Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

“Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Cor 1:3). Just over five months and shortly after my appointment as Administrator of St. Paul Catholic Church, I addressed you with a sort of “state-of-the-parish” letter in which I laid out four primary areas of focus for the coming year: Finances, Personnel, Religious Education, and the Narthex Project. From July to the present, I have tried to use the Pastor’s Corner in the parish bulletin to provide information to the parish on a wide-range of issues and updates. I encourage you to attentively read the bulletin, as that is the primary method by which I communicate information to the parish. This present letter is meant to act as a mid-year update on the areas covered in the previous “state-of-the-parish.”

I. Finance

In my previous report to the parish, I outlined some of the challenges that have arisen, especially in light of the deficit of the previous two fiscal years. I am very pleased to report that our budget performance for the current fiscal year is much improved, showing a consistent monthly surplus. This surplus has been saved to assist in replenishing the general account. Some months ago, I asked that parishioners prayerfully consider increasing their general offertory weekly giving by $5 or their monthly giving by $20. Some parishioners have positively responded to this request. Expenditures are more properly understood and under control. Overall, the parish Finance Council and I are pleased and satisfied with the current budget performance.

At the end of January, I hope to have annual parish pledge forms available to parishioners indicating their intended regular offertory giving for this year. We
have done this in previous years, but not last year. This will assist the Finance Council in March when we begin to prepare a budget for the ’17-’18 FY. More on that to follow…

II. Personnel

In November 2016, the parish added to its staff a part-time bookkeeper, Teresa Davi. Teresa has been an asset to the staff and continues to transition into her role. As mentioned in a previous bulletin, the position of Office Manager is being re-tasked to that of Parish Secretary and Administrative Assistant.

With the departure of Jill and Louise from the parish staff in September, the responsibilities of youth ministry and confirmation preparation have been taken on by volunteers and I am very grateful to them for continuing this very important work on behalf of our parish. I also expressed hope that once the budget showed regular allowance for hiring a full-time Director of Religious Education and Youth Ministry, that a hire would be made.

Now satisfied that adequate and stable financial conditions exist for a new full-time position, a job posting for the position of DRE/Youth Minister is being made. Applicants for this position should read the job posting and description, which will be posted on our parish website this week. My hope is to find a suitable candidate as soon as possible, with the budget allowing for a hire as soon as February 1st. The “when” as to a hire depends largely on the issue of “who” applies.

III. Religious Education

Religious Education continues to go well. I am very grateful for the many individuals who have volunteered as leaders, catechists, and assistants in our programs. I am pleased to report that most everyone involved in religious education has completed their Called to Protect qualifications.

For obvious reasons, much of what is being planned for religious education for next year will be dependent upon who we can hire for a DRE/Youth Minister and when. When a hire is made for the position, I will begin coordinating with them the vision for religious education next year. This vision will be very important to the parish as a whole and I hope to share more of that vision with you in the months to come.
IV. The Narthex Project

The parish building project for our Narthex expansion continues. At present $749,459.43 has been pledged to the project with $524,097.48 having been collected. The current balance of the restricted Building Fund is $134,233.33, which may be used for the Narthex project. Pledges are being monitored regularly to ensure a consistency in the planned cash flow. We have secured a construction loan through the Archdiocese of Portland Parish Funds Trust not to exceed $370,000.00 at a variable interest rate of 3.5% for use on the Narthex project. The loan paperwork has been signed and finalized. Of course, it is our hope not to use the full amount of the construction loan if possible.

As part of the loan process with the Archdiocese of Portland and with the consent of the parish Finance Council, in November 2016 I sought bids from two additional contractors and requested that Grant Co. rebid the project. The bids were returned to me by December 9th. A joint meeting of the parish councils was held on December 13th where the bids were comparatively discussed with our architect, Dennis Thompson of DMTA. On December 10th the parish Finance Council gave an official vote of recommendation to hire Dalke Construction of Salem, OR as the contractor for the Narthex project. Dalke’s bid on the project – which was the lowest of the three received bids – was $923,604.00. Dalke Construction is a company with an reputation for excellence and so far I have been pleased to work with them. This bid is consistent with what local contractors and individuals in the construction industry have estimated as an increase in costs by approximately 15% each year (in view of the original estimated cost of the Narthex project some 18 months ago, at $800,000.00). The bid amount was higher than everyone on the councils or I would have liked, but having three excellent contractors all bid within relative proximity to one another indicates the reality of the cost of the project, as well as the inherent financial impact of increases in construction costs and City requirements when this project was first conceived. The previous bid the parish received did not include a finished steeple or the proposed rain garden to address the City of Silverton’s drainage concerns.

A meeting was held with Dalke Construction to discuss value engineering options to reduce the cost of the bid further. The result of that meeting brings an estimated cost saving of $28,000.00. Additional costs over and above the bid to include permits, SDC fees, additional architect fees, lead paint & asbestos abatement, special inspections, etc. is estimated at $83,000.00.

What’s the bottom line? Total costs = $980,000.00. Total money pledged and money from the building fund = $883,700.00. At present, we are short $96,000.00 to fully pay for the Narthex project with the funds we have. This has been discussed with both parish councils and with the Parish Funds Trust. Both
councils and the Archdiocese have confidence that St. Paul Catholic Church can raise the shortfall to continue forward with the project. Though the shortfall is disheartening, the reality is that we are very much within reach of our goal. Methods that are within our reach are the annual parish auction (which on a bad year is a reliable $25,000.00 net), continued fundraisers by the Hispanic community (which raise approx. $8,000.00/yr.), continuing to seek additional pledges, and asking individuals who have pledged already to consider extending their pledge by one more year.

While our parish fundraising events such as the parish auction and various activities of the Hispanic community continue with success, **I would please ask that those who have not yet pledged to the Narthex project prayerfully and seriously consider doing so. I would also ask that those who have outstanding amounts on their pledge to please prayerfully consider your ability to offer the remaining balance of your pledge soon if you have the means to do so.** This would result in a lower amount of money to borrow. I have been very edified by some in the parish who have shared with me their preference for having done another sort of construction project, but have nonetheless supported the direction of both myself and my predecessor, Fr. William, the direction of both parish councils, and the vast majority of the parish community (nearly 50% of parishioners have participated in a pledge or gift towards the Narthex project). I am grateful for everyone’s willingness to make this a “team effort,” regardless of what might have been preferred on an individual basis – that is exactly what a true community and family looks like!

Moving the Narthex project forward is important. You may have noticed the chain-link fence up around the church and school, as well as construction equipment and trailer in the corner of the property. We have secured the loan and financing for the project through the Parish Funds Trust. The final construction contract with Dalke Construction will be signed next week reflecting the value engineering changes. This coming week, the Archdiocese will receive the executed contracts from Dalke, which is the last remaining step from their end. This coming week I will be meeting with the City of Silverton to receive our building permit in our pre-construction meeting. We are ready to break ground and begin!

Construction will begin with utility work from the street to the property for the next few weeks. After which, demolition of the present Narthex space will begin. I will be meeting next week with the Superintendent of the project to review projected phase timelines. In several months, there will be a period of time when the church building will not be able to be occupied. When I have that information, I will share it as soon as I can (and assuming the project moves along on schedule). Overall, it is estimated that the total construction time will be six months, with completion sometime in June or July.
There are some practicalities during this construction. Effective Monday, January 16th daily Mass will be held in the library located in the parish office building. The main entrance to the church through the Narthex will be walled off and inaccessible. Please use the North and South entrances to the church for Mass. **For liability and safety reasons, under no circumstances are parishioners to access the construction site. Breach of the construction site will immediately constitute trespassing by unauthorized persons.** We are in the process of acquiring video monitoring for the construction site. Please observe extra vigilance and precaution during this time, especially with children. If any safety issue is observed, please do not attempt to “fix it” yourself, but contact me immediately.

For the duration of construction, we will be losing access to the lavatory in the Narthex and the confessional. The parish office will be opened during Mass for individuals to use in place of the church lavatory. Confessions during the normal 4:00-4:45pm time will be in my office. During this time when exits and entrances into the church will be constricted, for the safety of everyone **under no circumstances may either the North or South exits be blocked or foot traffic impeded at any time.**

The parish councils, the liturgy committee and myself have tried to anticipate the logistics of construction consequences as best as we can. If other issues arise, I will address them as needed. In the meantime, please use caution and pray for the swift completion of construction and the safety of all those involved.

As we commence construction next week, I would also like to take a moment to thank individuals who have been key to the success of the Narthex project. There are too many people to name here, but there are some I would like to single out as having been of exceptional help to my predecessor, to myself and to the whole parish. To begin with, a debt of gratitude is owed to my predecessor, Fr. William Hammelman, OSB, who with the parish and the councils have brought the dream of nearly 10 years’ worth of work to realization when he began the planning process years ago. Both parish councils have been instrumental in planning for the Narthex project and I wish to thank them for their support, especially the council chairs Kathy Beutler and Katie Edmonds. The parish fundraising committee was so crucial as we began the capital campaign last year to secure the funding for this project. All members of the fundraising committee were key and I would like to especially recognize Chuck White for his leadership of that committee.

The parish building committee has worked closely with both myself and Fr. William, as well as the architect to fashion a design that is both practical and beautiful. I would like to thank all the building committee members, especially Dan Gaspar. I should add that Dan, as chair of the building committee, has been instrumental in the planning and execution of the project, especially these past several months as we have moved into our final phases prior to construction. Dan
is not one to step forward and take credit, but credit is certainly due here and
greatly appreciated! THANK YOU, DAN! Finally, but certainly not least, I want to
thank the parish as a whole for your overwhelming support of the Narthex project.
This simply could not have happened without your prayers, your input, and your
financial help. Future generations of parishioners will owe you a debt of gratitude
for the work we are now beginning together. THANK YOU, parishioners of St.
Paul’s!

It continues to be my honor and privilege to lead this parish towards Christ,
in truth and in mutual love. May He who has begun the good work already
underway at St. Paul’s, bring it to a fruitful and generous completion.

Gratefully yours in Christ,

Rev. Basil Lawrence, OSB
Administrator