



September 2020

Dear Saint Francis Xavier Parishioners,

Six months ago, our way of being church changed significantly. I have been inspired by the many creative ways in which so many have kept alive the St. Francis Xavier Parish mission, ministries, and community spirit amid the COVID-19 restrictions. They include our parish and school staff, our Reopening Leadership Team, over one hundred volunteers, and countless other parishioners. We developed a “drive through” Food Pantry to serve an increasing number of area families; we celebrated a parking lot graduation ceremony for the St. Francis Elementary School Class of 2020; prayer groups have relocated to Zoom; ministers of care have remained in contact with those they could not visit in person until recently; weekly recordings of Holy Week, Easter, and Sunday Mass developed into livestreams of Sunday Mass that can continue beyond the pandemic to reach those who are unable to gather with us in person.

Amid the uncertainties and risks, we have not been overwhelmed. Rather, our St. Francis Xavier family remains a beacon of hope in our community. The Spirit continues to inspire and challenge us to build community, to strengthen communion in Christ, and to serve the needs of the larger St. Francis Xavier community and those we serve in ever new ways. **Thank you!** Here are some highlights.

CARES ACT and PAYROLL PROTECTION PLAN

The COVID-19 crisis has created financial instability for many, including houses of worship. The Archdiocese of Chicago encouraged all parishes and parish schools to apply for the Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) loans that became available in April. This loan helped us maintain critical staff through the end of the fiscal year. This autumn, we will apply for full forgiveness of that loan, which is part of the program. Thank you to all parish, bank, and Archdiocesan personnel who worked to secure the loan; these funds made it possible to complete the last fiscal year in a healthy position and to plan for the current fiscal year with realistic hopes for what is possible.

PARISH STEWARDSHIP OF RESOURCES

On June 30, 2020, we closed the last fiscal year with an operating surplus of \$36,141. This was despite a drop of \$86,500 in regular income from Sundays and Easter during the four months without Masses in our church home. The lost revenue was offset by reduced payroll expenses. Last year, we operated without an Associate Pastor or a Pastoral Associate, and, last October, we reduced the Youth Ministry position to part time. We reduced school expenses last summer when we brought all elementary school programs “Under One Roof,” eliminating the lease and administrative costs of the former East Campus. Finally, all staff carefully managed expenditures throughout the year.

LOOKING FORWARD

Our challenge going forward is to work creatively within the limits imposed by COVID and to deepen the spirit of community and communion that have been hallmarks of this faith community. Our new Associate Pastor, Fr. Rich Milek [click here](#), and our new Pastoral Associate, Maggie McMahon [click here](#), have been meeting with ministry organization leaders to develop new ways to pray, learn, and serve within our virtual reality. Terri Simeoni is developing a program to engage and nurture our School of Religious Education

families to grow in faith through a 100% virtual format. Sharon Garcia and our school staff continue to enhance our in-class and virtual academic and faith programs; Mary Tassi and the School Advisory Board are seeking ways to strengthen school community connections and meet a \$200,000 fundraising goal. Allen Sterwalt has been developing virtual performances with members of our parish choirs [click here](#). Mary Freeman has adapted our Food Pantry outreach to operate outdoors throughout the winter. The business office and facilities department continue to manage all physical demands of our new reality to keep our campus safe. And our office support staff continues to do all their regular tasks from home, including answering the phone from 8:30-4:30 on weekdays and 9:00-Noon on Saturday.

October has become a month in which we, the St. Francis Xavier family, reflect on our stewardship of what God has given us: time we devote to prayer; talents we share in the community; and treasure we offer to fund Christ's mission on earth. **Thank you** to all the volunteers who share your time and talent to enliven our mission. **Thank you** to so many parishioners for your continued generosity, even when many of you experience financial stresses. If your household has the means to increase your regular offertory contribution, you will help us close the significant deficit that we anticipate this fiscal year due to the ongoing effects of COVID; more importantly, you will help us remain vital in living our mission. St. Francis Xavier Parish is 130 years strong and continues to grow and change. We continue to seek opportunities in the face of obstacles and to trust that *God already has placed among us all we need* to do so. Our work is to discover and encourage what already is in our midst, and to reach out to serve those in need.

Let us pray for one another, especially those among us who experience fear, loneliness, or depression. May our worship be lively and life-giving, our growth in faith persistent and multi-generational, and our outreach to others kind and selfless. God bless us all.

Peace,
Fr. Bill