

Staffing Communication

Sunday December 13, 2020

Good morning brothers and sisters in Christ. I come before you this morning to speak to you regarding impending changes to our paid staffing structure. In doing so, we feel it important that we outline for you as fully as possible how these difficult, but vital decisions were made.

From our parish, I would like to acknowledge the contribution of my colleagues on the finance council, Doug Grabham and Ken Cameron, further input from the chair of our Parish Pastoral Council John Crerar and of course Father Ignatius in working collaboratively, offering insights and expertise, to best position our beloved St Gerard's for today and into the future. A copy of this presentation will also be posted on our website.

Our financial position and trending are published quarterly and we prepare an annual comprehensive financial report as at Dec 31 each year. This reporting is published in our Bulletin and placed on the parish website and I encourage everyone to refer to this information to stay abreast of this critical component of parish life.

Since I assumed this role in 2013 and even prior, it has been more than evident that while we are managing year to year, our revenues barely exceed our expenses and there is no appreciable savings so in more understandable terms, we are essentially living hand to mouth. Extensive renovations completed in 2018 were solely attributable to a \$500,000 gift from our Knights of Columbus, without which, our washrooms, windows, doors and flooring would continue to deteriorate and our parking lot crumble.

With this as our backdrop, a day-to-day discipline to manage our expenses became our theme and in fact our mantra, particularly studying our staffing costs which are by far our highest fixed cost. In addition to discussions within our Finance Council, we also consulted with members of the Calgary Catholic Diocese and in late 2019 we began finalizing a solution that would see a notable reduction in staff costs due to a proposed realignment of our paid full-time office staff to reduced hour part-time positions.

As we all know, in early 2020, we began facing the Covid-19 pandemic, which cancelled and overrode all plans; thus, meeting with our staff to introduce this realignment was set on hold. Further, working with the Diocese, positions deemed non-essential were temporarily laid off as of May 1, 2020, conjunctive with the full closer of all churches. This directly impacted Doreen and Gordon.

While this was a difficult task, we were thankful that it was temporary; and that with the government programs and top up option we were allowed to provide, our impacted employees would retain 80% of their pre-Covid salaries. In addition to saving staff costs through this period, the Diocese also set aside the 14.5% cathedraticum on gross revenues charged to parishes as a further aid to cutting costs and creating the environment for parishes to survive during this period.

As you know, we are required to prepare a budget annually (these budgets, once approved are also posted on our website) and that process began in October. Again, working with the Diocese, all parishes were asked to budget paid staff costs to not exceed a band of 30%-38% of 70% of the past three-years average revenues. For St Gerard's this amounted to slightly more than \$128,000.

When comparing this number to our pre-pandemic work hour reduction plan, it was evident that even reducing positions to Part-Time

would still exceed this budget stipulation. Accordingly, the Diocese asked all parishes to look at all options to stay within their respective targets.

Again, working directly with the Diocese and after careful comparative review to parishes across the Diocese in the context of our historical pattern of diminishing attendance and stagnant revenues, we determined the best solution for St Gerard's was to combine our two office positions into one comprehensive full-time job, that would combine dual Evangelical and Management support to Father Ignatius. It was felt this full-time position was necessary to meet the needs of our parish and also creating a wholesome challenge for a qualified candidate and ensure longer term consistency and contingency. The new job is entitled, **Pastoral Program Coordinator**.

As was the case for the entire Diocese, this new position required the express approval of the bishop, which was provided in early November and resulted in one-on-one meetings delivered by a Diocesan representative and Father Ignatius with each of Doreen, Jan and Gordon. At that meeting, our staff were advised of the outcome determined for their positions as referred to in the Bishop's open letter of November 3, 2020 and respective severance packages were presented on a confidential basis to all staff. In the case of Gordon's position, it will be reduced to a 26 hr weekly part-time role.

Slightly over a week ago, all severed staff were again directly contacted by the Diocese and were given the first option to apply for all of the new positions being created out of all of the various restructuring efforts throughout the Diocese. This privilege was accorded out of respect and fairness considerations for all of our impacted staff as these changes impacted 55% of Diocesan and parish staff, including Administrative staff, cleaners, librarians, youth coordinators, bookkeepers, music directors, pastoral assistants/coordinators,

sacrament coordinators and housekeepers. All severed staff were given this option to apply for these new positions up until end of day yesterday, December 12, 2020.

Any resumes received will be reviewed by the Diocese and forwarded to the parish pastor to arrange interviews which are expected this upcoming week. As at yesterday, Dec 12, we had been provided with two candidates from other impacted parishes in the Diocese and interviews with each of those individuals are pending. Should these candidates prove unsuccessful, our new position will be exposed to an open public competition with hopes of the successful incumbent being seated by early January.

My brothers and sisters, we can assure you that while this has been a difficult and at times painful period for all, our staff were accorded fairness and openness as well as out-reach by Father Ignatius in recognition of the long-standing nature of capable service provided by both Doreen and Jan who over the years have become interwoven intrinsically to our parish fabric. We sincerely thank them for their contribution; they will remain in our hearts and we hope they will remain with us as we continue our faithful journey's as united members of St Gerard's.

As we now turn to the future, let us all join in prayerful hope that we find that "right" person to assume the role of our new Pastoral Program Coordinator, who we will receive joyfully and thankfully, offering our full support and cooperation as we continue our ongoing travels on the road to building a strong vibrant church and community, preserving our stewardship and sustaining the future of our beloved St Gerard's!

Murray Gartner
Finance Council Chair