

May 5<sup>th</sup>, 2017

Dear Ascension & St Bernard's Parishioners,

*"But Jesus called the children to him and said, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. I tell you the truth, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it." (Luke 18:16,17)*

On this Good Shepherd Sunday we share with you developments which we believe will allow Jesus to, in His words from today's Gospel, give us life more abundantly. Our Faith Formation programs from Ascension and St. Bernard's combined efforts to form one joint program for both parishes, now called "St. Bernard/Ascension Faith Formation" (STBAFF). This change in the program has been a blessing for us by establishing a larger, stronger program taking advantage of all the resources our parishes have to offer. This success has given us the opportunity to "learn from the children" by looking at other areas of our parish lives. As our Faith Formation year comes to a close, many uplifting and positive experiences have been a result of the commitment and support of our parishes. Our children brought the best out of our members this year. The communal meals, dynamic conversations during classes, and the support of our volunteers have opened our eyes to the gifts and talents our Lord has provided us.

Another result of the Faith Formation program was the formation of the Joint Leadership Team. This group was developed out of the need to make joint Parish decisions for our Faith Formation program. The Joint Leadership Team is comprised of the Trustees, Finance Council Chairs, Parish Council Chairs, the Pastor and the Business Administrator from both parishes. Besides the Faith Formation program, our Business Administrator and Father Gregory have been asking for more efficient use of our talents and resources between the Parishes. Therefore, we have expanded the expectations of this team to explore other opportunities to make our parishes stronger through joint efforts by reviewing those ministries that share a similar vision and goal. We recognize there are some groups that would not effectively work together due to the unique needs of the individual parish. Finance

Councils, Buildings and Grounds, and the Cemetery Committees are examples of unique and separate committees that will not be advised by the Joint Leadership Team.

The focus of the Joint Leadership Team is to help both parishes succeed in the future by effectively utilizing both of our resources. In some cases, this could mean pooling resources to reduce duplication of efforts and expense, like we have done with the Faith Formation program. In other cases, it could mean combining efforts to build a larger community such as a Prayer Chain. The Joint Leadership Team will be striving to find ways to strengthen both Ascension and St. Bernard to grow in our faith communities. We will make recommendations to the individual Parish Councils for their consideration.

Currently, we are focusing on creating a joint Mission & Vision Statement for our parishes. This will help to guide us in making the best recommendations for our parishes. Developing a supportive, faithful community, such as we have within the environment of our Faith Formation program, is very important to every member of our Joint Leadership Team. We have begun to witness the fruits of our evangelizing efforts by the new families at Mass on Sunday, and the response we have heard from our children and parents in Faith Formation.

Our meetings start with prayer and Adoration. We ask for the Holy Spirit to guide our decisions. We respect the talents of the individual parishes and share a common purpose to do God's Will. The positive energy and excitement for our future is evident at our meetings, and we look forward in joyful anticipation to all that God has in store for our parishes. Please contact any of the Joint Leadership Team if you would like to discuss any thoughts or concerns.

*"For just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others." (Romans 12:4-5)*

Sincerely,

The Joint Leadership Team

St. Bernard's Catholic United Financial is pleased to have sponsored several different fundraisers to benefit our parish community during the past year.

**2016 Fundraising**

Ice cream stand	\$804.00
Rummage sale – Matching grant event	\$2103.55
MinisTree	\$300.00
Donations (Individuals)	\$265.00

**2016 Donations**

St. Bernard's Faith Formation	\$2104.00
Matching Grant (1,000.00)	
Grant 4 Good – Family (300.00)	
Ice cream stand (804.00)	
St. Bernard – Forward in Faith	\$2900.00
Convention – Outreach	\$50.00
Gather 4 Good	\$90.00
Sharing and Caring Hands	\$100.00
Msgr Richard J. Schuler Trust	\$100.00
Knights of Columbus – Picnic bingo prize	\$10.00

We wish to express our gratitude for your participation and ask for your continued support as we move forward. We could NOT have accomplished this without your assistance.