What is the Pastoral Council, and Who Should Consider Serving?

The Pastoral Council, a team of about a dozen parish members, works collaboratively to guide and determine the parish's direction. This is achieved through providing leadership, leading pastoral planning, and initiating and directing policies that flow from the parish mission. All of this is done in close collaboration with the parish priest, fostering a sense of unity and teamwork among the members.

The pastoral council is visionary, direction-setting, and policy-formulating—in other words, it focuses on the big picture. The pastoral team, committees/councils, and volunteers are responsible for implementing policies and doing the work of the church.

The Pastoral Council meets monthly on the first Wednesday at 7:00 p.m. Members are asked to commit to a 3-year term and serve on one of the commissions: Education, Christian Service, Parish Life, or Worship.

A person representing the parish through the Pastoral Council should possess the following characteristics and/or qualities:

- Be a practicing Catholic
- Be self-motivated, energetic, outgoing
- Be looking for a way to be involved
- Be a good decision maker
- Be a good team player
- Be a good communicator
- Have the time, desire, and conviction to serve
- Be registered in the parish

Become Familiar with St. Pius X Councils, Commissions and Committees

St. Pius X is shepherded by Fr. Martin Ezeihuaku, MSP, Pastor. Fr. Martin seeks consultation with three primary Councils: the Council of Elders, the Finance Council, and the Pastoral Council. The Pastoral Council has four commissions:

Education Commission (EC): The Education Commission assists the Pastor and pastoral team in developing, promoting, coordinating, and evaluating all parish activities relating to Catholic education within the parish and to evangelize both within and beyond the parish.

EC meets on the second Thursday of the month at 6:00 pm at the Parish Center.

Christian Service Commission (CSC): promotes the church's social mission through direct service, ecumenical involvement, and cooperation with civic and other groups that seek to further justice and peace. St. Pius X is one of the original Family Promise churches, a shared ministry of area faith communities whose mission is to restore homeless families to self-sufficiency. CSC facilitates this ministry which we host at least four times a year. Some other CSC ministries include Pak-A-Kid, Christmas Angels, Food Collection Weekend, and other ministries that serve the needy in our family and follow our Catholic Social Teaching.

CSC Meets the first Thursday of the month at 6:30 pm at the Parish Center.

Parish Life Commission (PLC): Fosters a community spirit and enhances parish communications. Responsible for overseeing parish website, social media, bulletin, and Flocknote communication. Coordinates efforts for parish events such as the Parish Picnic, Coffee & Rolls, Five Weeks of Thanksgiving, and Name Tag Weekends.

PLC meets on the fourth Tuesday of each month at 4 pm at the Parish Center.

Worship Commission: The Worship Commission cultivates full, conscious, and active participation in the parish's liturgical, sacramental, and prayer life. It coordinates, plans, evaluates, and oversees all areas of liturgy and communal worship in our parish. The commission studies the rites and traditions of our Church and seeks to nurture and promote the liturgical life of our parish.

The Worship Commission meets on the third Wednesday of each month at 6:30 pm at the Parish Center.

For more details on the above, as well as information about Christian Formation, the Development Committee, Young Adults, Youth Ministry, Bible Studies, CCW, KCs, and more, please go to the parish website www.stpiusxblgs.org and the parish Facebook page "St. Pius X Parish."

We, the St. Pius X Community, are strengthened and guided by the Holy Spirit as we seek to follow Jesus Christ. We are a family called together to celebrate in sacramental worship and share in a caring ministry to one another. We value each person in our faith community. Our faith moves us to action and service. We welcome and reach out to all.

Our Parish is founded on and carried forward by:

- ✞The guidance and wisdom of the Holy Spirit
- ✞Celebration and worship
- ✞Our caring and welcoming community
- ✞Respect for life and the diversity of individuals
- ✞Living what we believe in the broader community

A History of St. Pius X Catholic Community 1958 – Present

(Adapted & Edited from 1958-2008 50th Anniversary Parish Directory)

St. Pius X Parish began as a cemetery. Calvary Cemetery was opened in 1906, at the time St. Patrick's Church was being built in downtown Billings. It was in the countryside west of Billings and served the Catholic Community of Yellowstone County.

Holy Rosary Parish was established on 5th Street West in 1951 as the city expanded westward. It was soon bursting at the seams. In February of 1957, Bishop William J. Condon announced that a new parish would be built on the western half of the Calvary Cemetery property at 18th St. West. The cemetery had been closed in 1956. Pope Pius X had been canonized on May 19, 1954, and the new parish was named in his honor.

Fr. Andrew J. Zarek, pastor of Holy Rosary Parish, was responsible for creating the new parish. He established St. Pius X Mission and began constructing a new church and school. According to the custom of the times, the school would be built first, and Mass would be held in the gymnasium for a few short years until the new church was constructed. Little did people know they would be in the gym for forty years!

The new parish was formally established by a decree of Bishop Condon on October 11, 1958. Construction on the school had begun the previous summer, and as each classroom was completed, children were moved to the new building from the overcrowded Holy Rosary School. Sr. Mary Julitta Doerhoff was the first principal. By Christmas, all the classrooms were being used, and Mass was being held in the gym. The first Midnight Mass was on Christmas Eve 1958.

In 1959 St. Pius X Parish had almost seven hundred registered families. By 1964 that number had grown to nearly one thousand, and thoughts began to turn to building the long-awaited new church. A new church was built but not in St. Pius X parish. St. Thomas the Apostle Parish was established northwest of St. Pius, and three hundred parishioners became part of the new parish. Another thirty years would pass before a new church for St. Pius became possible.

The "old rectory" house on the corner of 18th St. West and Yellowstone Avenue was replaced in 1973. The new priests' residences soon began to serve as parish offices. As the parish staff grew, the offices began to take over more space. Fr. Jerry Connolly, pastor from 1987 to 1993, was the last priest to live in what eventually became "the parish offices."

By 1984, there were no longer any sisters on the school faculty. In 1986, all Catholic Schools were consolidated into one system.

Fr. Steve Tokarski became pastor of St. Pius X in July 1993, and the community was still celebrating in a school gym. He recalled, "I didn't come here to build a church. I came here and discovered a parish that desperately wanted to build a church. All I could do was respond." A building committee was formed, and four years later, Bishop Anthony Milone dedicated the new church on October 19th, 1997.

Following the dedication, the additions, both liturgical and artistic, to the church continued, including stained glass windows, stations of the cross, carvings to adorn the processional doors to

the cemetery, a new organ, new bells for the town, a new classical piano, and much more. A second capital campaign was launched to enable the re-opening of Calvary Cemetery, the expansion and renovation of the parish offices, and the creation of a youth center in the former convent east of the school. Approximately four million dollars was expended over the years to complete these projects. The debt has now been eliminated.

In October 2011, St. Pius X faced a dramatic loss after nearly 20 years of being led by Fr. Steve Tokarski. Fr. Steve died of cancer on October 4th. Amid the shock and grief, a beautiful liturgical celebration of his life was held on Friday, October 7th. The church was overflowing; a tent was erected next to the St. Francis Intermediate gymnasium to overflow the reception. Bishop Michael Warfel, brother Priests and Deacons concelebrated.

The "Fr. Steve Way of the Cross Memorial Garden," made possible through donations by parishioners and friends, was designed by Stacey Robinson, parishioner of Land Design, Inc. The Stations of the Cross came from the original church and were encased in stone that matched the façade of the church. The dedication was on Sunday, October 7, 2012. A Fr. Steve Tokarski Memorial Scholarship for St. Pius X students who attend St. Francis Intermediate was created, and the first two scholarships were awarded in 2013.

From October until April, Frs. John Houlihan and Tony Schuster, both retired priests, shepherded the parish. Msgr. John M. Steiner of the Diocese of Spokane served a brief tenure from December through February 2012. On the weekend of April 21 & 22, 2012, the parish embraced our new pastor Fr. Wayne Pittard. Fr. Wayne, upon arrival, shared with the parish and community at large: *"I never thought that I would be the person to inherit his vision of what it means to be the body of Christ, the church, manifested in the parish of St. Pius X in Billings. I have a sense this might be the completion of the circle. I started with Steve…following the spirit of Steve to his parish, and he asked me to take the parish after him. I'm looking forward to growing in my own spirituality here.* Fr. Wayne oversaw the development of the Fr. Steve Way of the Cross Memorial Garden, the dedication of a beautiful statue of St. Kateri, and the installation of the two new columbaria in May of 2014.

Following Fr. Wayne's retirement on June 29, 2018, Fr. Greg Staudinger was assigned as pastor. Previously, Fr. Greg Staudinger served thirty years in Eastern Montana, so Bishop Warfel decided it was time he moved "west." On June 30, 2019, we welcomed Fr. Greg as our pastor, and he commented: "I'll take it day at a time, onward and upward through the fog, I'll look up one day and seven years will have passed."

On April 17, 2023, Fr. Martin Ezeihuaku, MSP, was assigned as the pastor to St. Pius X by Bishop Michael Warfel and Coadjutor Bishop Jeffery Fleming. Fr. Martin came from Wolf Point, so the adjustment to such a large parish was an adjustment.

St. Pius X Catholic Community has fully embraced Vatican II's vision of lay ministry and has a vibrant base of dynamic disciples who serve in many capacities: Pastoral Council, Finance Council, and the four commissions: Christian Service, Education, Parish Life, and Worship. In addition, there are many groups, such as the Council of Catholic Women, Knights of Columbus, and St. Michael's Circle. There are several Bible studies, small faith-sharing groups, and prayer groups. In 2009 a group of young adults approached Fr. Steve and asked to form a Young Adult ministry.

St. Pius X was one of the original churches involved in what was initially called Interfaith Hospitality Network and is now Family Promise, a shared ministry of Billings area faith communities whose mission is to restore homeless families to self-sufficiency. In addition, Pak-A-Kid, Christmas Angels, Sandwich Ministry, Food and Toiletry Collection Weekends (assisting Family Service, Inc., Tumbleweed, and St. Vincent de Paul), and other ministries to serve the needy and follow our Catholic Social Teaching are part of the fabric of our parish community.

Our story continues…we now have over 1,600 registered families. Your commitment to helping build our parish community in whatever capacity your baptismal call offers is part of our story.

The list of Pastors at St. Pius follows:

Fr. Andrew Zarek (1959-1968)

Fr. Valerian Bezdicek (1968-1969)

Fr. Valerian Bezdicek / Fr. Nathan Bourke (Co-Pastors: 1970-1974)

Fr. Patrick Moran (1974-1975)

Fr. Patrick Tarrant (1975-1976)

Fr. Charles Gorman (1976-1978)

Fr. Harold Arbanas (178-1981)

Fr. Harold Arbanas / Fr. Tony Schuster (Co-Pastors: 1981-1983)

Fr. Tony Schuster / Fr. Kirk Morgan (Co-Pastors: 1983-1986)

Fr. Kirk Morgan / Fr. Jerry Connolly (Co-Pastors: 1986-1987)

Fr. Jerry Connolly (1988-1993)

Fr. Steve Tokarski (1993-10/4/2011)

Fr. Wayne Pittard (4/18/2012 – 6/29/2018)

Fr. Greg Staudinger (6/30/2018 – 4/16/2023)

Fr. Martin Ezeihuaku, MSP (4/17/2023-Present)

The list of Associate Pastors at St. Pius follows:

Fr. Kenneth Clausen (1959-1960)

Fr. Thomas Tobin (1959-1960)

Fr. Joseph Papes (1960-1961)

Fr. Nathaniel Bourke (1961-1966)

Fr. Gary Kaberry (1966-1968)

Fr. Terrance Regan (1968-1971)

Fr. Kirk Morgan (1974-1976)

Fr. John Kindall, SJ (1975-1977)

Fr. William Cawley (1976-1978)

Fr. Kevin Malee (1978-1981)

Fr. Tim Struckman (1987-1990)

Fr. John Krier (1990—1992)

Fr. Gary Gunville (1992-1993)

Fr. Daniel Wathen (2007)

The Pastoral Team of St. Pius X.–Described in the 2008 50th Anniversary Parish Directory as the "Hall of Fame Staff" and the listing has been edited to include changes from 2008 to the present:

Aileen Silbernagel, Dee Martinson, Sheila Deibele, Rachel Ryan, Jessie Rohrer, Shana Johnson, Rita Brehm, and Shannon Behounek at the front desk (position currently vacant). Marlene Mattison, Cheryl Daem, Cheri Smithlin, Barbara Burleson, Jennifer Mack, Rachel McLain, Jessie Rohrer, and currently Andrea Vacek coordinating Religious Education. Dick Aichele, followed by Val Wilcox, Bob Bender, and Karyn Haider, and Shannon Behounek currently in the Business Office. Nancy Englert, Carol Falbo, Colleen Eisenman, Cheri Smithlin, Judi Pike, Bob Holbrook, Nick Coffman, Mary Stordahl, and currently Janice Krueger as Liturgical Coordinator. Virginia Jeanotte, Sr. Mary Dostal, Shelly Greenfield, Don Foster, Bob Bender, Karyn Haider, Cheri Smithlin, Sr. Barbara Brown, OP, Matt Low, and currently Karyn Haider oversee pastoral ministry. Shelly Greenfield, Karyn Haider, Cheri Smithlin, Lynne Gillig, Bob Fannon, Matt Low, and currently Karyn Haider coordinating OCIA, Baptismal & Marriage Preparation (at times Adult Education was managed under this position as well). Marcie Wilske, Marie West, Jennie Preite, Cheri Smithlin, Jessica Westberg, Deanna Cahill, Jessie Rohrer, Mary Flynn, Amanda Michael, Olivia Hanser, and currently Teresa Twichel as Youth Minister. Eva Schwehr was the organ accompanist from the beginning of the parish until her retirement in the early 2000s. Music Directors were Nancy Englert, Penny Smith, Joan Clare Ford, Rosalie Foster, and currently, Joan Whalen as music director. Mary Carol Rachac coordinated the Outreach Ministry until June 2020. Virginia Jeanotte as Volunteer Coordinator, Kathy McCleary as Communication and Volunteer Coordinator, and Jessie Rohrer as Parish Life Director. Shelly Greenfield returned to St. Pius in 2010 as Bulletin Editor, Christian Service Commission, and front desk backup. Curt Sauber and now Mike Persha, Cemetery Manager, and Bill Walker, Custodian.