

Come to the Water ACC Pastoral Council Meeting
Church of St. Mary, Alexandria, MN
January 27, 2026

Present: Fr. Dan Ruprecht, Todd Wentworth, Mike Ponicki, Darcy Thesing, Nathan Eisel, Veronica Haavig, Leon Breun, Rodney Roers, Dan Eckstein, Adrian Panther, Mark Maloney, Craig Hight, Tonya Marthaler, Marianne Shrode, Bev Paul, and Carol Gaffaney. Guest: Josh Waltzing. Absent: Fr. Matthew Kuhn, Josiah Aultman and Maria Lopau.

1. Meeting called to order at 6:00 for St. Mary's representatives and 6:30 for the full council.
2. Opening Prayer. Potluck meal was enjoyed by council members.
3. Meeting minutes from December 9, 2025 were approved.
4. Individual Standing Committee Reports were reviewed with the following additions:
 - Adoration- **(Josiah)** No report.
 - Board of Education- (Mike) reviewed their meeting minutes. There will be a winter activity at Geneva Bible Camp on the Tuesday after Easter (no school for St. Mary's School [SMS] students that day). Multi-tiered school tuition consideration will be deferred to at least the 2026-27 school year. More work needs to be done. Troy has a list of parish families with eligible kindergarteners. Members volunteered to reach out to them. Kindergarten and 6th grade enrollment timelines – first week in February. Two former SMS students (currently at Discovery Middle School) will come and talk to current 5th graders.
 - Cemetery- **(Dan and Mike)** have no new updates
 - Evangelization- (Rodney) No meetings yet.
 - Finance- **(Leon)** Discussion on the shortfall in the retirement pension fund. Todd Wentworth is on the Diocesan committee working on this. **(ICC)** Budget and offerings are going well; doing upgrades at the convent building to prepare a chapel for Eucharistic Adoration there. **(Mike)** Approved the roof project and going to do a subset of masonry restoration work as well; will be using a lift for both of those projects. The roof will look the same as the steeple; can still have Mass during this period as they will work around our Mass schedule. Discussed social outreach options and stewardship as a way of life.
 - Liturgy- **(Adrian)** Volunteers are needed in these ministerial areas: EMHC, altar servers, and hospitality. Received an update on safety measures. Will assist ICC in starting regularly scheduled Eucharistic Adoration. **(Bev)** Updating occurring in the chapel in the former convent so they can begin scheduling weekly Eucharistic Adoration; aiming for the first Friday in Lent. They are meeting with Parker Olson regarding Lenten planning. New railings have been put up in the church. **(Mike)** Talked about the number of musicians at SN. Parker and Erin are giving piano lessons, so we're establishing a sort of a pipeline for future piano players for our ACC. Talked about replacing priest vestments for SN. They

are expensive, but so many of the existing vestments are ready to be retired that we are starting conversations about buying new sets. Also talked about ordering higher quality incense to minimize discomfort among parishioners. Starting lent preparations and will meet again on March 3rd to talk about Holy Week planning.

- Stewardship- **(Marianne)** Annual Stewardship Renewal being planned: February 7-8 - Father Matthew will give a kickoff message; February 15 – parishioner family witness talks; and February 22 - commitment weekend. KCs are planning a party for altar servers at the Bowling Barn. **(Veronica)** Time & Talent ministry sign-up scheduled after 8:30 mass on February 8; coffee and rolls included. Having a community dinner with a church in Carlos on February 22, 12:30-2pm. Reviewing emergency plan. **(Todd)** An increased number of trees (maple and spruce) have been ordered for Arbor Day distribution.
- 5. Guest Speaker **Josh Waltzing** – Josh explained the ACC’s 14-Day New Member plan, which was developed as part of the *All Things New* process. The five steps of welcoming new parishioners within the first two weeks after registering:
 - 1) Recognize Their Entry – a welcome email and text message.
 - 2) Give Them People – assign 2-3 families to connect with them.
 - 3) Answer Their Questions – develop a list of frequently asked questions to share with them.
 - 4) Show Them Where Life Happens – provide a 30–60 day list of events that occur on a regular basis.
 - 5) Give Them Something Tangible to Take Home – examples: coffee mug, cookbook, handwritten note from pastor, etc.

5. Admin update (Todd)

- McGread Stewardship Conference, March 11-12 - travel to Wichita on March 10 and arrive home the evening of the 12th. Parish is covering the costs involved. Have four attending so far, would like at least 4 more. Will organize car pooling with others from our diocese who are attending.
- The St. Mary’s Staff Accountant will be on maternity leave beginning at the end of March; will need a couple more people to be Mass collection counters at St. Mary’s.
- St. Mary’s School – kindergarten registration is underway. Tuition assistance and scholarships are available.
- All Things New – All plans have been submitted. The Committee for the Affirmation of Plans (CAP) has reviewed plans prior to forwarding to Presbyterial Council and Bishop Neary for final approval. Discussion followed on recent news of some area parishes that will be closing.
- Fish Frys – Four fish frys are being planned for our ACC as listed below. Todd wants to form a committee that would start meeting this fall to plan for the 2027 fish frys.
 - March 6 – Immaculate Conception

- March 13 – St. Nicholas
- March 20 – St. Mary's
- March 27 – St. Mary's
- Underfunded Pension Plan – Todd attends 2-3 meetings/week regarding this issue as they review options and make plans going forward; considering other retirement plans that could be implemented for active employees and new hires. Effective December 31, 2025, the current pension with Christian Brothers was frozen. This means that new employees will not enter this plan, and current employees have stopped accruing additional pension amounts. Funds will transfer from Christian Brothers to a new dedicated account in 2026. We anticipate this will take place sometime in the summer, but this timeline is not yet definitive.
- 6. Pastor's perspective – Father Dan said the 14 -Day New Member Welcoming process will be very important over the next several months as we will likely have people coming to our churches to discern where they will change their membership to. As Christians, we need to have empathy for their situation and be hospitable, to listen and be welcoming. A suggestion was made regarding reaching out to Hispanic families in our area to let them know we're thinking of them and are available to help if there are any needs. Todd will relay the discussion to Father Matthew.
- 7. **Next pastoral council meeting will be held on February 17th (a change from the previous schedule) at 6:30pm in the basement at ICC (6:00pm for ICC representatives)**