

ST. MARY OF THE WOODS / ST. ALOYSIUS ~ PARISH COUNCIL MINUTES

August 12, 2026; 6:00pm, St. Aloysius

1. ATTENDEES: Linda Root, Kate Burchess, Jim Grant, Dan Ingalls, Dawn Staley, Kate Burchess, Dave Erickson, Richard Wentzel and Denise Elsenheimer. Missing: Bonnie Fish and Jim Malloy.
2. PRAYER:
3. REVIEW MINUTES: The last meeting was held on June 10, 2026. Kate moved to accept the minutes without corrections and Richard seconded the motion. The minutes were approved unanimously.
4. NEW MEMBER: Dave Ericson has volunteered for service on the Parish Council from St. Aloysius and St. Mary of the Woods. Richard moved to accept Dave as a new member and Linda seconded the motion. The vote was unanimous to accept Dave as a member.
5. OLD BUSINESS:
 - A. Father Michael Verschaeve's Ordination Celebration (3-19-2027):
 - Denise updated the Council on plans to celebrate Father Michael Verschaeve's 50th Ordination.
 - Denise reminded the council that the "Mill Pond" Park rental is \$2,000.
 - United Ministries Church in Kalkaska, which has a large reception hall costs \$100, with a \$50 security deposit to rent. The facility was not recommended by the council.
 - The council estimates that between 150 and 200 people will attend the celebration.
 - The council discussed the possibility of using St. Mary of the Woods as a venue for the celebration.
 - The council discussed the cost of the celebration, which hasn't been estimated at this time because plans haven't been solidified. At the next meeting of the council (September 9), the venue, the caterer and menu should be recommended and approved by the council so that the overall cost of the celebration can be estimated.
 - Denise recommended that the parish office personnel can mail out postcards in the early winter of 2027 to parishioners inviting them to attend the celebration and donate to the cost of the event.
 - B. Google Document Update: Dawn Staley and Denise Elsenheimer have successfully set up the system which will aid in taking meeting minutes and make the handling of Parish Council business more efficiently. They recommended that council members bring their cell phones or laptop computers to the next meeting on September 9, to set up the system on their devices.

6. MINISTRY/DEPARTMENT BRIEF UPDATES

- Dan reviewed the Knights of Columbus updates. The Knights have gained some new members following their membership drive. They are sponsoring a child, who is attending a South American school again this year. They conducted their Tootsie Roll campaign, which was supported by Father Fred's charitable activities in Travers City. The Knights donated to the "Drive Wellness Center" in Eaton Rapids, Michigan, which just purchased a new Ultrasound device. Dan reminded the council that the Knights have members from St. Als, St. Mary and St. Anthony in Mancelona and they have 63 members with 10 active members.
- Kate updated the council about St. Aloysius's Parish Council of Catholic Women (PCCW) plans. They are planning to hold their annual barn sale on September 10 – 12 at the Legion in South Boardman. Their annual retreat is planned for October 16 at St. Al's starting at 8:30 am and running to 2:00 pm. A speaker has been hired.

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- Denise reviewed Faith Formation, Youth Ministry and Vacation Bible School (VBS) activities, plans and updates: Carina Conklin was very helpful with this year's VBS which was held at St. Mary's on July 21, 22, 23. There were 30 students who participated in the event, and it was a great success! Carina Conklin will not be able to work this year in the Faith Formation program.
- Denise anticipates that 9 students ranging in ages from 7 to 11 years old will participate in this year's Order of Christian Initiation of Adults (OCIA). So far, 2 adults have indicated an interest in participating in the program.
- Father Michael's 76th birthday is to be celebrated at St. Mary's on Saturday, August 29th after mass, and on Sunday, August 30th, after mass at St. Al's.
- Jim reviewed achievements and plans for buildings, grounds and maintenance.
 - St. Mary's parking lot updates are complete.
 - Work outside on the front of the St. Mary's church is continuing. The statue of St. Mary will be removed from its pedestal, and masonry work will continue to improve it. Then the statue will be replaced.
 - The floor in the Narthex at St. Mary's is being improved.
 - A tree was removed from St. Mary's cemetery on July 4th.
 - Electric and light improvements outside of St. Mary's Church are being considered.
 - The snow fences on the roof of St. Al's have been installed.
 - Black top paving of St. Al's East parking lot and front parking should begin next week.
 - There are 6 trees that should be removed from St. Al's property and cemetery. The trees are old and diseased and are dropping limbs on the grounds.
 - Window glazing work by St. Al volunteers is being organized for a day in the next few weeks.

7. Replacement priests have been found to cover masses during Father Michael's absence on August 15th and 22nd.

8. Our annual Parish picnic will be held next Sunday, August 23rd, after mass. It will take place outside and in back of St. Mary's church in the pavilion. A three-piece Dixie-land Band will set up in the pavilion and perform from 12:30 – 2:00 pm. Food and soft drinks will be provided. The Knights of Columbus will sponsor a 50/50 raffle during the picnic. On Saturday, August 22nd, preparation and setup of the pavilion, tables, etc. will begin at 8:30 am. Dave Erickson volunteered to get around 150 ears of sweet corn. Help is needed to set up!

9. There will be a Risk Management meeting with visitors on September 24, 2026.

10. Cemetery Committee updates: There has been a few sales for grave sites.

11. Crosses being sold at the Fife Lake Farmers Market: Michelle Hudson and Jane Roesemeier sold crosses at Farmers Market last weekend, and interest in purchasing crosses is dwindling. So, we'll stop our efforts to sell crosses at the Farmers Market. Crosses will still be available for sale at St. Mary's and St. Al's Churches.

12. God's Garden: Two parishioners have been active in nurturing the garden this year, but interest for it has been minimal this year. The council will consider closing the garden next year.

13. A parishioner and good wood worker volunteered to improve the sign in the front of St. Mary's Church. The sign shows the name of the church, and the time of masses. The parishioner has provided high-quality improvements to St. Mary's in the past. So, we'll let him develop a design, and decide if it can be used. The sign is double sided.

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14. There is a new publisher of our church bulletin. Josh, who works in the Parish offices at St. Mary's needs to learn how to use a new software program which the new publisher uses.

15. The work of the cleaning staff at St. Mary's and St. Al's hasn't been satisfactory. There are questions about hours worked, and the cleanliness of both church facilities is not acceptable. The Parish Council may be forced to seek alternative actions for cleaning our churches.

16. Blood Pressure Clinics are planned for Saturday, September 5 at St. Mary's Church after mass, and Sunday September 6, at St. Al's church after mass. Denise is looking for a nurse who can measure blood pressures at St. Al's.

17. Closing Prayer.

18. Adjournment, Next Meeting: September 9, 2026, at St Mary's beginning at 6:00 pm.