Come To the Water ACC Pastoral Council Meeting
St. Nicholas Church, Belle River, Minnesota
August 25, 2026

Present: Father Matthew Kuhn, Todd Wentworth, Mike Ponicki, Steve Harren, Craig Highet, Marianne Shrode, Ashley Shrode, Rodney Roers, Leon Breun, Josiah Aultman, Dan Eckstein, Maria Lopau, Beth Sabolik, Mark Maloney, Sandy Wussow, and Carol Gaffaney. Absent: Father Dan Ruprecht, Deacon Scott Kahler, Darcy Thesing, Veronica Haavig, and Bev Paul.

1. Opening prayer.
2. Minutes from June 23, 2026, were approved.
3. All Things New – Father Matt responded to questions about the future merging of parish finances. We are in Year 3 of this 5-year process. He noted that all of St. Mary's debt will be retired in March of 2030. There will be separate finance councils until July 1, 2028, when the canonical and civil mergers are completed. After the merger, the directive states that the largest church in the newly formed parish will host masses for the Triduum and for Holy Days. Masses will be held on Sundays in all churches. Father Matt would like to have Christmas Mass in each of the churches.
4. Discussion specifically related to St. Nicholas Church:
   - The roof repair has been completed. It was noted that some tuckpointing is needed on the church.
   - Father Matt asked if the St. Nicholas parishioners would be interested in hosting a festival Mass in early summer similar to what Immaculate Conception did a few weeks ago. Mike said they would discuss the idea with parishioners.
   - Father Matt noted all three churches have had great attendance this summer.
5. Individual Standing Committee Reports were reviewed with the following additions:
   - Cemetery – Dan reported that work will begin after Labor Day on replacing the asphalt drive at St. Mary's Cemetery. The new fence at Calvary Cemetery by Osakis looks great. Immaculate Conception has a group of volunteers who handle mowing and maintenance. Mike said they have volunteers that help with mowing at the St. Nicholas cemetery.
   - Evangelization Committee – Leon reported on the committee's work. There will be a Welcome message at Mass after Labor Day. Joe Korkowski is focusing on reaching people who have fallen away from the church; Tammy Huss is focusing on ministries; currently working with Hospitality and Ushers. They plan to have a Welcome Sunday soon and the same day will also be a Nametag Sunday.
   - Finance – Rodney said the end-of-the-year report shows a 10.8% increase in Sunday offerings. One of our summer visitors gave a large donation in July to reduce the debt on the parish house. There was a fabrication delay in getting the new windows for St. Mary's; the work to put in the new windows began a couple weeks ago and will be completed soon. Rodney noted that Father Al's Trust Fund currently is above the original principal it started with, due to good investment returns. Craig reported that Immaculate Conception finances are doing well and their maintenance projects are being completed. The bell tower restoration work is completed. The boiler in the school was replaced. Work is scheduled to level out some of the concrete areas by the church. More rooms in the convent building are being painted. New altar server robes are done and will be delivered soon. Another altar server training session will be held soon at all three parishes.

- Liturgy – Beth Sabolik will serve as the pastoral council's liaison on the St. Mary's Liturgy Committee. Immaculate Conception will do a mini stewardship drive in September, highlighting the need for musicians and ushers.
- Parish Life – Marianne said the August 16th Sunday Funday festival at Immaculate Conception with an outdoor Mass, food, games, etc. was well attended. They served 292 people.
- Stewardship – Josiah reported the committee discussed stewardship renewal plans and the ministry fair. Discussion followed on ways to better communicate ministry needs to the congregation. Todd said the next McGread conference is scheduled for February 3-4, 2027, in Wichita, Kansas. He encouraged pastoral council members to attend. Costs are covered for those attending; let Todd know if you're interested. Steve reported on their June meeting They are updating their list of members and working on a calling effort to contact those who haven't been attending. The Grill the Priest event was well attended. They are making improvements at the St. Nicholas parish house so it can be used as a retreat center, a place for wedding parties to get ready, etc. Marianne said they are looking through their list of parishioners and will be contacting people who haven't been attending. They have put together a welcome packet.
- JPIC – Father Dan has made arrangements so he can attend the JPIC meetings. A Nature Walk at Burr Vineyard will be held September 13th.

6. <u>Administrative Update</u>
   - Todd reported that the Pension Task Force is currently working on legal documents for the new 403(b) plan. A 403(b) plan for current employees will begin January 1st. Payments to current retirees are going out as normal. Beginning with this fiscal year, we will be required to pay an additional $50,000+ to help fund the now-frozen pension plan to ensure retirees receive the benefits they were scheduled to receive. This could continue for twenty years or more.
   - School will begin at St. Mary's School next Monday with 271 students in grades K-6 (an expected decrease from the record high enrolment last year). Three new employees have been hired (paraprofessionals and Kid Kare). Over the summer months, the playground fence was installed, and school lockers were refurbished.
7. Pastor's Perspective - Father Matt said he will need to submit three suggested names to Bishop Neary for the new Parish that will be formed when the three churches merge into one parish. He said members can give him suggestions. He'll bring the list of suggestions to the next meeting. Todd asked council members for assistance in developing a list of FAQ (frequently asked questions) they will get in regard to the merging of the three churches into one parish, especially focusing on the financial area.
8. The next pastoral council meeting will be held on Tuesday, September 22, 6:00 p.m. at Immaculate Conception Church.