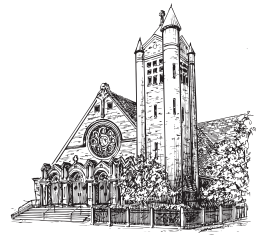




NATIVITY OF OUR LORD & SAINT GABRIEL PARISH



STATE OF PARISH LETTER 2023

Dear Friends,

As we enter our fifth year of unification, I write to thank you for your support and commitment, and to share some reflections and information about the state of our Nativity of Our Lord and Saint Gabriel parish. This past year was eventful, and I feel that we have begun to chart a course for growth and increased spiritual development.

The most important of last year's parish pastoral initiatives was **ALPHA**. More than 30 people took part either in the Fall session or in the Spring session. Over the course of ten weeks, they met on Wednesday evenings to share a meal, watch a video and discuss. **Deacon Rob Morris** took the lead, but our new parish **Evangelization Team** was awesome. One of the follow-ups to this was a request for a **Bible Study**, and so we started one in July and had to cut off participants at 30. Clearly there is a hunger for spiritual development in our parish! I am offering tuition incentives for families of First Communion candidates, hoping that deeper engagement with the faith among our young families will be "contagious" and impact our parish and schools in the years going forward. **ALPHA** will continue twice-a-year moving forward, and I encourage everyone to consider taking part in this (and to invite friends and family to join you).

In the Spring all parishioners of the Archdiocese were asked to take part in a survey, called the **Discipleship Maker Index**. It is a way of marking our baseline, and we will compare this with ongoing surveys in years ahead to mark our progress as a parish. In addition, this will be useful tool for Parish Council and staff as we consider where to direct our energy in order to better encourage and facilitate growth in discipleship among our members. Results from this survey are posted on our website- please have a look.

Mass attendance and **Stewardship collections** are objective markers of a parish's health. Our count of the average number of weekend worshippers increased some over the previous year, which is encouraging. I would like to see this double over the next five years. Our music ministry adds so much to our worship, and we are working to grow participation and involvement in all our liturgical ministries during this year that the US Bishops have designated for a "Eucharistic Revival." This year we plan to provide more after-Mass socials (beer/wine, coffee-and-donuts, etc).

Our collections, unfortunately, have flattened out even as inflation increased expenses more than usual. (*If everyone who works would give at least the value of their first hour of work for the week, we would be fine. Please consider making this commitment.*) About 220 households gave at least the value of an hour's work at minimum wage, providing 80% of parish financial support through Stewardship offerings. Last year's financials can be found among the pages of this report.

I am grateful for our dedicated and talented staff. Over the past months some new people joined us: **Lori Serpico** is helping me with administrative tasks as well as coordinating our Religious Education program. Our new Director of Parish Schools and Principal of BCA, **Kelly Bourrell**, has hit the ground running, and I think we are going to see some great things on our parish's educational ministry front. Also at BCA, **Amanda Canino** came on as school secretary. **Julie Jurisic** was promoted to Principal of SGCS and is flourishing in that role. **Fr. Paul Klavins** from Latvia joined us in July and will be with us for the year, part-time on sabbatical and part-time ministering in the parish. He will work with Lori and our Religious Education program, and accompany both our RE catechists and our school teachers in developing the lesson plans for their religion classes.

Our educational ministry continues to be the most active ministry in the parish, serving the families of nearly 450 children. Our enrollment has been stable at both sites, but at Saint Gabriel we need to either increase enrollment or increase funding (or both) in order to reduce the budget deficit. In addition, encouraging parents to partner

with us by matching the family’s commitment to weekend worship with what the children are taught about this at school is an ongoing effort. Our weekly schools page in the bulletin highlights the wonderful things occurring in our schoolhouses.

On the campus **building** side of things: as you know, most of our seven buildings are old (our newest is the same age as me; some are more than twice that)- so issues regularly crop up that need to be addressed. We finally completed the Saint Gabriel bell tower work last year. I am waiting to find out if the Archdiocese is going to do another major capital campaign soon, because if so, we will piggyback our next one with that. Otherwise, we’ll start a homegrown campaign to raise funds for the Nativity roof and the St Gabriel vestibule floor and church inside floor (for starters). The long-awaited accessibility project for our Nativity of Our Lord church is finally underway, and I am praying that it will be operational sometime this winter.

I am proud of the ways our parishioners have come together for the **social events** we’ve had (the St. Patrick’s Corned Beef dinner and the Kenned & Carl concert, for example). We have also seen great participation in efforts aimed at **helping those in need**: the Mega PB&J, the Baby Bottle project, Ministry of Care to the homebound, Second Collections at Mass , and participation in many local community organizations.

Developing a **personal relationship with Jesus** is at the heart Christian discipleship. Our liturgies, prayer events and sacraments, in addition to offering fitting worship to God, help to facilitate that relationship as we strive to be Christ’s ambassadors in the world. We can find more ways to foster this through events that provide meaningful encounters with the Lord.

Each year, as I get to know our parishioners better, I am increasingly grateful for the opportunity to serve as your pastor. I feel very positive about the direction we are headed.

May God bless you, and may God bless our Nativity of Our Lord and Saint Gabriel parish!



Rev. James F. Hurlbert
Pastor

Amount Given 7/1/22– 6/30/23	# of <u>Recorded</u> Contributors	% of Households	% of <u>Recorded</u> Contributors	% of Total Given (recorded)
\$1-15/week	470	36%	68%	22%
\$15-40/week	165	13%	24%	40%
\$40-50/week	19	1%	3%	9%
>\$50/week	34	3%	5%	29%
TOTAL <u>RECORDED</u> DONORS	688	53%		
\$0 in recorded Contribution	596	47%		
TOTAL Households	1284	100%		

WEEKLY STEWARDSHIP GIVING

I ask parishioners with jobs to make a weekly financial commitment of the **value of their first hour of work on Monday mornings** as their Stewardship Offering to support the mission and ministry of the parish. This means that a minimum of \$15/week (for those who earn minimum wage) would a responsible level of support. Our additional fundraisers can be fun ways to augment this, but as disciples we are called to respond in gratitude by making sacrificial financial support for our parish (“tithing”) a priority.

Parish Advisory Councils 2023-2024

Parish Council

Carrie Hermle

John Czubaja

Jane Christensen

Ann McBroom

Tom Flannigan

Ron Cabrera

Sean Bruen

Mary Pat Palumbo

John O'Brien

Laura Garza Lara

Kevin Sheehan

Nicolette Orlando

Tom/Jackie Costas

Jean Johnson

Ron/Sam Bossard

Finance Council

Bill Babuskow

Sharon Cordin Becker

Alex Deutsch

Sean Heneghan

Mary Ann Mahon-Huels

Colleen Hughes

Jan McDonough

Joy Vanek



Capital Improvement Projects



The main capital improvement project completed last year was the repair and tuck pointing of the St. Gabriel bell tower. Further tuck pointing will be required for the lower portion and for the church in the near future. In addition, we will begin considering replacing the carpet in the church and perhaps the kneelers. Spacing out the pews by a few more inches might also be worth considering.

At our Nativity campus, we have contracted with an architect for the platform lift, which will give accessibility to both the church and the hall. Work on this will hopefully begin in the Fall, with completion planned for some time before Easter. In addition, we need to begin considering replacing the roof on the church and the Parish Center. Interest has also been shown in remodeling the hall: adding a suspended ceiling, polishing the concrete floor, and painting.

For the bigger projects, the Archdiocese has asked us to hold off on beginning a large-scale parish Capital Campaign, as it will make more sense to piggy-back that with an expected Archdiocesan-wide Capital Campaign in 2024.

Some Statistics for the Fiscal Year 2023:

Registered Parish Households: 1284
representing 2497 individuals

(143 new families registered since July 1, 2019
establishment of the united parish)

Baptisms:
(infant): 46
(adult/children over 7): 5

Confirmations:
(children): 51
(adult): 2

First Communion:
(children): 43

Weddings: 14

Funerals: 55

Number of students enrolled:
St. Gabriel Catholic School: 171
Bridgeport Catholic Academy: 237

Number of children attending the
Religious Education Program: 65

Average total weekly Sunday Mass attendance : 560
(counted in October 2022)



OUR PARISH SCHOOLS



Dear Nativity of Our Lord and Saint Gabriel Parishioners,

It is my pleasure to serve as your new Director of Parish Schools/Principal for St. Gabriel Catholic School and Bridgeport Catholic Academy. Catholic Schools are an essential ministry of our Church. Students who attend our schools will learn to be:

- Faithful Followers who learn the teachings of the Catholic Church and allow their faith to be alive and vibrant and permeate all they are and do, in the classroom and out.
- Independent Thinkers with the academic fundamentals, critical thinking skills, personal values, and confidence necessary to solve problems independently, both in and out of the classroom.
- Young Leaders with the specific life skills and characteristics – such as integrity, self-confidence, accountability, time-management, teamwork, and self-direction – that will position them for success in high school and beyond.
- Confident Communicators who read and write at a level beyond that of the typical student at competing schools, empowering them to be confident and agile communicators who can shape and marshal words into meaningful and impactful ideas.
- Open-Minded Individuals who work alongside a diverse student body, inspiring them from an early age to see past skin color, religious affiliation and economic status as precursors to the value of another human being.

Additionally, both of our Parish Schools will be increasing the number of instructional minutes that students receive in math instruction, and there will be an emphasis on improving Language Arts and writing skills. Our faculty and staff will be provided with opportunities to work together across the two campuses and to take advantage of the strengths of each school without losing our understanding of what makes each school community unique. Every other Wednesday, teachers will meet as grade level bands to discuss ways to improve our student's growth in all areas; mind, body and spirit.

Finally, I would like to extend a special thank you to the leadership of the School Board, the BCA Home & School Association and the SGCS Family & School Association. Both groups have imagined and accomplished successful fundraising opportunities at both campuses.

Wishing you all Christ's peace,

Kelly Bourrell
Principal/Director of Parish Schools
Bridgeport Catholic Academy and St. Gabriel Catholic School

Parish and School Events

Alpha	Giving Tree	Golf Outing
St Patrick's Day Corned Beef Dinner	Blood Drive	Comedy Night
Kenned and Carl in Concert	Coat Drive	Trivia Night
Mega PB&J Nights	Thanksgiving Food Drive	Left Center Right Night
Bible Study	Pancake Breakfasts	Restaurant Nights
	Rock The Block	Little League

FINANCIALS

Thanks to the generosity of our parishioners we kept our heads “above water” on the church side the last fiscal year. Enabling us to be in the black was the fact that we were not able to fill some staffing needs for which we had budgeted. On the Schools side: tuition and fundraising at BCA allowed us to end the year in the black. The deficit for St. Gabriel Catholic School was covered by the Archdiocese and Big Shoulders, per the three-year management agreement that was renewed and will be our financial backstop through the 2024 fiscal year. This year we will develop a plan for addressing this once school finances become our responsibility in FY2025.

	Church & Religious Education	St. Gabriel Catholic School	Bridgeport Catholic Academy
Sunday/Holy Day Collections	\$ 449,241.00		
Christmas Collection	\$ 39,195.00		
Easter Collection	\$ 26,121.00		
Other Collections	\$ 832.00		
Tuition & Fees	\$ 9,128.00	\$ 688,569.00	\$ 1,221,486.00
Fundraising	\$ 51,132.00	\$ 171,873.00	\$ 116,323.00
Outside Funding Sources		\$ 132,801.00	\$ 102,036.00
Funerals/Baptisms/Weddings/Masses	\$ 67,312.00		
Other Income	\$ 1,046.00	\$ 4,469.00	\$ 3,807.00
TOTAL	\$ 644,007.00	\$ 997,712.00	\$ 1,443,652.00
Salaries/Benefits	\$ 253,239.00	\$ 946,264.00	\$ 1,066,685.00
Utilities	\$ 57,222.00	\$ 56,708.00	\$ 57,147.00
Maintenance	\$ 30,934.00	\$ 63,660.00	\$ 71,246.00
Operations/Admin Expense	\$ 37,571.00	\$ 28,390.00	\$ 36,692.00
Liturgical Costs	\$ 25,511.00		
Faith Formation/Books & Supplies	\$ 20,078.00	\$ 29,716.50	\$ 44,912.00
Insurance	\$ 65,322.00	\$ 49,307.04	\$ 55,723.00
Arch Assessments	\$ 81,244.00	\$ 6,084.00	\$ 9,144.00
Other Expenses	\$ 37,809.00	\$ 8,333.32	\$ 11,412.00
TOTAL EXPENSE	\$ 608,930.00	\$ 1,188,462.86	\$ 1,352,961.00
NET INCOME (LOSS)	\$ 35,077.00	\$ (190,750.86)	\$ 90,691.00

Other Significant Events:

Capital Collections	\$ 85,436.00		
Food Pantry Collections	\$ 11,097.00		
Religious Retirement	\$ 998.00		
Priests Retirement	\$ 1,134.00		
Propogation of the Faith (Missions)	\$ 655.00		
Catholic Campagin for Human Development	\$ 825.00		
Catholic Charities	\$ 1,051.00		
Refugees	\$ 598.00		
Annual Catholic Appeal	\$ 19,482.00	Goal:	\$20,524

END OF YEAR BALANCES	Parish	St. Gabriel School	Bridgeport Catholic Academy
Operating Accounts	\$ 116,733.25	\$ 73,975.72	\$ 102,237.69
Savings Accounts	\$ 98,029.00		\$ 184,002.28
Elevator Fund	\$ 61,411.71		
Building Fund (Nativity Campus)	\$ 28,244.95		
Building Fund (BCA)			\$ 32,211.28
Building Funds (St. Gabriel Campus)	\$ 39,207.69		
To Teach Who Christ Is Savings	\$ 38,312.81		
Auxiliary Accounts		\$ 13,644.03	\$ 101,333.76
	\$ 381,939.41	\$ 87,619.75	\$ 419,785.01

FINANCIALS CONTINUED

In the past few weeks, I have received a lot of feedback surrounding the combination of weekly contributions in the bulletin. Up until this new fiscal year, we did report the weekly collections by “church” location. We began reporting the electronic donations combined in the prior fiscal year. For the past 3 years, we have been moving towards one vendor, “Give Central” for on-line or electronic donations. Because those donations through give central all come into one account, it is unfair to report electronic donations by site.

In addition, any new parishioner that has registered since 2020 is no longer distinguished by one site or the other; but rather the new combined parish. We are excited to report that the parish continues to grow and that nearly 15% of our registered participating parishioners have registered since 2020. Some good news is that each year the number of our parishioners who do weekly on-line donations has continued to go up. This past year an average of 18% of our parishioners who donate regularly have given on-line.

I also wanted to address some of the questions and concerns relative to how we are accounting for things in the combined parish setting to alleviate any concerns from parishioners that have been expressed or been relayed to me. First and foremost, I want to reiterate that we are ONE parish that is extremely fortunate to be able to operate two church sites to continue to serve both communities in the church buildings those communities built. The Sunday collection funds that we receive through on-line and in pew contributions continue to be our primary source of income for the parish.

This past July you may have noticed that we no longer report our Sunday contributions by site but instead are only reporting one combined number each week. In addition, we have combined our 50/50 offertory raffle into one as well. Since the primary source of income comes from Sunday collections, I thought it would be helpful to explain how expenses are paid. Our single largest expense for the parish is the cost of employment. This includes salaries and benefits, accounting for nearly 37% of our total income. All of our parish employees serve in roles that support both sites but more importantly the parish as a whole. So even though I may sit at the Nativity Campus most days, as does Fr. Hurlbert, our time is split evenly between the two sites serving the needs of parishioners from both sites. Although we have office staff at each site, we do that to make it more convenient for parishioners who live closer to one site or the other to come to the office for things like mass intentions or sacramental needs. Even though there is a person at each site, their responsibilities are divided in such a way that they serve the combined parish.

One area where we do track donations separately is for the building fund and school (education) fund. Because all of our buildings are beautiful albeit older buildings, they and each present their own needs. Last summer we were able to complete the bell tower repairs at St. Gabriel campus and this coming year we hope to complete the accessibility project at the Nativity campus. Each month the building fund and school collections are taken and recorded by site and those funds are currently being deposited and tracked separately. The reason we treat them differently is that we feel that the needs differ per site and parishioners are able to designate which site they wish to support for their building fund donations.

In addition, if there are any special donations made for the upkeep or repairs to buildings on one campus or another; or if a large donation is made as part of an endowment, etc., we would honor the wishes of the donor as to how that money would be used.

On the schools’ side, financial results are normally driven by enrollment. This past year, Bridgeport Catholic Academy regained the enrollment that it lost during the Covid 19 pandemic and was able to regain some of its losses from the 2021-22 fiscal year. St. Gabriel school had a small decline in enrollment this past year but shows a larger loss than prior years. This is partially because the normal payment we receive from Big Shoulders as a subsidy for St. Gabriel has not yet been received. In the 2021-22 fiscal year that payment was in excess of \$90,000. The deficit for St. Gabriel School is covered by the Archdiocese and Big Shoulders as part of a management agreement. That agreement was set to expire on June 30th, 2023; but has been extended for one more year.

Fully funding our educational ministry will remain a challenge unless we are able to increase either enrollment or tuition rates. Currently, tuition rates are set below what it actually costs to run our schools.

If you have questions regarding this report or would like additional information about how we track and account for things; please feel free to reach out to me at kosowiec@nativitystgabriel.org.

Kim Osowiec
Operations Director.