Minutes of the 10/28/26 Parish Council Meeting

- PPC Members in attendance: Mimi Madrid, Gail Graham, Martha Zamorano, Jeff Cardell, Orlando Cruz, Father Juan, Stephen Sheahan, Cheryl Geary, Steven Lajewski, Persephone Galambos, Kent Atzinger (via Zoom), and Chichi Odenigbo.

Opened with a prayer by Father Juan

Fall Festival - October 17th

Gail reported on the results of the 2026 Fall Festival which received broadly positive reviews from attendees and volunteers alike. The Festival returned a profit to the parish that exceeded last year's return and attendance exceeded last year's Festival, as well. Gail thanked those who had provided detailed feedback for her notes and emphasized that feedback continues to be welcome.

Most of the time spent on this topic focused on challenges with the Ministry Fair. Ministry leaders, again expressed dissatisfaction with the results of the day as they have done with every iteration and variation of the event since it was first mounted. Leaders report that it is ineffective both as a recruiting vehicle for new volunteers and as outreach to those who may need the ministries' services. They complained about the difficulty of staffing the tables throughout the Fair's duration as they did when the Ministry Fair was a standalone event held over Saturday and Sunday. When we paused offering the Ministry Fair we had significant feedback from parishioners indicating that we should bring it back and positive comments when it was restored.

Council members agreed that this should be the subject of ongoing discussion.

Pastoral Council Strategic Initiatives:

- Increasing Council Participation & Bylaws

We welcomed three new Council members who attended this as their first meeting - Kent Atzinger, ChiChi Odenigbo, and Persephone Galambos. An additional candidate from the Hispanic community was identified to Father Juan who announced that a new member, Rafael Flores, will join appointees Orlando Cruz and Alex Miniel on the Council and be seated at an upcoming meeting.

Mimi announced the roll-off dates for the current Council members whose terms are expiring.

Member	Will serve through
Jean Mense	December, 2026
Ed Gallagher. Jeff Cardell	January, 2027
Stephen Sheahan	February, 2027
Mimi Madrid	April, 2027

The Council will elect new officers at the March, 2027 meeting.

Father Juan thanked all of the departing members for providing continuity through their extended service to the parish supporting multiple pastors.

- Supporting STA Ministries

Stephen Sheahan and Jeff Cardell discussed plans to meet with Jean Mense to:
- identify January dates for offering additional sessions of the Growing in Discipleship workshop which was taken by about a third of the leadership team in September and
- determine the content and timing for the Spring and Fall, 2027 developmental workshops.
Cheryl Geary asked to be included in these conversations.
Jeff took the action to schedule our next meeting.

- Encouraging & Increasing Communication

Martha Zamorano distributed, for comment, a categorized list of STA ministries which will appear in the various communications channels we use to maintain our parishioners' awareness of the many ways we can engage at STA.

- Initiating outreach to PC's @other parishes

No update this month. Activity in this initiative will likely be driven by a specific requirement that would lend itself to inter-parish sharing. To be revisited in Spring, 2027.

- Partnering with Faith Formation

There was no report this month. Stephen Sheahan will follow up with Abigail to ensure that plans for an Aquinas Gala in 2027 have been officially deferred until 2028.

Pastors Update

Father Juan reported that 53 reservations (worth $106K) have been submitted for the Columbarium. Given that the overall goal is to have 100 reservations this is very promising for the first solicitation. He also noted that there will be a $1K discount applicable for purchases made prior to 12/31/27 and that the 53 families submitting reservations were ready to proceed to purchase now, well ahead of schedule.

The Archdiocesan Capital Campaign has gotten off to a very fast start at STA. To date, nine families have made pledges that aggregate to $1.26M (43% of our overall parish goal of $2.94M). The parish will retain 30% of the target ($882,000) and 100% of every dollar collected above the target.

Newcomers Brunch

The Newcomers' Brunch which had been scheduled for 10/25 was cancelled as only 2-3 positive RSVP's had been received within a few days of the event. A number of people who had not RSVP'd to the invitation then showed up on the scheduled date which helped to highlight that we need to work on the invitation/confirmation process which currently uses more than one channel in parallel. Mimi will work with Martha on revisiting the process and rescheduling the event.

Mimi stated that the next meeting will be November 18th at 6:00PM.
Ended with a Prayer led by Father Juan.

Special Session on STA's Pre-School Program

The Council's meeting was followed by a special session (also attended by members of the Finance Committee). The session was requested by Father Juan so that members of both councils could hear directly from Kathy Hampton on issues affecting the Pre-School Program.

Kathy, who has directed the program for 30 years, will be retiring in early 2027. She brought to Fr. Juan's attention a great number of challenges, some of significant longstanding, which, if unaddressed, could undermine our ability to continue to offer the program. Father Juan asked her to brief the councils directly on the status of the preschool program so that members could in turn provide him with advisory support on a decision as to whether to close or work to sustain the program.

Kathy described for the councils, a lengthy and wide ranging list of serious problems. These ranged from declining enrollment, to the emergence of new competitors, to the inadequacy of our physical plant to attract prospective clients. She also announced without explanation that 40% of her staff have informed her that they will leave their positions when she retires. Her briefing did not include information on measures she has taken to date to address any of these problems nor any recommendations as to what she thought might be done about them.

Finally, Kathy, when questioned, ackowledged that we will need to know whether we are proceeding or closing the program in about 60 days in early January.

Thus tasked, Council members agreed that the data points Kathy had presented would need to be organized and analyzed before we would be in a position to provide well-founded advice to Father Juan. We suggested to Kathy and to Father Juan that this is not a single, binary decision that must be made now - to abandon the program or seek to sustain it. Rather, it is a series of decisions about various aspects of the program that could only be made once we brought order to the data. It was further suggested that given the very tight timeframe, within which we must address these serious concerns, it may be necessary for us, once the organized data is in hand, to develop an interim as well as a longer term solution for the program. The sense of the group overall was that this work needed to begin quickly because the preschool program is an important component of support for our parishioners.

Stephen Sheahan agreed to create an outline for the data that we will need from Kathy. And the council members agreed that we will need a series of interim meetings to get this work underway given the urgency of the problems.

-Submitted by Stephen Sheahan