

FINAL
St. Rita Pastoral Council Meeting
January 25, 2025

Vision Statement: *We strive to be confident in our faith, comfortable in sharing that faith, dynamic in celebrating it and generous because of it!*

Mission Statement: *St. Rita is an active Catholic community that welcomes all God's children for worship and service. We are dedicated to living and sharing the Gospel of Jesus Christ as we are now and in ways not yet imagined.*

Council Members Present

Fr. Bosco Padamattummal, Chris Losey, Chris Schultz, Jan Strait, Jim Stechschulte, Margie Hermes*, Mark Zuzelski, Patricia Applegate, Sue Harmon*, Tiffany Scott
[* = via Zoom]

Absent Council Members

Deacon Chris Vida, Joanne Dupree

A. Opening Prayer

Jan Strait

B. Review Past Meeting Minutes and Current Meeting Agenda

The agenda was accepted and adopted. Revised minutes from October 26, 2024 meeting were reviewed and approved pending revision to the Welcoming Committee. Tiffany Scott will revise and distribute the final minutes to members and Jeannie Hitchcock.

C. Discussion

- 1) Knights of Columbus: Jim provided the following updates:
 - a. Chet Fleszar is celebrating 100 years birthday and 75 years as a Knight!
 - b. 1/27: Hosting Quad District meeting which consists of 20-25 Knights of Columbus councils.
 - c. Golabki/Golumpki dinner planned for Valentine's Day & ladies will be granted free entrance.
 - d. Planning for Lenten Fish Frys is underway.
- 2) Steeple with Electronic Bells: Steeple planning is currently on hold as a new roof is a greater priority.
- 3) Roof: Funds need to be raised.
 - a. Jan will connect with Jeannie and Aaron on bids that were collected last year, including the flat roof/rubber roofing material.
 - b. Tiffany will provide Fr. Bosco with Pastoral Council minutes for meetings where the roof was discussed. (Attached, as provided after meeting)
- 4) 2023 Parish Survey Update: Deferred to next meeting.
- 5) Pastoral Plan:
 - a. Priorities identified (Attached version as provided after meeting)
 - b. Fr. Bosco attended "Priests for Apostolic Age" conference in San Antonio and was introduced to a program lead by the Evangelical Catholic - <https://evangelicalcatholic.org/>
 - i. The program's focus is to strengthen lay people of the parish with the following objectives:
 1. Form and launch like St. Ignatius of Loyola did with six men formed
 2. Build a repeatable formation process for parishioners
 3. Support lay apostolates
 4. Create structure and ongoing formation

"It's time to be a parish that intrigues people, one that challenges people to rethink their own lives. It's time to be a parish that fascinates people, a parish that moves people... We all carry the seeds of greatness within us. Sometimes that greatness manifests in extraordinary things, but most of the time the greatness of God manifests in us through ordinary things done with great love." --Inspired by Rediscover the Saints, Matthew Kelly

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5. Unite apostolates: Invite equipped parishioners to rally a strategic objective for a season (i.e., Poor, the lost, men's group, women's group, parishioners, family)
 - ii. Cost is \$10K-\$25K every three years.
 - iii. Requires identifying group leaders to enrich the spiritual life of lay people.
 - iv. Participants have to "FAT" – Faithful, Available, and Teachable.
 - v. Funds will need to be set aside for this program and will also need to determine how to select attendees from St. Rita.
 - c. Jim shared this aligns with a national surge towards individual discipleship and mentioned other programs such as:
 - i. Inferno Michigan - <https://www.infernomen.com/michigan>
 - ii. Paradisus Dei - <https://paradisusdei.org/>
 - iii. Cor - <https://www.kofc.org/en/who-we-are/our-faith/cor.html>
 - d. Discussion ensued with our current Mission and Vision statements.
 - i. Jim shared that new statements were drafted in 2023 and finalized in 2024. He will provide the finalized statements to the group.
 1. Vision statements should address "where do we want to be in the future."
 2. Mission statements should address "what are we doing and continue to do to achieve the Vision" and need to be able to measure progress via key success factors.
 - e. Status against Pastoral Plan will be provided in future Pastoral Council meetings.
- 6) Chris Schultz was appointed as Vice Chair of Pastoral Council. The first item is to conduct the annual new council member election process.
- 7) Annual New Member Election process for 2025:
- a. The group reviewed and discussed member selection criteria from our Operational Guidelines including, but not limited to:
 - i. At least nine members at any time.
 - ii. Members can elect to serve for an additional one to three years beyond their three-year assignment.
 - iii. Annual selection process needs to be published in the bulletin.
 - b. Tiffany noted there are currently nine members and two clergy, and shared membership status of each member. (Attached)
 - c. It was noted that representation from the Finance committee has been lacking to date. Chrissy to connect with Jeannie to identify a representative from the Finance committee to attend meetings regularly.
 - d. Also noted the need to publish pastoral council meeting date/time in advance of each scheduled meeting in the Bulletin.
 - e. Tiffany and Jan (members since 2018 and 2016, respectively) explained that due to hiatus during covid, other than themselves, all members are new as of 2023 or 2024 with earliest membership term date of June 2026.
 - f. Fr. Bosco asked Tiffany and Jan to remain in the Council for an additional year and both accepted. This will maintain nine members and therefore eliminates the need for an election process this year.
- 8) The group discussed two articles on 1) Welcoming Gays and 2) Dechurching (Summaries attached). Key takeaways:
- a. Love the person, always. "Love thy neighbor as thyself."
 - b. We are all God's children. "All are welcome."

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- c. This is covered in catechism of Catholic Church.
- d. Theology on Tap is a good outlet for “the hard issues.”
- e. “Jesus picked disciples that weren’t perfect.”
- f. Fr. Bosco referenced how author Lisa Brenninkmeyer addresses Dechurching in “Walking with Purpose” and further stated that the Walking with Purpose program here at St. Rita is an excellent outlet for people who are questioning or searching.

9) Other Business/Discussion:

- a. Note for planning future pastoral meetings: St. Rita Men’s Group meets on the second and fourth Saturday of each month at 8:00am.
- b. Our Lady of Medjugorje says to “pray, pray, pray!”
<https://www.medjugorje.org/overview.htm>
- c. “Online Giving” has been absent from the Bulletin on several recent weeks. Chrissy to follow up with Monica to have it reinstated.
- d. Several members asked for status of the parish’s annual financial report for the 2024 Fiscal Year (7/2023-6/2024). (Attached, as provided after meeting)

D. Future Discussion Items/Agenda

- 1) Welcoming Committee
- 2) Knights of Columbus
- 3) Status against Parish Plan

E. Next Meeting

- When: Saturday, March 22, 2025 @ 9:00AM – 11:00AM
- Where: Conference Room
- Zoom meeting to be scheduled for council members who will be out of state
- Opening Prayer Lead: **TBD**

F. Closing Prayer: Led by Fr. Bosco



Tiffany Scott <tbs.moomba@gmail.com>

Roof Project History - Pastoral Council Minutes

1 message

Tiffany Scott <tbs.moomba@gmail.com>

Mon, Jan 27, 2025 at 6:57 PM

To: frbosco.strita@gmail.com, jeannie.hitchcock.strita@gmail.com, "St. Rita Church - MAIN" <stritasclarklake@gmail.com>, "Jan Strait- St. Rita" <janstrait56@gmail.com>, Fr Bosco Padamattummal <frboscopd@gmail.com>

Fr. Bosco,

Per discussion at Saturday's Pastoral Council meeting and at your request, attached are excerpts from previous Council meetings on the topic of Roof Project. These were copied directly from meeting minutes. I hope this is helpful. If you have any questions, please let me know.

Peace & Blessings,
Tiffany Scott
517-206-7462

**PCC Minutes-Roof Project.docx**

17K

St. Rita Pastoral Council Meeting Minutes Excerpts regarding New Roof

Note: Prior to the meeting on June 23, 2023, all parish renovation related discussions focused on the status of the new administration wing.

June 24, 2023 (page 3, item 12)

Roof Discussion: Fr. Tom shared there have been leaks over the years, but they were patched on an as-needed basis. There are now several, and recurring leaks, especially in the cry room, sky light, and kitchen areas. Jeanne contacted North-Ply Roofing (Charlie Dunigan). It's simply time to replace the roof. North-Ply recommends removal of the old roof and replacement with foam layer and rubber; initial estimate is \$270,000.

- a. Suzy shared this type of roofing is used in Florida and it has been known to reduce energy bills by 50%.
- b. The parish's operating budget covers repairs, but not a capital expenditure of this magnitude. For example, a new roof for the rectory (\$11,500) and black top sealing of the entire parking lot and rectory driveway (\$24,000) can be managed within the current operating budget.
- c. Fr. Tom is in the process of reaching out to prospective donors.
- d. Fr. Tom contacted parishioner Rob S. to obtain additional roofing company recommendations and bids.
- e. Council members are asked to consider how we can present and launch a campaign to the parish given our recent capital campaign for renovations and the expected Diocese campaign for Catholic schools. Ideas mentioned:
 - i. A spin off of an old Prudential Insurance slogan ("Own a piece of the Rock" of Gibraltar) -- "Own a piece of the Roof"
 - ii. "Help keep the weather out and God in"

August 26, 2023 (page 3, item 10)

Roof Project: Two bids have been received to date. Fr. Tom is pursuing additional bids.

November 11, 2023 (page 3, item 8)

Roof Project: Three bids received. The estimate is \$270K and includes the rectory. Fr. Tom shared a sample of the new composite style roof which is "closed-cell foam" and expected to greatly improve heating and cooling expenditures.

January 27, 2024 (page 5, item 10)

Roof Project: Repairs completed. Aaron is repainting skylight boxes which is an indicator that there are NO LEAKS!

March 9, 2024 (page 3, item 11)

Roof Project Update: Update deferred to next meeting

May 4, 2024 – Roof Project was not on the agenda, nor was it discussed at this meeting.

June 22, 2024 – Roof Project was not on the agenda, nor was it discussed at this meeting.



Tiffany Scott <tbs.moomba@gmail.com>

Pastoral Council Update

Chrissy Losey <ckscollard@gmail.com>

Sun, Feb 2, 2025 at 8:25 AM

To: Fr Bosco Padamattummal <frboscopd@gmail.com>, Chris Vida <chris.vida413@gmail.com>, Chris Schultz <chrisschultz8533@gmail.com>, Patricia Applegate <prapplegate@comcast.net>, Jan Strait <janstrait56@gmail.com>, Tiffany Scott <tbs.moomba@gmail.com>, Mark Zuzelski <mzuzel@ameritech.net>, Joanne Dupree <jomollyrick@comcast.net>, Margie Hermes <mrueger@umich.edu>, "ss.bacher@comcast.net" <ss.bacher@comcast.net>, "jmsstech1@gmail.com" <jmsstech1@gmail.com>
Cc: Chrissy Losey <ckscollard@gmail.com>

Following are responses to several items discussed at our Jan 25, 2025 Pastoral Council meeting:

1. **Annual Financial Report** - was distributed inside the bulletin and presented by Jeannie Hitchcock during mass this weekend, as attached.
2. **Online Giving Reporting in the Bulletin** - per Monica, was temporarily suspended while she and Jeannie were preparing the annual report, but is back in the bulletin now as of the February 2, 2025 bulletin as attached.
3. **Finance Committee Member on the Pastoral Council** - Jeannie agreed to email me the members of the Financial Committee this week so that I can call them to see who will volunteer to join the Pastoral Council. She also advised that she needs several new members who are more assessable. Either Jeannie or our new member will provide updates on the Five Year Plan and Fund Raisers.
4. **Pastoral Council Meetings Announced in the Bulletin** - Monica has added our Pastoral meeting dates to her calendar so she can publish two weeks ahead of each meeting.
5. **Pastoral Plan** - Dcn Chris (who was absent from our Pastoral Council meeting) has provided contacts for each item in our Plan, and advised that the Vision & Mission will remain the same as already published on our website. Dcn will also review the 2023 Parish Survey results to determine if there is anything remaining to be included in the Pastoral Plan. Pastoral Plan update attached.

Note: Dcn Chris will arrange conference calls with those Pastoral Council members who will join remotely for our next meeting. Be sure he has your correct phone number for the Mar 22 meeting.

Chrissy Losey
Pastoral Council Chair

3 attachments

**Online Giving 020225.pdf**

1776K

**Financial Report 063024.pdf**

1712K

**Pastoral Plan.docx**

23K

St. Rita Parish Financial Report

July 1, 2023 - June 30, 2024



Dear St. Rita Family Members,

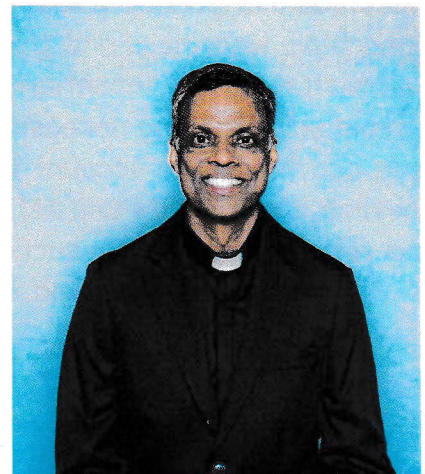
I am writing to express my sincere gratitude for your consistent giving. Your faithfulness in tithing is a true reflection of your love for God and His church. As it says in 2 Corinthians 9:6-7 "Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously. Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver." We are blessed to have supporters like you who believe in our mission and vision.

Your generosity will have a significant impact on everything that we do in our church, taking care of our building, paying our staff, and all the expenses related to our liturgical functions. Specifically, in the past year your giving has made the possible: expansion of our columbarium with an additional 160 niches; sealcoating the parking lots around the church and rectory; new steps and railings on the southeast entrance to the church; new rectory roof; new monstrance and candelabras for our Adorations. There are still a couple of things coming soon which will need big support: "Saints and Scholars" campaign for Diocese of Lansing area catholic education; and the church roof which will cost about \$300,000.

Your giving makes a real, tangible impact in helping us achieve our goals. Please know the your gift is greatly appreciated, and we pray that God blesses you abundantly for your sacrificial giving.

With gratefulness,

Fr. Bosco Padamattummal



**Statement of Financial Position
(Balance Sheet)**

As of June 30, 2024

Assets

Restricted Funds	\$ 123,917.91
Building Fund	\$ 155,847.87
Undesignated Funds	<u>\$ 436,664.47</u>

Total Assets \$716,430.25

Liabilities & Equity

Liabilities - Payables \$ 47,247.77

Equity

Retained Earnings	\$695,309.87
Net Surplus (Loss)	<u>\$(26,127.39)</u>
Total Equity	<u>\$669,182.48</u>

Total Liabilities & Equity \$716,430.25

Prayer to St. Joseph,
Patron Saint of Workers

O Glorious Saint Joseph, model of all those who are devoted to labor, obtain for me the grace to work in a spirit of penance for the expiation of my many sins; to work conscientiously, putting the call of duty above my natural inclinations; to work with thankfulness and joy, considering it an honor to employ and develop by means of labor the gifts received from God; to work with order, peace, moderation, and patience, never shrinking from weariness and trials; to work above all with purity of intention and detachment from self, keeping unceasingly before my eyes death and the account that I must give of time lost, talents unused, good omitted, and vain complacency in success, so fatal to the work of God.

All for Jesus, all through Mary, all after thy example, O Patriarch, Saint Joseph. Such shall be my watch-word in life and in death.
Amen.

**Statement of Activities
July 2023 through June 2024**

Income

Building Fund	\$ 155,847.87
Witness to Hope share	\$ 100.00
Offertory	\$ 693,243.42
Interest Earned	\$ 15,858.80
Mass Stipends & Memorials	\$ 8,450.00
Columbarium receipts	\$ 19,800.00
Religious Education tuition	\$ 1,500.00
Miscellaneous income (Votive, Barkenquest Scholarship fund, Youth Group donations, Coffee & donut fund)	\$ 143,094.27
Total Income	<u><u>\$ 1,037,894.36</u></u>

Expenses

Church Administration (Diocesan assessment, Admin salaries & benefits, rectory expenses, telephone & supplies)	\$385,083.24
Capital Expenditures (Bal on Renovations, Blacktop)	\$ 59,358.91
Christian Services (Shelter)	\$ 6,037.51
School Assessment & Subsidy	\$ 39,696.53
Music Ministry (Salary & benefits, materials & supplies)	\$ 32,557.78
Plant Operation & Maintenance	\$203,761.83
(Maint. church & grounds, custodian salary & benefits, building insurance, utilities & supplies)	
Parish Life (Picnic, funeral luncheons, anniv. Mass dinner, Sunday coffee/donuts, hospitality, Faith Mag)	\$ 44,189.51
Worship (Altar & liturgical supplies, ministry help)	\$ 32,718.44
Columbarium expense	\$ 3,593.15
Youth Ministry (Youth Minister salary & benefits, Youth group activities, youth retreats & seminars)	\$ 28,059.51
Faith Formation (DRE salary & benefits, classroom supplies & textbooks, telephone, staff development)	\$109,183.37
Transfer to DRG (Restricted funds)	\$119,781.97
Total Expenses	<u>\$1,064,021.75</u>
Surplus (Deficit)	<u>\$ (26,127.39)</u>
Net Surplus (Deficit)	<u><u>\$1,037,894.36</u></u>

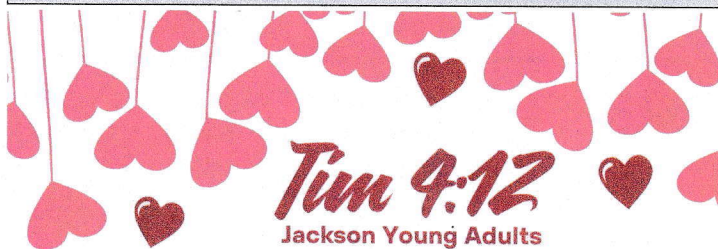
SOAR Display in Greeting Area

Louanne has set up a display of items that we are collecting for the women in the SOAR house, you can find it in the Greeting Area. Come take a look and see how you can help! We will collect items through February 15.

Things SOAR women need:

Any kind of paper product such as paper towels, tissue, toilet paper, Clorox wipes, Toothpaste/ Toothbrushes, Shampoo/Conditioner, Razors, Pot-holders, Spatulas/kitchen utensils, Trash bags. Socks, soap...laundry, dishwasher soap and personal soap bars and liquid soap.

Thank you!



February Events

Thursday, Feb. 6th - Trivia Night!

7-9 PM at Queen of the Miraculous Medal, in Seton Hall

Thursday, Feb. 13th - Bible Study Night

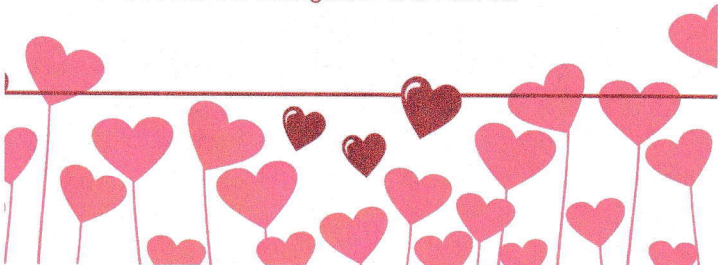
7-9 PM at Queen of the Miraculous Medal, in St. Catherine Room

Thursday, Feb. 20th - Night Out!

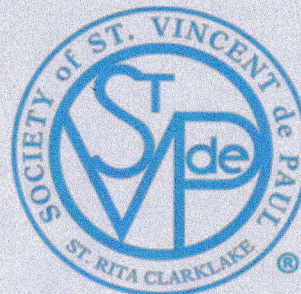
7-9 PM in downtown Jackson, dinner @ The Chase Sports Bar

Thursday, Feb. 27th - Game Night!

7-9 PM at St. John the Evangelist Parish Center



St. Vincent de Paul,
St. Rita Conference
(517) 745-6375



St. Rita SVDP provided 4 food deliveries for the week ending in 1/31.

Parishioners, we at SVDP would love to have you join our team of general volunteers by signing up for various opportunities we have through signup.com. There's no commitment to join our conference nor do you have to agree to a minimum amount of hours. Our forms are located on the desk outside our pantry, complete it and leave in the brown box and we will email you with a more information once you are in the system.

Thank you!

Stewardship

General Offertory.....	\$6,769.00
Anonymous Cash.....	\$964.00
Contributions.....	174
Online Giving Dec.....	\$19,665.00

Thank you for your gifts of time, talent and treasure.

Bulletin Articles

If you have an important topic you would like considered for the bulletin please send it to bulletin.strita@gmail.com at least 10 days before publication date. All requests are subject to approval and editing.

St. Rita
2025 PASTORAL PLAN
(updates in red)

Vision Statement:

We strive to be confident in our faith, comfortable in sharing that faith, dynamic in celebrating it, and generous because of it.

Mission Statement:

St Rita is an active Catholic community that welcomes all God's children for worship and service. We are dedicated to living and sharing the Gospel of Jesus Christ now and in ways not yet imagined.

2025 Pastoral Plan (*Top Priorities):

- 1) **Implement 2025 Items from the Five-Year Financial Plan (Jeannie H)**
- 2) ***Replace the Roof Campaign to Raise \$300k – 1st Half '25 (Jeannie H with soft fundraiser for the Building Fund so as not to compete with Diocese DSA & S&S)**
- 3) **Increase Participation in Diocese Programs, such as:**
 - a. Genesis of Gender by Dr. Abigail Favale – February 27 (Fr Bosco, Dcn Chris, Nancy Carter, Lew Neeb) Book available for loan from Chrissy L
 - b. Men's Conference – March 22 (?)
 - c. *Saints & Scholars Campaign for Catholic Ed – 2nd Half '25 (Jeannie H)
 - d. Corpus Christi Procession preceded by 40hrs Adoration – (Dcn Chris)
 - e. Women's Conference – October 11 (Nancy Carter, Chrissy L, etc.)
- 4) **Increase Collaboration amongst the Lakes Group (Fatima & St Joe).**
 - a. Pastoral Backup Support as needed (Fr Bosco)
 - b. Theology on Tap (Dcn Todd)
 - c. Advent Tea (Nancy Carter)
 - d. Exchange Best Practices re Fund Raisers, etc. (?)
- 5) **Evangelization (Diocese Grants Available).**
 - a. Catechesis of the Good Shephard (Sarah Duke & Catie Grodi)
 - b. Knights of Columbus Cor (Jim Stechschulte & Jan Strait)
 - c. Men's Group (Dcn Chris)
- 6) **Evangelical Catholics (Fr Bosco)**
- 7) **Support & Sustain the 35 active Ministries/ Committees as listed in the Ministry Directory on the website (Chrissy L to contact for updates in Sept)**

St. Rita Pastoral Council					Membership by year					
Pastor	Rev. Bosco Padamattummal	734-707-3657	frbosco.strita@gmail.com			7/2024-6/2025 ¹	7/2025-6/2026 ²	7/2026-6/2027	7/2027-6/2028	
9 Selected members:					extension (1-3 yrs)					
Ad Hoc appointed members not to exceed 50%				initial term						
	Jan Strait	313-570-8541	janstrait56@gmail.com	7/2016 -6/2019	-2026	AH	AH			
	Tiffany Scott	517-206-7462	tbs.moomba@gmail.com	7/2018 -6/2021 7/2023 -6/2024	-2026	AH	AH			
New	Patricia Applegate	517-812-5057	Prapplegate@comcast.net	7/2023-6/2026		S	S			
New	Joanne Dupree	517-938-8321	jomollyrick@comcast.net	7/2023-6/2026		S	S			
New	Susan Harmon	517-812-1786	ss.bacher@comcast.net	7/2023-6/2026		S	S			
New	Chris Losey	517-416-3462	<a href="mailto:Chrissy Losey <ckscollard@gmail.com">Chrissy Losey <ckscollard@gmail.com	7/2023-6/2026		S	S			
New	Chris Schultz	517-499-6012	chrisschultz8533@gmail.com	7/2023-6/2026		S	S			
New	Margie Hermes	734-395-2997	mrueger@umich.edu	7/2024-6/2027		S	S	S		
New	Mark Zuzelski	248-884-6184	mzuzel@ameritech.net	7/2024-6/2027		S	S	S		
New				7/2024-6/2027						
New	No election held ²			7/2025-6/2028						
New				7/2025-6/2028						
New				7/2025-6/2028						
New				7/2026-6/2029						
New				7/2026-6/2029						
New				7/2026-6/2029						
Alternates					AH	2	2	0	0	
					Sel	7	7	0	0	
					Total	9	9	2	0	
Alt	No election held ²			7/2025-6/2026			S	S	S	
Alt				7/2025-6/2026				S	S	S
Alt				7/2025-6/2026				S	S	S
Alt				7/2026-6/2027				S	S	
Alt				7/2026-6/2027				S	S	
Alt				7/2026-6/2027				S	S	
(Grand Knight, Council #7945) (1 year term)										
Jim Stechschulte 517-945-6091 jmsstech1@gmail.com						AH				
Youth Minister										
Abby Walraven 517-592-5470, ext 19 abigail.walraven.strita@gmail.com						AH	AH	AH		
Deacon Advisory Members:										
Dcn. Chris Vida 517-740-6639 chris.vida413@gmail.com						S	S	S		
finance council advisory member:										
Jeannie Hitchcock 517-592-5470, ext 12 stritasclarklake@gmail.com jeannie.hitchcock.strita@gmail.com						AH	S	S		

- 2024: Dcn. Chris Vida appointed as Standing member. Due to limited number of electees; Sue Harmon was moved from an Alternate to Standing member, Hermes & Zuzelski (summer parishioners) appointed as Standing members, Chrissy Losey appointed as Chairperson, No appointed Vice-Chair (due to limited number of electees), Tiffany Scott acting Secretary. By proxy, Jeannie Hitchcock is acting Finance advisory member.
- 2025: Chris Schultz appointed as Vice-Chair. Jeannie Hitchcock appointed as Standing member for Finance Committee. Jan Strait and Tiffany Scott extended an additional one year term. No elections held, per Fr. Bosco.

After their son came out, this conservative Christian couple went into a closet of their own

By [John Blake](#), CNN

Updated 3:07 AM EST, Tue November 5, 2024

<https://www.cnn.com/2024/11/03/us/conservative-christian-coming-out-gay-cec/index.html>

Here's a summary of the document:

Greg and Lynn McDonald had a tough time accepting their son Greg Jr.'s sexuality, but their journey led them to unexpected places and friendships.

- **Initial Reaction:** Greg Jr. came out to his conservative Christian parents in 2001, leading to a tense confrontation where his father insisted he needed to be "fixed".¹²
- **Parental Struggle:** Instead of their son facing rejection, it was Greg Sr. and Lynn who experienced alienation from their church and community.³⁴
- **Hidden Crisis:** The McDonalds' story highlights a broader crisis among conservative Christian families dealing with LGBTQ+ children, often resulting in homelessness and rejection for the kids.⁵⁶
- **Church and Therapy:** Greg Jr. was sent to Christian conversion therapy, which he quickly rejected, causing further strain between him and his parents.⁷⁸
- **Healing Moments:** Lynn's battle with breast cancer and Greg Jr.'s support during that time helped mend their relationship.⁹¹⁰
- **Changing Perspectives:** Greg Sr. began reading works by religious scholars who supported LGBTQ+ inclusion, helping him reconcile his faith with his son's identity.¹¹¹²
- **Starting a Ministry:** The McDonalds founded "Embracing the Journey," a support group for Christian parents with LGBTQ+ children, which led to both new friendships and loss of old ones.¹³¹⁴
- **Facing Criticism:** Their public support for LGBTQ+ families attracted harsh criticism from conservative Christians, but they continued their advocacy.¹⁵¹⁶
- **New Family Dynamics:** Greg Jr. is now married, and his parents have embraced his husband as part of their family, showing their growth and acceptance.¹⁷¹⁸

The Misunderstood Reason Millions of Americans Stopped Going to Church

The defining problem driving people out is ... just how American life works in the 21st century.

<https://www.theatlantic.com/ideas/archive/2023/07/christian-church-communitiy-participation-drop/674843/>

[The Atlantic](#)

- Jake Meador

Here's a summary of the document:

Millions of Americans have stopped going to church, and it's not just because of scandals or moral failings. The way modern life is structured plays a big role too.

Decline in Church Attendance: Over the past 25 years, 40 million Americans have stopped attending church, marking the largest shift in church attendance in the country's history.¹

Impact on Society: This decline is concerning because participation in religious communities is linked to better health, higher generosity, and more stable families, which are crucial in a nation facing loneliness and mental health issues.²

Gradual Departure: For many, leaving church isn't a sudden decision but a gradual process where they slowly drift away without even realizing it.³

Challenges of Modern Life: Busy schedules and high-stress jobs make it difficult for people to prioritize church, as other commitments often take precedence.⁴⁵

Potential for Change: Churches could combat this trend by fostering communities that emphasize mutual support and shared values over individual success, offering a meaningful alternative to the pressures of modern life.⁶⁷