfilling our requirement by the Archdiocese to present a Safe Child program to the students. The 7th and 8th grade had their session on Sunday, November 10.
- Both groups are hosting the Advent Event on Sunday, Nov. 24 from 1130-330. We will be making simple advent wreaths, advent calendar chains, a Jesse Tree, a table for children who would like to create a poster for Keep Christ in Christmas, and "Pockets full of Love" for the convalescent home. The pocket will have a Christmas card as well as affirmations for the seniors to read. The Advent wreath making is open to all parishioners. We will also have snacks throughout the day.

2nd Grade and 9th Grade Faith Formation – Helena Thomas from November 2024 report

- 2nd Grade Sacramental Year: We currently have 11 children enrolled in the 2nd grade sacramental year Faith Formation program (we have added a few more since the last meeting). We've had five classes so far: 9/24, 10/8, 10/22, 11/5 and 11/19.

The children are again utilizing the 2nd Grade We Believe "Jesus Shares God's Life" book by Sadlier which begins with Jesus and His Church, the Sacraments and Commandments, more specifics on the Sacrament of Reconciliation and Holy Eucharist, and further progresses with the Mass, how the Church lives today, and how we honor Blessed Mary and the saints. There will also be seasonal instruction during class for Advent, Christmas, Lent, and Easter. The first three-quarters of class is instructional, and the last quarter is an activity that enforces what the children have learned. I've received a lot of positive feedback last year with this book; so far, the parents are happy with it and like taking it home so they can do the homework together with their child. Both parent and child are learning this way.

After each chapter, there are exercises to complete. The children will receive a sticker on their Homework Sheet at the following class for homework completion. Also, they have a Prayer Sheet and each time they say the Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory Be, and Act of Contrition, they color in a smiley face. The children ask many questions during class and show that they are eager to learn about God.

At the 11/19 class, the children brought in gifts to fill Operation Christmas Child boxes. They really enjoyed doing this and coloring a Let's Be Friends worksheet.

- 9th Grade Confirmation Year: We currently have 11 teens enrolled in the first year of Confirmation prep (we have added a few more since the last meeting). We've had five classes so far: 9/21, 10/6, 10/20, 11/10 and 11/17.

I'm continuing the same program I established last year. The program is designed to start the teens thinking about why they are here (more than going through the motions to receive Confirmation because their parents told them they have to), refresh their memories of the 10 Commandments, Sacraments, what is sin (difference between venial and mortal sin), more about Blessed Mary and the Rosary, the Beatitudes, Mass components, and then progress to Jesus' promise of the Holy Spirit, Gifts and Fruits of the Holy Spirit and their meanings, preparing to live their new commitment to Jesus, celebrating the Holy Spirit in our lives, and finally what it means to live what will be celebrated in Confirmation.

After each class, I hand out information about at least one saint for the kids to take home. I also hand out a Challenge of the Week sheet which will challenge the kids to do something faith related like

start a prayer journal at home, pray the Rosary, do an act of kindness, to just name a few. Each week has several new faith challenges for them to choose from.

We've had one service event on Nov. 10 which was Operation Christmas Child. Between 2nd grade and 9th grade, almost 50 boxes were filled! All boxes will be dropped off at the Colchester drop off site later this week.

Also, the 9th and 10th grade Confirmation class will assist Cindy at the Advent Event this Sunday, Nov. 24.

10th Grade Confirmation Year – Helena Thomas from November 2024 report

- The 10th graders celebrated the Sacrament of Confirmation on November 3 at the Cathedral of St. Joseph. Afterwards, parents commented on how beautiful the Mass was as well as the Cathedral. For many, it was their first time at our Cathedral. See photo in Attachment 1.

Youth Ministry – Helena Thomas from November 2024 report

- There are four dates set-up for the Faith Formation year. Unfortunately, we had to cancel our first one scheduled for November 9 due to non-participation. Our next one originally was scheduled for December 14 from 5:30 to 7:00 but since this day the hall will be set-up for the following day reception celebrating Archbishop Coyne, our youth will assist with serving at the Spaghetti Dinner on December 7 instead. Right now, I only have three teens committed to assisting but it's still early.
- **Order of Christian Initiation for Adults/Adult Confirmation** — Jim Castellani from November 2024 Report
 - OCIA: Assisted one candidate from South Windsor with locating an OCIA group in her area.
 - Adult Confirmation - Two active participants
 - There are two cycles yearly in the Archdiocese, SPRING and FALL. Completed studies with TWO Adult Confirmation candidates, a father-and-son duo, Alex (father) and Joseph (son) Lombardi both living in Marlborough and parishioners of St. John Fisher Church.
 - Both attended the Adult Confirmation service at the Cathedral of St. Joseph, Archdiocese of Hartford, on Wednesday, November 6, 2024 at 7:00 PM. I stood as sponsor to Alex and Cathy Castellani stood in as the proxy sponsor for Joseph whose fiancé wished to be his sponsor but lives in Mexico. The ceremony celebrants included Archbishop Coyne and Bishop Betancourt. The class included 97 confirmandi. The Spring Adult Confirmation service will be scheduled some time in May 2025.
 - Announcements have been submitted to the parish bulletin, website and Facebook page. A photo will be posted in the vestibule.

ADMINISTRATIVE

- **Finance Council** – No report.
- **Maintenance Committee** – Peter Yorio
 - Peter Yorio said that the fire panel is not calling out. The detectors are working, and the alarms will sound, but the panel will not call out emergency response services. Peter said we got a state grant to fix the panel up front.
- **Communications/Social Media** – no report
- **Web Ministry** – No report

PARISH LIFE

- **Social Committee** – Christina Warchut from November 2024 Social Committee Report
 - Coffee Hour is continuing. Attendance varies. Many people who come are grateful for the time to share and socialize.
 - The Spaghetti Dinner is December 6. There seem to be many conflicts with the date. Ticket sales were very slow the first weekend. After Deacon John made an announcement at 10:30 Mass, more tickets were sold. Sale of tickets will continue for the next two weekends. We need to make sure announcements continue.
 - The reception for Archbishop Coyne is still in the planning stage. Signup sheets for baked goods and finger foods will be set out the weekend of November 30-December 1.
- **Knights of Columbus** – Carlos Pina from November 2024 report
 - SJF Lighting – “Thank you” again to 3C Electric Systems (Carlos and Pedro Cristovao) for expanding electrical service in the front of the church and out to the street sign. Pedro is Chancellor of Council 15734. Wiring was completed during the week of 11/11/2024.
 - Acoustic Panels in the BVM Adoration Chapel – The Knights have contributed to the installation of acoustical, sound-control panels to be installed in the chapel.
 - Lights on the Green, December 7, 2024 – The Knights will again offer a FREE POPCORN stand during the lighting of the Christmas Tree & fireworks on the Town Green.
 - 2024 KofC Scholarship – Winners have been selected and communications are being organized.
 - Knights Annual Coat Drive – Held November 2, 2024. The drive was very successful.
 - Keep Christ in Christmas 2024 – Poster Contest is currently ongoing.
 - KofC Ornaments are for sale – Ask any Knight.
 - JOIN THE KNIGHTS – Contact Carlos Pina or any Knight. Informational materials are available in the vestibule.
- **Men’s Prayer Group** – Jim Castellani from November 2024 report
 - Regular Gatherings - We continue to meet in-person the 1st Thursday (7pm) and 3rd Saturday (7am) of each month. (NOTE: Meetings continue throughout the year.) Contacts - All are welcome to participate, just contact Jim Castellani or Pete Yorio to get on the mailing list or to have questions answered about the Group.
 - Christmas Lights – I’ve been unavoidably delayed in coordinating the installation of this year’s outdoor Christmas lights display. I will have the Advent lights installed before November 30, 2024. I will coordinate with the Men and the Knights a time to decorate the trees and shrubs.
 - Bookmarks and Mission Cards – Both of these are located at the Exits of the church and are FREE to take. The latest bookmark offers the encouraging statement – “The Messiah is among you.”
 - Join the Men’s Group - Just come to any session and see if the experience is or you. God Bless.
- **Women’s Prayer Group** – Barbara Meyer from November 2024 report
 - A group of 20 active members meet each month to pray together and discuss the current book we are reading together. The new book is Mary, Teach Me to Be Your Daughter which will guide our discovery and reflection for the next year (12 chapters, one chapter a month). We continue to meet the last Tuesday of each month (Nov and Dec are earlier meeting times due the holidays).

- X. **NEXT MEETING** - Thursday, **January 16, 2025** (7:00-8:30 PM)
Email Committee Reports to the Parish Council email list by **January 9, 2025**
- XI. **ADJOURNMENT** – **8:30 PM**
- XII. **CLOSING PRAYER** – Offered by Deacon Bill Gilles

Attachment 1
Sacrament of Confirmation on November 3 at the Cathedral

