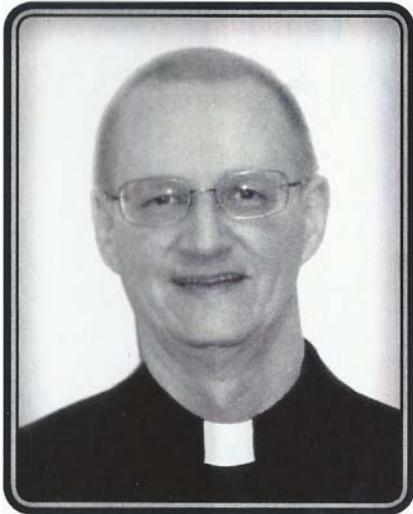


2008-Present: The Rev. John H. Finnell



Father John is convinced that God is love. He always gives us what he knows we need in order to carry out whatever is our part in his plan to lead all people into the full embrace of his love and glory. It is in this spirit that Father John pastors South Charleston. He strengthens, and empowers parishioners at Blessed Sacrament. As spiritual leader of the parish, Father John speaks, interprets, and enlivens the WORD through his homilies and personal example of living. Meaningful liturgies draw prayer. Advent, Christmas, Lent, and Feast of Corpus Christi have taken on new importance and greater

meaning. All parishioners are invited to participate in the ministries where they feel called. Support for the needs of the parish can be explained in Father John's words: "Take what you need; give what you can!" He hopes to stay for many years and say "Mission Accomplished" at the end.

Arrival of Father John

Bishop Bransfield assigned Father John to Blessed Sacrament parish effective Nov. 5, 2008. Father John had previously pinch-hit while Father Leon took a three-month sabbatical to Rome in 1996. When his appointment was announced at Masses, everyone applauded as they knew he was just the one to heal the parish. Later in November, after Father John had settled in, the parish gave him a welcome celebration combined with recognition of the 30th anniversary of his ordination.

In Father John's first years, a parishioner remarked that Father John was not going to build our parish with bricks. Later he said, "He's using his gifts to guide the parish on its mission journey .

Staff and Ministry Leadership

- Deacon John Hanna celebrated the 30th anniversary of his ordination in 1985.
- Sandy Williams retired as Office Manager on July 17, 2015, after serving 24 years. Natalie Zellers replaced Sandy.
- Music is a form of prayer led by Becky Barnes, music director since 2004. She conducts lovely annual Epiphany concert, coordinating all the musical and singing talent she had trained and active at Blessed Sacrament.
- Michelle Patterson became a paid youth director in 2009, expanded youth activities to include World Youth Day attendance (Spain, 2011), Cardboard City (donations to YWCA's Sojourners), Labor 4 Neighbor (home improvements, repairs at Coalburg).
- Amy Ricketts assisted in office work for 7 years and organized the parish library.
- Cathy Rappold started cooking and housekeeping back with Father Leon and continues for Father John. She knows his special dietetic needs.
- After many years, Jane Roy relinquished her leadership of the bereavement luncheons to Bev Schissler and Pat Habenschuss.
- The pastoral council discerns new membership. A facilitator leads meetings to make decisions by consensus. The finance council operates in a similar manner and produces an annual budget report presented to the parish at Mass, usually in May.
- Bob Lucas began putting homilies on the parish website and maintains Facebook.
- Jeanne Haas, as pastoral associate, executes an ever-expanding role for liturgical ministries, faith formation, RCIA, and education. This includes seasonal environment in the worship space, enhanced celebration of our parish feast day and holy days and programs for annual themes, to name a few.
- Missy Summey now leads, trains and schedules liturgical ministries.
- Linda Sapp kept the books and other office duties for many years.

Sharing of the WORD and Communications

- A Parishioner's gift in 2016 contributed to a new sound system in the worship space.
- We now have a web page and Facebook.
- Announcements, expanded to include schedules and coming community and parish events, go via Internet to parishioners. Its content matches the bulletin handout, and includes "thank-you's" for those who help make everything possible during the week. Natalie Zellers skillfully creates these communications.
- Homilies at the 5:30 PM Mass go on CD for the homebound.
- Headsets are available for those needing hearing help at Mass.

Faith Formation

- Father John is a teacher. He wants us all to become familiar with the Bible. Adults may attend classes Wednesday morning (topical), afternoon (bible study) or evening, coming Sunday between Masses (topical). Summer Bible School for all comers gets better every year.
- The RCIA process (Rite of Christian Initiation for Adults) runs from late summer to Easter with followup. Anyone may attend to learn more and choose to make a commitment to become a catechumen or candidate.

Stewardship

Parishioners are in solidarity with Father John's vision of stewardship; for example, the parish does not charge for anything. Parishioners give what they can - for faith formation class materials, camp, and dinners. Father John fondly says - "God will give us what God knows we need." The parish operates successfully on faithful stewardship.

Outreach

Thinking of folks alone on Easter, Thanksgiving and Christmas, Father John hosts a dinner in the parish hall for all who wish to come. Yearly attendance is on the upswing.

In concert with our mission statement, in the summer of 2009, through Catholic Charities, the parish sponsored an Iraqi refugee family - Ahmed and Tara Raouf and their three daughters: Aiya (2), Mariam (5), Lana (8), who needed everything. They rented our house at 405 E Street and in 2011 moved to Lexana, Kansas. They love America and loved being part of our community. Our Youth Director included the children in activities. West Virginia is their favorite place to live. Ahmed now works for the U.S. Government and they have a fourth daughter. Joan Garten coordinated resolution of their many needs.

A standing committee of parishioners began, in 2012, reviewing tithe fund contributions to local, regional and national needs. Their current objectives include establishing liaison with each receiving agency to learn how the money is used, make any necessary changes as the fund grows, and if representatives of the organizations should present their programs periodically to the Finance Council.

At Thanksgiving, the parish collects non-perishable food for baskets for 40 families in South Charleston and the Coalburg area and 400 Christmas baskets for people in the Coalburg area.

In 2015 and 2016, parishioners were invited to the Mosque of the Islamic Association of WV, across the tracks, to share experiencing Ramadan with their Muslim community.

Blessed Sacrament has provided crews for Habitat for Humanity housing construction at both Jubilee Heights and properties in North Charleston.

Worship

Father John celebrated an Explanatory Mass on July 29, 2012, and a second time in 2016. There was a Q&A period at the end. A reception followed. The RCIA process also explains the Mass to participants.

Beginning in May, 2015, in response to a growing Latino membership in our community, Father John began celebrating occasional Masses in Spanish. For their convenience, the worship aid is printed in Spanish. The parish also specially celebrates the feast day of Our Lady of Guadeloupe in Spanish on Dec. 12.

During Lent on Wednesdays, parishioners serve meatless soup and bread followed by short services until Holy Week.

Jeanne Haas has become very creative in setting Liturgical Season themes expressing them by colorful worship space depiction. In 2016, it was a desert scene that you expected John the Baptist to emerge from at any minute.

We are now placing more emphasis on Easter, Christmas and other feast day celebrations, especially our parish feast day, Corpus Christi, as well as yearly themes announced by Pope Francis, such as Year of Priests (vocations) and Year of Mercy (God's love and forgiveness).

Facilities, Maintenance and Renovations

Modest changes occurred through the first half of 2016:

- The sanctuary received a fresh coat of paint February, 2015.
- Heating/cooling units replaced over worship space.
- Roof repaired on school.
- South parking lot repaved in 2016; parking spaces widened.
- Apartments and two small homes demolished north on 4th Ave.
- Eternal Flame added to Columbarium, a gift of the Pollitt family.
- Shelves and books placed for library in old meeting room.
- Landscaping improved around north entrance.
- Planning in progress to attach a garage to the rectory.

Ministries

Under Father John's guidance, parish ministries are growing and membership increases. A recent count of parish ministries set the number at 55 and increasing. Parishioners are encouraged to join one or more where they can contribute their Spirit-given gifts for the benefit of the parish community. An annual Ministries Fair explains those ministries for our liturgies, parish life, youth, leadership, community service, companionship, faith formation and outreach.

Discernment Process

The parish uses a discernment process for choosing council members, making major decisions, setting goals and objectives for 3 to 5-year plans and worship space arrangement. Decisions are made by consensus.

Father John hopes for a long-term assignment to Blessed Sacrament parish.