

OUR LADY OF GUADALUPE CHURCH PARISH

PASTORAL AND FINANCE COUNCIL JOINT MEETING MINUTES

June 18, 2025 – Parish Rectory

I. ROLL CALL

Attendees: Monsignor Joseph Gentili, Father Herbert Sperger, Richard Clark, Timothy Conniff, Paul Crovo, Christopher Dern, Dominique Galloway, Matthew Gavinelli, John Graham, Peter Hawley, Mike Herron, Kimberly Hirsch, Lisa Kopertowski, Don Kraft, Anthony Mantellino, Jonathan Martin, Tony Martin, Juan Navia, Ellen Roehm, David Serrano, Bob Silberg, Ryan Visniski, Linda Wilbourne, Edward Zupanc

Excused: Deacon Bob Brady, Karen Brody, Laura Campbell, William Conway, Philip Junker, Raymond Kalouche, Barbara Kieffer, Michele Savage, Edward Zapisek

Recording Secretary: Alicia Augustine

II. OPENING PRAYER/REFLECTION

Gospel for June 18, 2025, from Matthew 6:1-6: “Jesus said to his disciples: ‘Take care not to perform righteous deeds in order that people may see them; otherwise, you will have no recompense from your heavenly Father. When you give alms, do not blow a trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets to win the praise of others. Amen, I say to you, they have received their reward. But when you give alms, do not let your left hand know what your right is doing, so that your almsgiving may be secret. And your Father who sees in secret will repay you.’...”

Msgr. Gentili shared part of the gospel reading for today’s meeting, reflecting on the fact that, at this point in Jesus’ sermon on the mount, He is setting a high bar regarding view of the law and the importance of the right disposition in all we do. Msgr. Gentili also points out how our Lord calls us to an interior disposition which is genuinely humble and sincere. Msgr. added that he had just celebrated the funeral Mass for parishioner Maureen Sapelli who, as an active parishioner and founding member of the Love in Deed ministry, truly lived this gospel in healing and serving despite her own trials. Others added their reflections about humbly offering our gifts to the Lord and being careful not to seek human respect over God’s way. Msgr. Gentili led the Lord’s Prayer for the prayers and intentions of those present.

III. APPROVAL OF MINUTES FROM PREVIOUS JOINT COUNCIL MEETING

Matt Gavinelli motioned, and Tony Martin seconded, to approve the minutes from the meeting on December 4, 2024. The members of the committee unanimously approved the minutes, which will be posted on the website.

IV. OLG Carnival

Matt Gavinelli relayed that the OLG Carnival was successful and thanked Dominique Galloway, Karen Babick, Valerie Mulligan, Jay Santiago, and others. Msgr. Gentili also celebrated its success despite less than ideal weather, with an impressive number of gift baskets and an incredible cleanup job. He also extended his heartfelt gratitude for the months of planning effort and execution.

V. OLG 25 Year Anniversary

Msgr. Gentili remarked on how the 25-year journey of the parish and encouraged everyone to infuse that sense of gratitude and celebration into parish-wide efforts for the entire year. He gave the example of how

Matt Gavinelli purchased a cake with the OLG 25th Anniversary logo (designed by David Serrano) and distributed free cake slices at the OLG Carnival. More formally, there will be a celebratory dinner dance on November 8th at the Bucks Club. Former priests, deacons, and seminarians have been invited. Fr. Quindlen will celebrate the Mass.

Msgr. Gentili thanked Juan Navia for leading efforts to write the OLG history, a process which has included interviews with former priests and deacons, as well as documenting the historical context in which the parish has grown. Juan Navia mentioned that the next step will be to invite some parishioners to provide anecdotes of the past.

VI. Strategic Plan 2026-2031

Each of the three sub-committees have contributed to the development of the Strategic Plan for 2026-2031. Don Kraft is leading the writing effort and has met with several groups for input. The current goal is to approve the plan by December 2025. Tonight, Don Kraft presented the working draft for discussion and feedback.

The new strategic plan will have the same mission and vision as the previous version, but will shift focus towards the next phase of growth. It will also anticipate any known Archdiocese of Philadelphia initiatives (eg. The Fourth Way). Msgr. Gentili reiterated the desire to stay faithful to the seven areas provided by the AOP/ USCCB. A few Joint Council members agreed with the need to evolve as a parish and thanked Don for organizing the initial assessment and content.

A. Evangelization Committee

The self-assessment process for the new strategic plan indicated that OLG stabilized well post-COVID and has a solid financial and administrative infrastructure. The previous strategic plan had set to achieve a 20% growth in mass attendance by 2026, but this goal could not have anticipated the negative impact of the COVID pandemic on mass attendance. The implementation and use of livestreaming helped parishioners to stay connected during the pandemic and now continues to be a lifeline for the home-bound and long-distance relatives of those receiving sacraments. Results of the first of two Disciple Maker Index surveys indicate that OLG has an engaged core group of parishioners in this post-pandemic phase. Fortunately, OLG has re-gained around 80% of pre-COVID in-person mass attendance, but livestreaming and in-person attendance have leveled off and are below what was projected in the prior strategic plan. Thus, the Evangelization Committee needs to put measures in place to foster real growth.

Several council members discussed that a measure of parishioner engagement should also be included as a measure of growth. Msgr. Gentili agreed that adding metrics for spiritual growth of parishioners would be appropriate and that his personal wish is to see at least two seminarians from OLG. The PREP program has been working hard to engage families in parish life, with a mindset to foster relationships that lead them to value their church community. Mike Herron conveyed that Adult Faith Formation is working hard to develop curriculum for adults in all phases of their spiritual growth (ie: those who are brand new to Catholicism, those with newly baptized infants, those who have fallen away, or those who would like to gain confidence as a missionary disciple). Msgr. Gentili added that OLG has an existing template that can be expanded to assist with these plans, and that any measure of population or spiritual growth should be as intentional as possible in preparation for any unforeseen circumstances.

Next, council discussion shifted from growth to OLG's role in the broader community and the Archdiocese of Philadelphia. All parishes are facing the reality of fewer priests and an aging parishioner population. Msgr. Gentili encouraged everyone that OLG is already working with a "Fourth Way mindset" and is starting to organically expand and align efforts with regional parishes,

but that the strategic plan will need input and ideas from all ministries on how to develop programs and efforts that reduce redundancies and resources required to accomplish shared goals. Matt Gavinelli plans to lead a review of ministries to look for inefficiencies and redundancies, with the goal of learning how we can streamline efforts so that leaders don't get tired out. Bob Silberg added that this type of assessment may benefit from looking at the skills required to run, versus participate in, ministries in order to help identify people who may be able to help or replace aging leaders. Tim Coniff and Lisa Kopertowski supported the "direct ask" approach as the most effective at engaging people in participation and leadership. Several council members also felt that engaging youth and young adults will yield adults who are engaged. Msgr. Gentili followed that we may be able to leverage the ministry weekend differently to foster parishioner engagement.

B. Institutional Review

Juan Navia stepped up to lead the Institutional Review sub-committee after the untimely passing of Bob Weikel, who will be missed. Juan has taken on the tasks of developing a parish history, ensuring that each of the forty-eight ministries are running efficiently, and evaluating the status of OLG standard operating procedures. Msgr. Gentili will assist Juan in identifying gaps in these areas and implementing solutions (eg: updating and training on standard operating procedures, encouraging ministries to keep a binder of successes and failures and minutes, helping ministries with recruitment, establishing a common place for ministries to post activities, and developing a process for routine evaluation of church maintenance). Matt Gavinelli noted that his proposed ministry review process can assist in identifying and filling these gaps. Juan and Lisa Kopertowski noted that a shared calendar would identify places for collaboration and identify opportunities for youth service hours. Msgr. Gentili agreed that each of the points discussed are an opportunity for improvement.

C. Fiscal Responsibility

Dick Clark provided a brief financial history, stressing that "without margin there is no mission" and that the finance council has an important fiduciary responsibility to the parish community. Over the past 25 years, OLG has built the church, Parish Life Center, and prayer garden, changed mortgage providers (and negotiated reduced mortgage rates), made balloons payments, and covered unexpected major projects around \$500,000. During this time, OLG parishioners came through via eight capital campaigns, weekly collections, and stewardship campaigns. More than 50% of weekly collections are now received electronic giving, which helps to reduce fluctuations in income. The Finance Council has also guided the establishment and maintenance of financial reserves and increased cash flow via several avenues, including shifts in funds from a bank account with 0.1% interest into Vanguard and short term treasury bills with 4.25% interest. Dick relayed that despite challenges, OLG came out in fairly good shape and still accomplished goals.

Looking forward, Dick relayed that the fixed budget of \$2.1 million does not allow for a lot of variable or discretionary spending, so one goal for the next strategic plan period will be to increase reserves to 4-6 months. Additionally, OLG needs to maintain the ability to assist the Archdiocese of Philadelphia if/when needed. When considering changes in the geopolitical and economic environment, inflation over the 5-year plan, it appears that OLG will need to draw \$40,000 per week in weekly collections to break even. This does not account for expansion of parish activities. OLG parishioner generosity and expansion of financial initiatives help to make up some of this difference (eg: increased Stewardship appeal goals and initiation of Planned Giving program), but more parishioners are needed to achieve the income needed. The Planned Giving program, led by Paul Crovo, has yielded 3 committed families and 11 interested families and is very important from a sustainable standpoint. Policies on how to direct these funds are forthcoming. Related, memorialization opportunities were nicely outlined by Msgr in a recent bulletin issue and will help with church environment.

Council members shared Dick's concern that the new strategic plan needs to include plans that yield more parishioners and greater return on investment from ministry activities and investments. Dick agreed with Juan that protecting funds for ministries will help to support those parishioners who are engaged in the work of the parish and influence their desire to give, and as a result, directly and indirectly grows the parish. Dick also agreed with Anthony's suggestion to model an 80:10:10 principle (80% bills: 10% savings: 10% charity) as a responsible accountability structure. This committee will continue to work with Msgr. Gentili and Don to develop the financial portion of the new strategic plan.

VII. Evangelization Initiatives

A. Youth/Young Adult Ministry

Lisa Kopertowski discussed how youth ministry activities are slightly scaled back for the summer. She will take the high school kids to Steubenville and is preparing for weekly Middle School summer fun nights with Bible Study. In late July, she will be attending World Youth Day in Rome and meeting with the Pope. She and her assistant, Gena Ortega, are also gearing up for youth activities for next year and planning for Kairos. The Young Adult Ministry continues to meet throughout the summer in targeted studies for boys and girls. The Young Adults will be taking over First Friday Adoration until 8pm, with lots of parent support and a goal to do it every week. Msgr. Gentili offered his gratitude for her efforts.

B. Parish Religious Education Program (PREP)

Matt Gavinelli provided the PREP update. Kids are currently participating in the new 7th and 8th grade week-long PREP intensive. Karen and Joanna will continue to work with those students throughout the year to ensure that they fulfill all PREP requirements. Those students who did not participate in the week-long program will attend weekly PREP during the school year. There are students from other parishes participating.

C. Hispanic Ministry

David Serrano shared that the Hispanic Ministry has been continuing its Café Guadalupano support group on 2nd Tuesdays of the month, with around 13-15 attendees at each meeting. Additionally, 12-13 people have been attending a new group that prays the rosary in Spanish at Shrine area. David is excited to collaborate with other ministries in new ways, including the upcoming concert in collaboration with the social committee. There is a family picnic planned for July 13, during which time he hopes to make families aware of the St. Raphaela Center and their Spanish-speaking retreats in the Philadelphia area. Future plans include the celebration of the Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe on December 12, for which Archbishop Perez will be the main celebrant, and the 2026 Pilgrimage to the Basilica of Our Lady of Guadalupe in Mexico City, for which Msgr. Gentili will be the spiritual director.

D. Adult Faith Formation

Mike Herron presented how he and others are busy reflecting, planning, and executing some new initiatives and informing the development of the strategic plan. He has been in close contact with ministry coordinators and faith formation programs to offer guidance, collaboration, budget support, and review and redirection as needed. Msgr. Gentili thanked Mike for his efforts to perform the needs assessments within parish activities that will help OLG run more efficiently and address unmet needs for adult faith formation.

Mike conveyed that he would like to see growth for OCIA and would like to run Christ Life again. Christ Life should finish before summer break and they may explore offering a condensed version in conjunction with Monday PREP. Don Kraft added that he felt that Christ Life was a successful

and sufficient means by which to help people prepare to live as missionary disciples. Lisa Kopertowski mentioned that graduated participants could be encouraged to bring one or two new people to the next session in an effort to encourage growth of the program. Mike conveyed that all of this feedback will be incorporated, and other initiatives will be developed and expanded over the coming months.

VIII. PASTOR'S REPORT

Msgr. Gentili had no new information to report but expressed his gratitude for everyone's efforts in the ministries, councils, and strategic planning process. He encouraged everyone to provide feedback to Don Kraft, noting that after revision and incorporation of feedback, they should be on track to vote the new strategic plan in by December.

IX. QUESTIONS/CONCERNS/NEW BUSINESS

No new business or questions were brought before the Joint Council.

X. NEXT MEETING

Combined Meeting of the Parish Councils: December 3, 2025

XI. CLOSING PRAYER

Msgr. Gentili concluded the meeting by leading everyone in the Hail Mary offered for the intentions of those present, for those who are sick or deceased, and especially those who helped to build the parish over the past 25 years.