



## St. John Fisher - Parish Council

### Minutes from Meeting – March 20, 2025

Parish Staff/Trustees		Parish Council		Other Attendees	
<b><u>Ex officio</u></b>		Jim Castellani	√	Carlos Pina	√
Rev. Alvin J. LeBlanc	√	Pedro Cristavao	√		
Sr. Dcn. Em. John McKaig	R	Barbara Gaudette	√		
Dcn. Bill Gilles	R	Tim Geary	√		
Marlene Luebeck (Trustee)	√	Nancy Gianetti	√		
Peter Yorio (Trustee)	√	Julie Groene	√		
<b><u>Non-voting</u></b>		Trevor Hooker	√		
Janice Reska (DMM)	√	Paul Kriksciun (Vice President)	√		
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, Father LeBlanc **6:56 PM**
- II. **OPENING PRAYER** – Father LeBlanc
- III. **REVIEW MINUTES** of **January 23, 2025** – All
  - Barbara Meyer provided a markup of the minutes. Jim Castellani made a motion to accept the January 23, 2025 minutes with Barbara's changes, Paul Kriksciun seconded the motion, and the minutes were approved with changes by voice vote with an abstention from Nancy Gianetti because she was not at the January meeting.
- IV. **PARISHIONERS' COMMENTS** – All
  - Jim Castellani said that he noticed new people, some of whom were young, attending. Jim said that thousands attended the March for Life. The Most Reverend Frank Caggiano, Bishop of the Bridgeport Diocese, gave the invocation.
  - Paul Kriksciun said that a parishioner told him that the most valuable part of attending was the homily, and that their child is pleased with the Confirmation process (thanks, Helena!)
  - Barbara Meyer said that Midge Lenihan will be taking over the Welcome Ministry, and the efforts to send out letters and make outreach calls.
  - Barbara Gaudette thanked Paul, Jim and Mike for visiting Rodney. Barbara said that she was at the library, and the librarian said about St John Fisher Parish, "You are close-knit."
- V. **DEACON'S COMMENTS** – Deacon Bill via Barbara Meyer
  - Deacon Bill will be offering Adult Faith Formation (Intro to Bible Study) during Lent.
  - Deacon John has retired from serving. He said he is not interested in a retirement party.
  - We will need Ministers of Communion to serve, so that Deacon Bill can offer the wine beginning the Sunday after Easter. It will probably stop in the Fall at the beginning of flu season.

- VI. **PASTOR'S COMMENTS** – Father LeBlanc
- Reconciliation will be offered on Mondays through Lent.
  - Father LeBlanc commended the efforts to connect with parishioners who have not been coming to Mass recently.
- VII. **OLD BUSINESS** – All
- Barbara Meyer said that a postcard went out Thursday, March 6<sup>th</sup> after Ash Wednesday. The next postcard will be before the Parish Picnic, which is on June 22<sup>nd</sup>, the Feast Day for St John Fisher and St Thomas More. This will mark the 50<sup>th</sup> year of the Parish.
  - Outreach to Parishioners (inactive and current) – Barbara Meyer reported that, in the continued effort to welcome parishioners back to Mass and to encourage additional involvement of current active parishioners, the following efforts were undertaken:
    - (1) a first postcard (in a series of what we think may be two this year) was sent to 615 Parish households using the Christmas card mailing list – it focused on our message of inclusion and the resulting feeling of belonging within our parish – to include the Lent and Easter schedule of events and Masses.
    - (2) Like we did at Christmas, we will have a bulletin stuffer at Easter to build on these messages and remind (welcome) those parishioners who may not be coming regularly, that we want and need them back with us (and what we have here to “welcome them home”).
    - (3) Additional outreach with warm and welcoming calls; and
    - (4) continued Adult Faith Formation programming to help those who are active to better speak of and demonstrate their faith (evangelization).
- VIII. **NEW BUSINESS** – All
- Barbara Meyer asked the following questions:
    1. Why do you come to Mass?
    2. Why St John Fisher?
    3. Why do you participate in ministries/committees?
    4. What do we offer that attracts you?
    5. For your life stage, what are your needs?
    6. What can we do better?
  - Why do you come to Mass at St John Fisher?
    - Marlene Luebeck said what attracted her was the community, and how Deacon John ended Mass with “Worship God by the life you lead.”
    - Father LeBlanc said that he liked the strong spirit of the singing and music. Janice Reska said she liked to listen to the congregation sing, and appreciated the spirit with which they sing.
    - Tim Geary liked the sense of community, how it was very welcoming, very active, and very special. He liked the music, the homilies, and the people.

- Marlene said that we have been blessed with very good Priests, who ensure that the message is not missing.
- Jim Castellani said that we have a nourishing environment, and that he feels a responsibility to come to Mass, but he also derives a benefit.
- Helena Thomas said that coming to Mass makes her feel close to God.
- Julie Groene said that if she misses Mass, it is like losing her blueprint; it is her GPS.
- Why do you get involved?
  - Julie Groene said there were three possible reasons: 1) If you were involved at your previous parish, you want to keep doing it; 2) You were asked; 3) You did it to meet people.
  - Jim Castellani said that the choir prays before practice and that the choir has gifts they are meant to share. Participating is doing the Lord's work, and there is a joy in service.
  - Trevor Hooker said he always wanted to greet, and if he had been asked earlier, he would have said yes.
- Why do teens come to Mass?
  - Trevor Hooker said coming to Mass is a way to get closer to God, and Mass is a check in point. He said he asks for guidance every week. He said that faith will always be a part of him, and that he sees faith as a gift rather than a burden.
  - Colin Tracey said that he likes the Parish because it is small, trusting, and loving. You have a lot of trust because the Pastor knows you.
  - Marlene Luebeck said that it has to be relevant to youth, and needs to answer their questions about how to be a better person.
- How can we do better?
  - Julie Groene said that we need more opportunities to speak about our faith, and to learn from others about their faith. There is a power in sharing personal stories about being a pilgrim.
  - Father LeBlanc said he was inspired by a show on EWTN called "Journey Home" that shared personal stories about faith.
  - Barbara Meyer asked if Parish Council members should wear name tags to encourage communication from parishioners. Nancy Gianetti suggested that greeters could wear nametags. Todd Gianetti said that he would order nametags.
  - Barbara Meyer said that the Women's Prayer Group got an idea from the Holy Family Retreat for each member of the Prayer Group to write a prayer and hand them out randomly at the end of each meeting – to be prayed during the month. Julie Groene said she felt that the prayer she received was the prayer she was supposed to get, and that the exercise showed what prayer looks like.

## **IX. COMMITTEE/MINISTRY REPORTS**

### **PASTORAL CARE**

- **Christian Outreach Updates** - Barbara Meyer from March 2025 Christian Outreach Report:

- ***We welcomed a new member, Theresa Brysgel***, who was our former Faith Formation Coordinator for K-8th grade. Theresa brings a wealth of experience in various outreach/activity initiatives both for our church (Coffee House music event, drive-through live Nativity, Chalk-the-Walk (parking lot) with inspiring messages during Covid, middle school nights, Easter egg hunts and drive about Easter decorations at homes) and the Marlborough/RHAM communities with the PTO (introduced and ran Trunk or Treat) and extensive involvement with sporting events. We are happy to have Theresa with us!
- ***Lent marks various opportunities for our parish –***
  - (1) Journey Home “Easter Baskets” filled with household/kitchen items and/or cleaning products;
  - (2) American Red Cross Blood Drive March 22nd – our 2nd time hosting in our hall, with a third drive scheduled for October 2025;
  - (3) Drive-Thru Café March 30th for the patrons of the Marlborough Foodbank;
  - (4) a Sunday Supper at St. Vincent dePaul in Middletown on April 27<sup>th</sup>; and
  - (5) continued weekly food drives and monthly sandwich making and collection.
- ***Prior to our May Parish Council Meeting –*** we will host
  - (1) a Baby Shower Mother’s Day weekend (May 10/11) to benefit Caring Families in Willimantic (a birth support organization helping young parents) and Sacred Sweeties (an initiative aligned with pregnant and new moms who are incarcerated); and
  - (2) our third and final Drive-Thru Café for this calendar year.
- ***We currently have 24 members and are always in need of new participants*** – we typically meet once a month, Sept – June (with December as a Christmas card writing gathering for the bereaved and June a social gathering to wrap up the season together).
- **Community Garden** – Peg Fillarmo from March 2025 Community Garden report.
  - The St. John Fisher Community Garden will be planting by early May and working there weekly by mid to late May on Monday evenings at five o’clock. Anyone is welcome to join in with us and help to grow and donate fresh produce to the Marlborough food bank. A few repairs are needed on the fence before we begin the 2025 season and my husband John plans to get those done.
- **Lending Library and Book Club** – Barbara Gaudette from March 2025 Lending Library Committee report
  - Flyer displays were placed at the entrances of the church to encourage parishioners to visit our Lending Library on their Lenten Journey. We sponsored the SJF Book Club meeting Wednesday, March 12, 2025 for a discussion of This Is Happiness by Niall Williams which is set in Ireland. Sixteen members attended this meeting which was enhanced by Mary Horrigan’s paintings of her trip to Ireland. In June we will discuss The Little Liar by Mitch Albom.
- **Comfort and Warmth (Prayer Shawl) Ministry** – Mary Horrigan from March 2025 Prayer Shawl Ministry report
  - We have distributed one Baptismal blanket and six Prayer Shawls during this quarter.

- We have received more donations of yarn. We are using some of the donated yarn to make “blanket squares” which will be given to the organization “Warm Up America,” that puts them together to make blankets. Crocheted baskets will be available during the coffee hour following this Sunday’s Masses.

## **LITURGICAL**

- **Altar Serving Ministry** – No report
- **Ministers of Communion** – Tom Geary and Peter Yorio from March 2025 Ministers of Communion report
  - Home and infirm Visits - We are bringing Communion weekly on Fridays to the Marlborough Health and Rehabilitation Center, both of the By The River facilities and four home-bound individuals. We also have another individual being served on Mondays.
  - 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 and Doug Meyer cover the 5th Friday of the month, when they occur.
  - We are in the process of adding another minister to the first through fourth weeks and should have these ministers onboard soon.
- **Liturgical Committee** – No report
- **Reader and Greeter Ministry** – Julie Groene from March 2025 Report
  - Current enrollment as of 3/17/25: 16 readers (+1) and 10 greeters
  - A warm welcome to Matt Wilson who agreed to be trained as a reader. He currently volunteers as part of the greeter ministry and is a welcome addition. The current quarter concludes March 30, 2025 and a new schedule will be forthcoming for Holy Week and the second quarter.
  - Adding readers and greeters remains a needed priority for the ministry.
- **Music Ministry** – Janice Reska from March 2025 Music Ministry Report
  - The adult choir has been rehearsing for Holy week services at our Wednesday evening choir practices. They will be singing on Palm Sunday, Holy Thursday, Good Friday, Easter Vigil, and Easter Sunday. It is a challenge to prepare for these special masses in addition to the weekly Sunday masses during our weekly rehearsals, but our choir has been working diligently to prepare. Their dedication is deeply appreciated.
  - We have recently gained one new choir member, Jim Henderschedt. Our Adult Choir is now comprised of 14 individuals. We are blessed to have these volunteers who are willing to give their time and their musical gifts to our church throughout the year.
  - Our sound system continues to present challenges. We recently experienced some issues with feedback and volume during mass, which Carlos Pina quickly addressed for us. However, there are still adjustments that need to be made to our sound so that it is balanced throughout the church.
  - It would be helpful to have one or two more cantors to assist with weekend masses. Currently, if one of the cantors is unavailable to sing on a specific date, the other two cantors have to cover

the masses. This issue becomes challenging during the summer when the adult choir typically does not sing and people go on vacation. We always welcome new cantors and choir members who are willing to serve in our music ministry.

## **EDUCATION & FAITH DEVELOPMENT**

- **Family Faith Formation (Grades K,1,3,4,5,6)** – Cindy Bryan from March 2025 Faith Formation Report
  - In January, We discussed what it means to be part of the Church community. How the Holy Spirit guides us to use our talents as part of the community- to share our time and talents with those in need. We went into depth on ways to live our faith. We explored ways we can participate more fully in the Mass- reading, greeting, altar serving, doing our best to listen and respond, singing the songs, sign of peace, respecting the presence of Jesus on the altar, present in the Eucharist. We also began a discussion of the Sacraments
  - In February we continued to discuss the 7 Sacraments. We went into depth on the meaning of each, -the Sacraments of Initiation- through Baptism we receive a new life in Christ, the Holy spirit strengthens us with Grace at Confirmation, and we strengthen our union with Christ when we receive the body and blood in the Eucharist; the sacraments of Service – Holy Orders, Matrimony; and Sacraments of Healing- Penance and reconciliation and anointing of the sick. When discussing Reconciliation and penance, we talked about ways we could make better choices. Father Al paid us a visit to answer questions from the children on the Sacrament of Holy orders, what a priest does, what it meant to him to become a priest and other more personal questions. The children enjoyed getting to know him a little better. For their home assignment, they were sent on a scavenger hunt looking for objects used during mass.
  - Our theme for March is the 10 Commandments and Lent. We listened to the story of Moses from the book of Exodus. God's rules remind us to be helpful, kind and truthful. They remind us to keep love of God and love of others as the center of our lives. When we face difficult decisions, we can look to the commandments and ask the Holy Spirit for guidance. Even if we make the wrong choice, we can ask for forgiveness and make things right. God still loves us no matter what. The children were sent home with a "color by number" picture. Each section of the picture is numbered with a corresponding activity of fasting, alms giving or prayer. Number one was to receive ashes on Ash Wednesday. The older children will also be hosting the Soup and Stations on April 11. This Thursday, we will practice and discuss the Stations using a new children's edition.
  - Thursday is our final children's session and Saturday April 5 is the final family session for the year.
  - Activities coming up are the Easter Egg-Stravaganza on Sunday April 13 after the 10:30 Mass, Chalk the Walk with Hope on Saturday April 12 and 13, and Summer Bible Camp August 4-8 with a theme of Super Heroes of the Bible. Any volunteers will be most welcomed!

### **2nd Grade and 9th Grade Faith Formation** – Helena Thomas from March 2025 report

- 2nd Grade Sacramental Year:
  - The 2nd Grade Faith Formation class received their 1st Reconciliation on January 18 beginning at 10:00am. Father Al heard all confessions. Two children (brothers) were not in attendance because they still had not received their Baptism. Both boys were baptized on Sunday, 3/16 and will receive their 1st Reconciliation in the near future prior to 1st Holy Communion Mass.
  - The 2nd Grade class is well on their way learning about Jesus in the Holy Eucharist with a strong emphasis on this truly being the Real Presence of Jesus – His Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity, when they receive the consecrated Host in Holy Communion, and the importance of receiving this sacrament regularly. The children also learned about the two main components of the Mass – Liturgy of the Word and Liturgy of the Eucharist

and the importance of actively participating and consciously listening during the Mass (as best they can). The children understand that we belong to a parish family and that we are all called by God to love and serve Him by imitating Jesus in our actions. Recently, we talked about Lent and the importance of preparing their hearts for Jesus' Resurrection by doing good deeds and showing love to their family and classmates.

- We are looking forward to a retreat on Saturday, April 12 for the children when they will practice receiving Holy Communion with unconsecrated hosts, make a family name banner for their pew, practice identifying the sacred vessels and other liturgical objects as we tour the church, a little coloring of Holy Eucharist sheets, practice singing "My Little Light of Mine," and finally enjoy some cake to celebrate this momentous occasion of receiving the Sacrament of the Eucharist for the first time! An actual rehearsal for the big day is planned for Friday, May 2, after school. The date for their 1st Holy Communion is May 3 at 10:00am. You are all cordially invited to join us!
- 9th Grade Confirmation Year:
  - On February 9, the 9th grade completed an additional Service Event which benefited the By the River residents. The teens assembled Valentine's Day gift bags and made Valentine's Day cards for the residents. Although the teens were asked to meet at By the River the following Saturday to meet and distribute the gift bags, unfortunately no one was able to do this. Instead, I met with the residents and distributed the gift bags on their behalf. I've included a few pictures of the residents receiving the gift bags below and thoughtful "thank you" notes from one of the residents and another card signed by the staff and residents. I really enjoyed my time socializing with them!
  - On March 9, the 9th grade completed another Service Event which benefited the homeless elderly residents at the St. Joseph's Residence run by the Little Sisters of the Poor in Enfield. They made St. Patrick Day cards with an uplifting Scripture verse inside concerning aging. The parents were very generous, giving multiple bags of chocolate candies to go with the cards. Chocolate is hard to come by according to Sister Caroline!
  - Our last Service Event of the year will be held following class instruction on April 27 that will benefit either House of Bread or ImmaCare.
  - On March 14, the teens hosted the Soup Supper and the Stations of the Cross. There were seven teens who were present from the Confirmation class, and they did a great job with the teen version of the Stations. The Soup Supper also went very well with plenty of soup and rolls (even fruit!) available for the parishioners who attended. In total, about 25 attended the Soup Supper and roughly 40 attended the Stations.
  - The teens are also planning another AHM Youth and Family Services bake sale after all Masses on March 22 and 23. We did this last year to help with the initiative to increase therapy services at AHM and it was a huge success! Based on how generous the Confirmation families have been thus far, I expect a large assortment of baked goods to sell and another successful bake sale!
  - The topics for the teens since last Parish Council meeting were: Action of the Holy Spirit and Gifts of the Holy Spirit, Meaning of the Signs of the Holy Spirit, Who is Jesus? Why be Catholic? Where am I going? Why go to Mass? the Mass Components and Meaning, Seven Virtues and Deadly Sins, and Lent. We only have two more classes remaining this year and the topics to be covered will be the Beatitudes, Works of Mercy, Preparing to live your New Commitment to the Church, Holy Week, and Easter.
  - We are looking forward to the Confirmation Retreat on April 6 at the Holy Family Retreat Center in West Hartford. The teens last year enjoyed it so we'll do the same for this year's Confirmation class.

### **Youth Ministry** – Helena Thomas from March 2025 report

- Our next one is scheduled for Saturday, March 29 from 5:30 to 7:30. I attended the Youth Ministry meeting for the teens at the Church of the Holy Family on Saturday night, March 15 to see how another parish conducts YM meetings. They have a nice and homey designated meeting spot at St. Columba in Columbia on Ct. 66. The meeting theme was the Theology of the Body and there were two young married couples talking about this subject along with the YM leaders, Lisa and Michael Ciarrocchi. There were eleven teens present from RHAM and other Catholic schools, Father Mike, and a mom (parents are welcome to stay). Lisa and Mike have graciously extended the invitation for STJF teens to attend their monthly YM meetings. I did inform our STJF teens about their most recent meeting but unfortunately no one was able to attend. Their next YM meeting is April 5 which I intend to attend hopefully with other STJF teens.
- **Order of Christian Initiation for Adults/Adult Confirmation** — Jim Castellani from March 2025 Report
  - OCIA: No activity. 4 Inquirers during 2024.
  - Adult Confirmation - No active participants

### **ADMINISTRATIVE**

- **Finance Council** – David Lenihan from March 2025 Finance Council report
  - Key financial information for the eight-months period 7/1/24 to 2/28/25:
    - The Finance Council continues to make the church's finances more visible and timelier by publishing weekly and YTD offertory collections (Goal versus Actual) and related variances.
    - Actual YTD Weekly offertory collections show a shortfall vs budget of about \$5,600
    - Thanks to the generosity of many parishioners, we exceeded the church's annual collection goal of \$58,000 by approximately \$6,200. These included two very generous donations from the Wilcox and Tracey families that fully paid for painting of the church.
    - On the expense side, we are over budget in our church repair and maintenance account by \$12,500 primarily due \$4,300 in unexpected HVAC repairs and a planned expenditure of \$10,000 for the painting of the exterior of the church.
    - Total expenditures are over budget by about \$11,600.
- **Maintenance Committee** – Peter Yorio
  - We have secured a grant for infrastructure security to install cameras outside, including at the office door.
- **Communications/Social Media** – no report
- **Web Ministry** – No report

### **PARISH LIFE**

- **Social Committee** – Christina Warchut from March 2025 Social Committee Report
  - Coffee Hour will be held on March 23. The last Coffee Hour this year will be April 27.



- We have decided to hold the Spring Tea. It will be on May 4 from 1:00-3:00. Tickets are available in the Church Office and will be sold after Masses except for Easter Weekend. The cost is \$10.00 per person.
- The Parish Picnic will be held on June 22 from 12:00-3:00. Sign up sheets will be at the church entrances after Memorial Day. We will be requesting set up, grilling and clean up help. Also, asking Parishioners to bring side dishes and desserts.
  
- **Knights of Columbus** – Jim Castellani from March 2025 report
  - 2024 KofC Scholarship – March 31, 2025 deadline. Program Chairman is Frank Daudish. See the parish website for details.
  - New brother Knight      New brother Knight and parishioner of St. John Fisher – Andre Lepine and fiancée Cori.
  - "MARCH FOR LIFE" CONNECTICUT
    - Wednesday, March 19, 2025 at the Capitol
    - 10:30 AM MASS FOR LIFE at the Cathedral of St. Joseph
    - 11:00 AM PRE-RALLY Concert at the State Capitol
    - 12:00pm RALLY
    - 1:00pm MARCH- around Bushnell Park.
    - Marshaled by the Knights of Columbus
    - Speakers Include:
      - The Most Reverend Frank Caggiano, Bishop of Bridgeport Diocese
      - Patrick E. Kelly, Supreme Knight of KofC International
    - PLEASE ATTEND
    - REGISTER: at <https://marchforlife.org/connecticut/> (requested but not necessary)
  - JOIN THE KNIGHTS – Contact Carlos Pina or any Knight. Informational materials are available in the vestibule.
  
- **Men's Prayer Group** – Jim Castellani from March 2025 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.
  - Stations-of-the-Cross – Very successful rite this year. 15 men from the Men's Group, the Knights and men of the parish processed through the Station's rite. 49 people were in attendance. The Seder Soup Supper went very well, as well with 29 people joining us. Pete Y was able to link in Rodney and Julie Madore from their home via cell phone. Thank you, Pete!
  - 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."

- **Women's Prayer Group** – Barbara Meyer from March 2025 report

- X. **NEXT MEETING** - Thursday, **May 22, 2025 (7:00-8:30 PM)**  
Email Committee Reports to the Parish Council email list by **May 15, 2025**

XII. **CLOSING PRAYER** – Offered by Father LeBlanc