

St. Gaspar Family of Parishes, August 27, 2024
Unified Parish Council (UPC) and Unified Finance Council (UFC) Meeting
Gathered at 6:30 PM at St. Joseph Parish Center

This is the first meeting of the newly formed group of people representing the six parishes in the St. Gaspar Family of Parishes. It consists of staff members and two representatives each for Council and two representatives for Finance from St. Joseph, Holy Trinity, Emmanuel, St. Rita, Precious Blood and St. Paul. As we move forward together, we are tasked with cooperating to eventually become one Canonical Parish of St. Gaspar.

Attending Staff Members: Fr. Tony Fortman, Christopher Lockhart, Joe Hurr, Matt Ruttle, Marianne Pitts, Sue Seibert and Joan Macpherson.

Attending Council Members: Kathy Wirrig, Mark Casdorff, Michael Boyd, Tom Scarpelli, Brad Thobe, Becky Chestnut, Joyce Bachman, Jerri Mechenbier

Attending Finance Members: Rita Zimmerman, Sherry Boyd, Melissa Grant, Bob Chodkowski, Amy Weideman, Kevin Brown, Michael Lee, John Kettler

Fr. Tony Fortman led us in prayer to begin this meeting. People introduced themselves. Fr. Tony began with his aim to meet every 6 weeks and to limit the meetings to 1.5 hours each. He emphasized that this is a process in navigating through changes that need to occur. It will take time and a willingness to cooperate for the benefit of each parish: "different houses, same family". We need to decide if we want to meet as a combined group and then break out into Council and Finance groups, keeping the meetings to one night. Or, we meet separately as the Unified Parish Council one night and the Unified Finance Council on another night. As discussion continued during the meeting, it was decided that we should all meet together and break out into the Parish Council and Finance groups.

Fr. Tony gave definitions of the roles of Parish Council and Finance Council:

Parish Council: Parish governance including pastoral council. Laity are sharers of governance, fostering the pastoral role. They are a consultative group. The Pastor role is pastoral care and to approve parish council decisions. Parish Council functions according to the needs of the parishes and acts as a voice for their needs and concerns. Each member brings different spiritual gifts to contribute.

Finance Council aids the Pastor in the administration of goods, within the norm of Canon Law. It should contain at least 4 members, but no more than 10. For now, Fr. Tony wants at least 2 people from each parish, in case one is sick, and to aid in sharing the responsibility. The Pastor appoints members, who are active members and have expertise in finance and law. These members cannot be related to the priest. Information discussed at meetings cannot be used to create conflict among the parishes in the family.

The Pastor is not a member of either group and does not vote, but presides over meetings. Associate Pastors can have input, but cannot vote. The terms for either the Parish Council or the Finance Council are 3-year terms. These can be staggered. If there is a new Pastor, the terms for members can be extended by one year to help with the transition.

One person mentioned Roberts Rules of Order and whether or not we would employ that practice? Fr. Tony thinks that we could use that format if everyone agrees. Another person mentioned that a quorum is needed to place a vote on a particular issue. Another question is: how do we create agendas?

As a group, we need to decide how minor and major decisions are to be made. At some point, we may need a way to address problems more broadly and publicly among the parishioners.

There will be no more individual parish councils. Representatives for the six different parishes will need to bring problems & concerns to the Unified Parish Council. Per Fr. Tony, committees can continue to meet in the different parishes, if they choose to, but cannot vote on major things. Every parish will have to discern this. Fr. Tony is not in favor of long meetings out of respect of each member's time, and asked us to consider if we should concentrate our meeting discussions to 3 parishes at a time, or all six at once during meetings? Each parish will have to decide what issues are important and what needs attention immediately, or longer-term. It was voiced that a lot of issues will probably come from the staff who will hear about needs from maintenance, committees, volunteers, other staff and parishioners. Representatives from one parish said that they have formed ministries for services, education and social action. They want to gather to keep implementing projects and services that are already in place. Fr. Tony understands that need, but is asking us to move toward bringing these concerns to the wider group. Not all characters and moving parts are known right now. What will be our support system going forward? The archdiocese has given permission for a new creation that will allow streamlining and simplicity in the newly formed families of parishes.

One person asked if we should create a Mission and Vision Statement? Fr. Tony spoke about the Next Generation Parish/Catholic Leadership Institute that has met for the last 7 months with a representative group from each parish to work on this. The group has formulated a vision, mission, pillars and goals. Implementation of these need to occur in the next 2 years, by 2027. The Envision team will turn over these items to an Implementation team to bring them to life. One of the biggest challenges is continuous communication. How will the UPC disseminate information to each parish? One of the Pillars formulated, addresses communication and transparency among parishes within the family. Becky Chestnut, who served on the Envision team, offered these goals developed for the St. Gaspar Family of Parishes:

Purpose: To be diverse and welcoming communities.

Vision: To be vibrant places of worship, to effect dignity in humanity, to serve the wider community.

Mission: To proceed with Faith, Service and Integrity.

Priorities:

- Encounter: to help people form a life-long relationship with Jesus, through daily prayer and adoration of the Eucharist, for example
- Unity: help people of all ages and stages of life
- Faith Formation: religious education offerings from youth to adult
- Communication: implement effective dissemination of news with transparency and fairness to individual parishes

Sue Seibert addressed Stewardship, as she recently attended a meeting for that purpose. She related that the first goal for all six parishes needs to be *hospitality* to welcome and engage people to try to enable more evangelizing. She asked for UPC members to give her names of parishioners who have that talent.

One of the UFC members asked about how we might show respectfulness for each of the parishes with regard to finances. How do we support each parish? What is the basic plan? What do members need to know to prepare for meetings? Joe Hurr addressed this:

- Question proposals carefully and make decisions according to what expenses make fiscal sense
- Share and review each parishes financial statements to help all the parishes function well
- Monies from the 6 parishes *will not* be conjoined at this time. All accounting will remain separate for each parish.

Eventually, we will become one Canonical Parish. UFC will see financial statements for all 6 parishes and can formulate rules and guidelines for ways to make financial decisions for the family of parishes. This will need to be a collective effort. Currently, any expense of \$25,000 or more has to have the approval of the Diocese. Per Fr. Tony, this will be a slow and arduous process, of which we are the carvers and formers.

Joe Hurr and John Kettler addressed Mother Brunner School. It is part of the St. Gaspar Family of Parishes. Precious Blood funds the school. Almost no Catholic schools make a profit and need subsidies. The school is very important to the community, as there isn't growth in Trotwood. Funds come from the State of Ohio, the Federal Government, from benefactors and from tuition, and each source has its own requirements. One of the benefactors recently passed away, but the family is still committed to helping fund the school. For the students, most of whom are not Catholic, this gives them an environment for learning that they might not otherwise have. The philosophy involves forming better citizens for a better future. This is evangelization in action, where we are helping children and families in a very real way. Religion is taught every day. Although most of the kids are raised Evangelical Baptist, it is hoped that some of the kids educated at Mother Brunner School will eventually help "fill the pews" of the church.

Fr. Tony is assigned to the St. Gaspar Family of Parishes for the next 5 years. His job is to make sure that parishioners understand the Gospel message. He asked for, and was given time, to get to know people in the 6 different parishes. Fr. Tony feels that this has helped him consider leadership positions in a more meaningful way. He asked if we were willing to pray for each other to help our mission on the road to becoming the St. Gaspar Family of Parishes?

After some discussion of people's schedules, it was decided that we try to meet at a regular time. Wednesdays seemed the most workable day of the week. The next meeting of the Combined UPC and UFC is at St. Joseph Parish Center at 6:30 PM on 10-16-24.

Volunteer Secretary,

Kathy Wirrig