

How the Parish Works: Part 3

Part 2 discussed the duties of priests and deacons at our dual-church parish of Holy Disciples (Puyallup) and Our Lady of Good Counsel (Eatonville). In this installment, we turn our attention to parish staffing and finances.

The mission of the Church is to *introduce people to Jesus and the Kingdom of God* by proclaiming the Good News of the Gospel, preaching repentance for the forgiveness of sins, and baptizing all people in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit (Mt 28:18-20; Mk 16:15-16; Lk 24:47; Jn 20:22-23).

Every parish exists to carry out the mission of the Universal—that is, Catholic (from Greek *katholikos*)—Church. The pastor directs the parish to live out the Gospel by devotion to the teaching of the Apostles, the communal life, the breaking of bread (Eucharist) and prayer (Acts 2:42).

Our dual-church parish has professional staff persons who assist the pastor in carrying out the pastoral mission of the parish. Deacon Rod assists in coordinating parish life and ministries as a part-time **Pastoral Assistant at Our Lady of Good Counsel**. At Holy Disciples, we have a full-time **Pastoral Associate** (Rosemary O'Brien-Wilson) assisting the Pastor with overseeing the overall pastoral ministry and programs at Holy Disciples, with direct responsibility for **Adult and Elementary Faith Formation and Pastoral Care** (K-6 Religious Education, Baptism, First Reconciliation, First Eucharist, Adult Baptism, Adult Reception into the Church, Pastoral Care to Hospitals and the Home-bound).

We also have **Pastoral Assistants for Administration** (Jack Gillitzer in the Parish Office and Susie Brown for Bookkeeping and Business Management); **Youth Ministry and Liturgy** (Carmen Bryant); **Stewardship** (Tom O'Brien-Wilson), and **Facilities Management** (Mike Bourlier). Additionally, we have an **Office Assistant** (Coleen Dory) who does additional office work and offers ministry support for the various parish programs and a **Sacramental Records Keeper** (Mary Jo Oboy).

Pastoral assistants are *paid staff* who work with the pastor and are responsible directly to him in carrying out the pastoral vision of the parish, in accordance with guidelines set by the Archdiocese of Seattle. The parish staff primarily serves the needs and programs at Holy Disciples, but bookkeeping and business-related issues, stewardship development, and maintenance of sacramental records are also provided to Our Lady of Good Counsel. Our Pastoral Assistants are all part-time positions, and the source of salary and benefits is proportionate to services rendered.

Just as the dual-church composition of our parish poses challenges for its priest-pastor and deacon, so it challenges the pastoral staff as well. Take sacramental records and administration of finances: we have **two sets of sacramental records** (Holy Disciples and Our Lady of Good Counsel). Finances are even more complicated.

We must maintain **two separate checking accounts for general operations** (Holy Disciples and Our Lady of Good Counsel), **two sets of savings and building accounts**, **two sets of financial books**, **two sets of financial reporting to the appropriate committees**, and **two sets of records for contributions** at Holy Disciples and Our Lady of Good Counsel!

So what happens to our money when it is collected each weekend? Collections received at Sunday Mass or through the mail, are counted by supervised parishioners who have had background checks.

After counting, funds are then recorded and deposited in the respective banks accounts for Holy Disciples and Our Lady of Good Counsel, depending on which church the funds were received at, or which church's envelope was used for a contribution.

All funds received, including electronic donations, are posted based on the date received and occasions indicated by envelope, transaction type, or transaction date.

How are offerings used? For human and material resources shared by both communities—priest and lay salaries and benefits, and central parish office expenses, we share the costs between our two

communities using a formula that fairly divides expenses by the percentage of registered households in each community— Holy Disciples at 90% and Our Lady of Good Counsel at 10%.

Funding of faith formation and ministry program costs, contributions to our outreach to the poor and needy, and our support for the wider Church, are handled separately by Holy Disciples and Our Lady of Good Counsel. We aim to offer some 10% of our ordinary income to outreach to the poor and needy. Our Lady of Good Counsel is responsible for the salary and benefits of its Pastoral Assistant.

The cost of maintaining separate church facilities is born by the respective community, as is the cost of weekend priest help in compensation and travel costs. For example, when the pastor (Fr. Matthew) celebrates Sunday Mass at Our Lady of Good Counsel, then Holy Disciples pays for their visiting priest for that Sunday morning. The process works in reverse when the pastor celebrates Sunday morning Mass at Holy Disciples.

Each community is separately assessed an amount to support the work of the Archdiocese of Seattle— based on ordinary income (Sunday collections throughout the year) —and a much smaller amount to support the Holy See.

It is important to know that money collected at Our Lady of Good Counsel is not deposited into Holy Disciples' bank account. Funds from each of our communities go into their separate checking accounts. Next, bills are paid either in *shared proportions* between our two communities, where appropriate, or *separately*. Finally, what is left goes into the respective community's own savings account, called a *Parish Revolving Fund*, mandated by the Archdiocese of Seattle, a corporation sole.

Contributions designated for *Building Funds* or for some other specific purpose are recorded in an appropriate restricted account, which cannot be used for any purpose other than that intended by the donor.

So who supervises parish funds? Holy Disciples and Our Lady of Good Counsel each have a **Finance Council** that meets with the pastor to review revenue and expense reports. Holy Disciples' Finance Council is a free-standing council, while the councils at Our Lady of Good Counsel is merged into a combined **Pastoral Council-Finance Council** body. The Church mandates that Finance Councils function for purposes of accountability and participation in pastoral life.

Do you send us bills each quarter? Financial statements are *not* bills—they are *courtesy statements* for parish accountability, and reminders for parishioners of promised pledges, which the parish depends on for budgetary planning and commitments. Each quarter we have about one upset caller expressing consternation over our sending of these courtesy statements.

NEXT WEEK: parish decision-making, parish councils and committees.

Blessings,
Fr. Matthew L. O'Leary,
Pastor