

ST. JEROME PASTORAL COUNCIL NOVEMBER 6, 2025, MEETING MINUTES

The meeting was called to order by Vice Chairman John Hopkins at 7:00pm.

Members present: Vice Chairman John Hopkins, Paul Baumgartner, Angee Clark-Hellon, Sr. Linda Mary De Lonais, Lucy Ehrhardt, Jan Gremaud, Kelly Houston, Fr. Kevin Laughery, Tom Mines, Brenda Neumann, Joel Petry, Gail Wolff

Special Guests: Joe Lombardi, Principal and Suzanne Halbrook, Development Director of Fr. McGivney Catholic High School in Glen Carbon

Members absent: Chairman Dan Jackson, Betsy Weinel

Opening Prayer was offered by Angee Clark-Hellon.

No additions or corrections to the October 2, 2025, Minutes. Motion was made by Angee Clark-Hellon and seconded by Joel Petry to accept the Minutes as presented; motion carried. Minutes approved.

Monthly Reports

Pastor: Fr. Kevin reported that another visit to our sister parishes in Guatemala is scheduled for the end of June to the first of July. The Centennial Campaign includes an evangelization or discipleship element, and Fr. Kevin signed a contract with Evangelical Catholic. Regarding marriage preparation, our family life director Gracie Ortez is recommending mentor couples for engaged couples. Fr. Kevin is working with one engaged couple now and is interested in getting a mentor couple for them. At a recent Presbyteral Council meeting, Fr. Kevin observed that reducing the number of weekend Masses is not being pushed from above. They have made suggestions and Fr. Kevin doesn't see a need to make changes. This will require further dialogue with neighboring parishes. Another item was a policy being proposed on funerals and one of the recommendations out of the Order of Christian Funerals, which envisions a vigil (visitation or wake) the night before at a different location instead of the increasing practice of holding the visitation at the church right before the funeral Mass. Other priests expressed concern about the added expense of holding a vigil at another location the evening before the funeral. The Presbyteral Council recommends that, as eulogies are considered inappropriate, pre-approved "words of remembrance" are to be given by the priest or deacon at the end of the funeral Mass, eliminating eulogies by members of the family or friends. These other personal reflections by family or friends could be given at the funeral lunch. Some members of Pastoral do support having the visitation remain at the church.

Written Monthly Reports: No questions on the monthly reports submitted for St. John Neumann, Youth Ministry, Administrative Office and Faith Formation.

Old Business

Fr. McGivney Presentation: Joe Lombardi and Suzanne Halbrook and the Pastoral Council members each introduced themselves with a brief summary of their background. Suzanne and Joe began their presentation with their history at McGivney starting at St. John Neumann and moving to McGivney when the school was built in 2015 beginning with 17 students, bringing in 90 and are now at 340 students, with more building going on.

Joe added that the two things that make McGivney unique are their Catholic identity, front and center; and the second thing is the great staff and their "house system" which is a class that's held in the middle of every day. It is given the same amount of time as a math or science class with 19-22 students, freshmen through seniors

Old Business

Fr. McGivney Presentation (continued):

mixing all the kids together; and they stay with those houses for four years straight. It builds really strong connections between the students themselves. The houses are led by juniors and seniors—providing an opportunity for leadership and for students to grow and mentor each other. Included is a house mentor which is an adult teacher to help monitor and adjust when needed. Every house is named after a saint; it has its own colors, its own tee-shirt, flag, mascot and traditions. They have house competitions throughout the year—lots and lots of things that bring the kids together. Thirteen years ago, McGivney was the only school to have this, other than Kansas City. Now other area schools have adopted the “house” concept, coming to McGivney for the model. Kids accepted into McGivney are invited to come to the school several times during the spring for ice-breakers, games, food, etc. The staff watches the visitors to note if they are athletic, super engaged with people, and what personalities they have. Over the summer, the staff looks at these things, not wanting students from the same feeder schools going into the same house.

Joe reported that 99% of their students go to college. The remaining 1% by choice go into the military or to work. McGivney prepares the kids for whatever option they want. Graduates are going to the better schools—Washington University, Notre Dame, University of Illinois, Missouri State, University of Missouri, etc.

Susanne distributed copies of the workbook (also online) that they give to the parents of potential students to provide them a snapshot of the whole school, their mission and what McGivney is trying to accomplish. Feeder schools are St. John Neumann, St. Mary’s, St. Boniface, St. Elizabeth’s, Holy Family, Ss. Peter & Paul, and St. Paul in Highland. This year they estimate to admit between 95 and 100 new students, and typically have a wait list. Joe added that they had their 100th application come in with 7 waiting already, with a total of 115 applications to be received. McGivney accepts special needs students. New students cannot transfer in after sophomore level because of the credits required for graduation at McGivney.

Suzanne explained that McGivney operates independently; a majority of funds are raised in-house with no help from the Diocese. There is some sponsorship support from parishes. They try to keep tuition affordable and competitive in the field. Last year’s cost per student to educate was \$10,036, with full tuition rate at \$8,700 and student fees \$750, leaving a gap of \$586 per student. They offer scholarships, discounts and multi-family discounts to provide financial assistance. In addition, McGivney supports all feeder schools, A Beacon of Light Pregnancy Support Center, Madison County Catholic Charities, Kelsey’s Hope, Relevant Options Pregnancy Center and Good Samaritan Home. Funds are raised through annual sponsorships, cash raffle, Annual Appeal, Griffin Gala Auction, Epiphany Scholarship Mass & Luncheon and ornament sales. The students are required to do service hours to support the charities and organizations about which they feel strongly.

Joe described how they meet with teachers from the feeder schools to discuss curriculum to create a unified idea of what Catholic education would be in our area. Before McGivney was completed, they relied heavily on the feeder school facilities. Now McGivney offers their safe and secure track and fields for use by the feeder schools for practice and games. Additional feeder schools are now coming to McGivney, making it a regional Catholic school. There are now 18 feeder schools (Catholic and public) after expanding into the Belleville Diocese. The focus is on the individual kids with no more than 20-22 student in a classroom. Current expansions are now due to necessity. The students have outgrown the present chapel. The common space now being built will be used for lunches, theater space, music, and the all-school Mass (which is now in the gym). It is important that the students have a good experience. Suzanne expressed gratitude for the support St. Jerome has given Fr. McGivney High School.

Old Business (continued)

Centennial Campaign: Jan reported that pledges now total \$690,000 from a little over 100 families. Thank-you letters have been going out to all those who have contributed to the Campaign. In two weeks, letters will go out to families that have not yet responded. After another two weeks, letters will again go out to those who have not responded.

Monthly Fellowship Calendar: Brenda said that there were 13 Trunk or Treat tables in St. Joseph's Hall with adults handing out candy and hot dogs to over 150 participants. With Donut Sunday coming up November 15/16, Pastoral Council will distribute cookies after 4:00pm and 10:30am Masses. The November 16 Chili potluck and family bingo will be promoted in the Friday email and the weekend bulletin. Joel, Kelly, Angee, John and Gail volunteered to bring Chili. Angee is preparing reminder slips to be handed out after all Masses between now and the event. Angee proposed that the Living Nativity at St. John the Baptist Chapel be postponed until next year due to the limited dates available this year and the amount of planning and effort required.

Campus Security: Paul reported that two companies came out to evaluate our security system to install cameras, etc. He has received one quote so far that he sent to John Sagovac. We need at least two quotes before deciding. The entry doors to the church have been repaired. Weather stripping will be replaced.

Calling on Parishioners for Prayers: Jan mentioned that Dan talked with the Faith Sharing group. They are interested but concerned that they may need some script to use when contacting the more inactive families. Jan said that there has been some discussion with the Faith Sharing group about starting a Speaker Series. Jan has spoken with Fr. Kevin about taking one evening a week during Advent for one hour of Prayer, Meditation and Worship with music and exposition of the Blessed Sacrament. After further discussion, Jan is planning both one afternoon (2:30pm) and one evening (6:30pm) session each week during Avent.

Generic Offertory Envelopes: Responding to Katie Price's comments, Fr. Kevin will be discussing with staff how to initiate a multi-purpose envelope that provides for prayers, petitions and other forms of stewardship.

New Business

There was no new business to discuss.

There being no further business, Angee offered the closing Prayer. The meeting adjourned at 8:09pm.

The next meeting is scheduled for Thursday, December 4, 2025, at 7:00pm, in St. Joseph's Hall.

Respectfully Submitted,
Gail Wolff, Recorder