



*In the Dominican tradition*

*St. Vincent Ferrer Parish*



*.... founded in 1931*

*1530 Jackson Avenue, River Forest, Illinois 60305*

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STATE  
OF THE  
PARISH  
REPORT  
2008

# 2008 State of the Parish Report



Fr. Tom Noesen, Pastor

Our mission statement as parish says we come together in prayer and faith. We desire to create a loving environment where folks grow, share, worship and have common commitment to the church. It goes on to say that we struggle to achieve love, peace and justice in Jesus Christ. SVF certainly has its mission clear. If we are not about this, we have missed the boat—the one that Jesus is in. Let us consider ourselves in a good space on a voyage in the right course.

In 2004 I wrote my first state-of-the-parish report as pastor. That report and all subsequent reports have focused on structures. This includes routines, norms, systems, and customs that create an atmosphere of safety, peace, efficiency and faith. Structures protect everything from our sacraments to our finances. It is important for us to know that these structures are only a tool—not a place of arrival. Structures secure management. We are about mission. Jesus gave us a mission to renew the face of the earth. We are not a club or organization of status limited to management. We are on the move. Beyond management is mission.

This 2008 report has three sections: *the first* is SVF20/20 vision by me as pastor. *the second* is the staff members' vision, and *the third* is from the various organizations within the parish. (Not all groups chose to respond or report. No entries within this SVF report have been deleted.)

## SVF 20/20

The year 2020 and also the 20/20 vision term suit us well in looking into the lens of our future. SVF brags on its history. It is worth bragging about. We build our future on our past. What we enjoy today

is from our grandparents and great grandparents. Now it is our turn to build the city of God and Body of Christ anew.

*In spirituality and sacraments:*

My hope is that we would move toward Eucharist as the source and summit of our lives. At present, soccer knocks out Mass. Sacraments are treated as events, entertainment, or spiritual highs. They are not seen as discipline of prayer for the Catholic community. Families' praying together is a very difficult habit to cultivate especially if it is not in one's long term experience.

Before 2020 I would like to see 7/24 Eucharist adoration. Youth can connect with this moving from the overly saturated world they now know. The daily Masses are awesome! Even with future priest shortages, my hope is that SVF can maintain our daily Mass schedules.

SVF ministers of the Eucharist: lectors, EMC's, servers, sacristans, and musicians are still low in numbers. Many of these ministries need to minister every week because of the shortage. We will continue to invite these ministries and catechize them on a tutorial basis.

The parish 2006 survey asked for greeters. This is a most needed ministry that I would like to see get started. (Ushers are not greeters; ushers take up the collection. Some ushers do greet. Greeters open both sets of doors and welcome folks quietly with warmth and fellowship.)

We will continue to build lay teams of faith. The family unit is the place for the catechesis of our sacraments. This is the method that teaches future generations. The baptism and marriage/wedding programs are well rooted in this model already.

I have invited the Archdiocesan office of evangelization to come in to help us move from management (structure) to mission. This will include a self reflection as parish. Our first meetings with leadership will be in late August. I have also invited the Province to do a visitation and review of us as parish in the quality of our faith life.

I would like to get a liturgist back on our staff to anchor the life of worship. My prayer is that we are in a temporary space with staff crunch. This would also have immediate effects on liturgy committee. (SVF has the subcommittees of liturgy—music, ministry catechesis and scheduling, art & environment—but, we do not have the major committee.)

Both of our schools emphasize the importance of family and faith in the home. This will only intensify. My goal is to introduce a "Catholic parenting class" for all those parents having more than one child. The

first child requirement is the baptismal class. I want us to teach parents to cast into the deep. Bear in mind that we have lost three generations of faith practice. It is not in the DNA. We need to teach it.

I would also like to see us move from the model of youth director to a ministry of youth based on both peer ministry and a parish adult team. This has more stability than the focusing on one person. The youth gathering on Friday nights is good. The Vincent Project was born this year. Youth ministry needs layering for junior high, senior high, college age, twenties, and beyond.

### SVF Outreach

SVF desperately needs a welcoming committee. This has been attempted several times in my years here. It has been more a person here or there than an actual process put into place. We register some 100 families a year. The neighborhoods are changing. There is no system or structure in place to show newcomers the parish. The development committee is addressing this at the present time.

SVF needs more 12 step groups. At present we have AA on a weekly basis. Twelve step programs are excellent pre evangelization opportunities.

A bereavement team would be good for the parish. This is the outreach at the time of death. Something as simple as a house call beyond the priest. It could be that presence that opens a door for folks to ask for more of *their* faith community—or *a* faith community. Remember that about half of SVF funerals, weddings, and baptisms are non-members.

At present we have Fr Michael directing the SVF pastoral care. This is a better lay position with an ordained resource available. This should be a team with a parish nurse full time. This latter position allows people to ask questions and get a reality check in their moments of health challenge and change. These positions can be the connection between aging parents and children not living with them. Aging and pastoral care will be a major ministry in the decades ahead.

SVF does not have a peace and justice committee. This would be a resource to bring the gospel to present issues of the day. So much of our culture and our personalities are self-serving. The gospel calls us to service of other. From the world of the unborn, to the aged, to the immigrant, to the homeless, etc. Our culture is a disposable mentality. We have a wake of disposables in our SVF midst. Peace and justice would lead us to service life styles—not projects. Peace and justice

committee would be primarily catechetical. It would bolster folks into everything from the Knights of Columbus food projects, to Catholic Charities, to whatever touches the castaways of our neighborhoods.

**The ministries of finance & stewardship.**

SVF has enjoyed a CPA with Jean Finnegan before my appointment as pastor. This structure needs to be in place into our future. I am resizing the staff to add a **Director of Development** for the parish. This position is on the web with the full job description. Now I propose it as a director. It needs to become a full department.

I would like to see SVF become a parish of tithing parish. Tithing is the biblical method of giving a percentage of income to the church. It is from the top—not the bottom. Just as we tithe our week by giving the first day to the Lord, we tithe everything material in the same way. This is the most common form of stewardship. Most non Catholic communities do this. Some tithe up to 18%. The bible suggests 10 %. At present SVF is generously maintained by 25% of the parish membership. Three fourths of the households do not give to the parish. When we realize that what we have is all from God, what we give is little. In Catholic tithing parishes the schools can run tuition free; building projects just flow from the bounty of holding all things in common. This is not theory. Wichita Diocese is already rooted into this.

**The SVF physical campus**

Keeping up aging spaces is much energy and money. Deferred maintenance is the number one reason for closing churches, schools, and not-for-profits. SVF is fighting the battle of maintaining buildings that are over a half of a century old. You know the aging of your home and its needs. Translate that to our huge campus.

Buildings and Grounds Committee is the new kid on the block of structures addressing zillions of items. Sorting out priorities of maintenance and trying to build a long range vision is a huge mandate.

SVF needs a one office system instead of two office system. This would be a break through in both personnel and also physical resources.

As I list the next two items for 2020, remember that nearly one half million in maintenance, upkeep and care have gone into the gym and pine room.

SVF needs large space for gathering. This is for meetings, meals, etc. A full licensed kitchen would be great for our school children where

food is fixed here and not just catered to a warming kitchen. A space serving several hundred is needed.

A gym with viewing space would be wonderful. Perhaps even over the present school is an option. The Building & Grounds Committee is looking at full campus assessment of space. Our buildings have served us well; we need to look to our future.

The need to connect the campus for mobility not using outside access would be most desirable. This would also conserve with heating and cooling. Increasing SVF parking without sacrificing greenery is on the agenda. Getting a ramp to access the offices via the priory is planned. Grant money is being applied for on this.

Thinking and becoming *green* is needed for us. All the church lighting is already low cost for over a year. Solar units are on the south side of the gym. Pope Benedict has spoken on environment consciousness as a moral and ethical mandate for us Catholics.

Signage and banners. The North Avenue sign is rotting through. This summer a temporary facing will be put on it. In the future we are looking at a stone sign worthy of the building. This could be part of a ramp entry making a crescent at the front doors. Since this is the main casket entrance, it would be more functional and esthetic. “You are here” pillars will become part of the SVF signage. All signs need to be in style with one another. The 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary banner hardware is all in place. Some generic SVF banners would be welcome.

The SVF church is a gem. The kudos for the space never stops. Maintaining its beauty is primary and will continue to be. Many items have been restored—the baptismal gates, light fixtures, statues, etc. This will continue.

### Communication

The 2006 parish survey asked for better communication. Yes, it is better but can become much better. We live in an era of superb technical communications; that does not mean they are used. Content is always more of the story.

SVF is moving into an T 1 campus. Soon you will be contacted on your registration becoming computer friendly. The school will be part of this perk. Our new forms are already updated.

The parish web is updated constantly by Fr. Judy. Many compliments continue to flow to us from literally all over the world.

**The weekly bulletin is good and will continue to improve. Meeting date lines is the toughest part for most organizations and folks. It is getting better.**

**Calendaring is also a tough communication challenge. Many presume a space and get upset when someone else used the process of reservation. Some events get changed and are not communicated to the master calendar in the main office. We will continue to try to improve.**

**Just one example of communication: St Pius V is our twinning parish. Do you know what that means? There are 7 distinct ministries in which we connect with Pius parish in twinning ministry. Do you know them? Would you want to be part of any of them? I use this example simply because it took me nearly two years to find out what all this meant and how we connected. With new people coming to SVF constantly, being a user friendly campus is key in communication. Nothing can be presumed.**

**SVF continues to grow in wisdom, age and grace. We are at some major crossroads in many areas. Just as with the early church sorting it all out for the Lord and in the Lord, we can and will do the same. Our 2020 is a realistic vision to have our eyes focused in the Lord Jesus.**

**STAFF**

**REPORTS**



Karen Dix

### ***Faith Formation:***

As he left them, the Lord said to his followers, “Go, make disciples of all nations.” Our goal is to help in that mission. We offer programs and opportunities for those who do not yet know the faith, and those who have lived their whole lives as Catholics. The most important goal of “catechesis” (religious education) is to foster a relationship with Christ. This is done through prayer, learning about Him in the Scriptures, and following Him in our lives. We use our heads, our hearts and our hands to follow God.

The most basic unit of church is the family, which we call the domestic church. Thus much of our program for the youth is developed with the family being the primary teacher. We try to involve parents and siblings by inviting them to come along to special events. This past year we sponsored a live drama on the Gospel of Luke, a family Lenten retreat, and Stations of the Cross. In the next school year we will have a Christmas Family Tradition day and a Holy Week Experience for families. We also begin every school year with a family event and set the themes for the program.

One of the most effective ways to reach families is through the Sacraments. Parents of children preparing for the First Reconciliation, First Communion and Confirmation are able to increase their own understanding as well as participating in sacramental events with their children. These become great moments of faith.

For adult education, various sessions are offered throughout the year. This past fall “2000 Years in 2 Hours” drew a good crowd as people learned church history in broad strokes. Bible study continues in both morning and evening sessions. This year we explored the Lands of the Bible, Women of the Old Testament, and Paul’s Letter to the Corinthians. The women of the parish were treated to a wonderful morning of reflection in December.

The way to keep our church vital is to bring in new members. This Easter we welcomed 5 new Catholics, 4 children and teens were baptized, and one adult professed her faith in the Catholic Church and was confirmed. This process, known as Rite of Christian Initiations repeats each year.

Our program invites anyone interested to become more involved- by participating, teaching children, helping to choose programs, or making the decision to enter the Catholic faith. Many people are needed to keep this ministry going. The Holy Spirit brings the flame- we just help to spread the fire.



Kevin FioRito

### ***Information Technology:***

The current, overall state of Information Technology at SVF can be considered adequate for fundamental business and school functions but in need of updating and improvement.

Until recently, the implementation of IT has occurred separately among 1) the parish school (including the school of religious education), 2) the business office, and 3) the priory (or local Dominican Fathers' residence).

The first two, the school and business offices, are primarily addressed in this report.

- 1) The school building consists of a wired, client/server Windows local area network (LAN) with 2 computers & 1 printer per classroom, a lab of almost 30 computers, and several more for office staff. Students and staff have filtered Internet access via DSL, limited file sharing, print sharing, and access to common office production and educational applications.
  
- 2) The business office also consists of a wired, client/server Windows LAN with about 12 computers and a department-capacity, multi-function copier. Staff has access to the internet via DSL, file-print-scan and fax sharing, and access to scheduling, financial and common office production applications.

In order to improve communication and collaboration among the entire campus, as well as provide a simpler and timelier delivery of technology, I joined the staff full time in October (after almost 10 years of part time work building and upgrading the business office LAN) to serve for a limited term to design and build a unified, managed campus network.

The current phase 1 of 3 focuses on the physical network which includes the acquisition of high-speed data service (T1) for the entire campus, installation of cabling and hardware to interconnect the campus, and the upgrading of client/server hardware and software to support the expanded, unified network. Phases 2 and 3 include the logical integration of the network and the unification of data sources, respectively.

With the completion of the entire project scheduled to take place in the next couple years, the parish will be in position to implement some of the more sophisticated technologies as deemed appropriate.

Two other services, mail and web hosting, are done off-site and provided by Fenwick High School. There are two separate web sites: [www.svfparish.org](http://www.svfparish.org) and [www.svfschool.org](http://www.svfschool.org). The first is designed and maintained by business office staff, the second by parent volunteers. Each will continue to be developed and improved.

Kevin FioRito

***Eucharistic Adoration:***

The Eucharistic Adoration program and chapel continue to be a source of stability, peace and blessings for not only committed and occasional adorers, but also for non-participating parishioners, and even members of the surrounding communities. Though it would be difficult to quantify the specific benefits that Eucharistic adoration provides our parish, it seems safe to conclude by informal observation that it does help improve all aspects of parish life.

The success of the program which formally began in 1999 is the result of the committed participation of a small group of lay people (parishioners, and non-parishioners) and the faithful service of the Dominican Fathers.

Overall attendance in the past year has seemed to increase. Indeed, the Lord draws people to Himself and attendance seems to correspond to the liturgical cycle with more people participating more often during Advent and Lent (before Christmas and Easter).

People have suggested increasing the hours of operation (currently M-W, 7:30am to 9:00pm) even to the point of establishing perpetual adoration (24/7). But because there's a persistent problem meeting the minimum required attendance, which entails having at least two people formally commit to attend weekly each of the 42 hours of operation, it seems unreasonable to expand at this time.

As a way of improving the program, the following activities are being planned:

- 1) Inviting a guest homilist for the Sunday liturgy one weekend to explain and promote Eucharistic adoration,
- 2) Disseminating via the bulletin general and specific information about the program,
- 3) Encouraging participation from students and staff of both the parish school and school of religious education,
- 4) Having a social gathering of current and prospective participants.



**Timothy Roberts**

***Meditation Ministry:***

The Advent and Lenten “meditation ministry”, lead by Timothy Roberts, turned out to be a great success. There were approximately twenty people including priests, parishioners, and guests. The ministry ran for three weeks before Christmas, and four weeks during the month of March before Easter.

Those who attended the meditation sessions were able to experience God’s transforming energies of unconditional love and unceasing light. Those who attended chose wisely. Kudos to you.



Fr. Michael Kyte

***Pastoral Care:***

Pastoral care is at the heart of parish life. During the year there are many people who receive the benefits of pastoral care. There are dozens of anointing of the sick, visits to the hospitals, communion for the home bound and counseling for various situations.

We are blessed in the parish to have communion ministers who are weekly visiting members of the parish. Three people recently completed a Ministry of Care course. There are courses throughout the year offered by the diocese and other groups. Anyone interested is encouraged to take it. Information can be received through the parish office. Usually they last for two or three sessions. We also have a member of the parish who is doing a two year lay ministry course at Mundelein Seminary. She will complete her first year this June.

The needs of God’s people today are many. We live in a fast paced world and there is little time to “loiter” with God. At St. Vincent’s we do our best to meet the needs of the parishioners. Please keep each other in prayer.

**BOARDS**

**&**

**COMMITTEES**

## *Finance Department Report*

In November 2007 SVF was audited by Michael Silver & Company, Certified Public Accountants. The main focus was a procedural audit. SVF did very well and received the opinion “there is no significant exposure to risk.” Finance continues to implement suggested improvements.

### Finance Board

Robert Gale  
Bob Huntington  
Michael Kelly  
Brian Maite  
Richard Neri  
Joe Ponzio, Chair  
Gabriel Romanucci  
Robert Sasseti  
Jerome Trakszelis  
Jean Finnegan, CPA, CFO

The committee continues to meet quarterly to review financial reports and activities. Currently the committee is working on approval of the Fiscal 2009 Budget.

### Sub Committees:

- 1) The Buildings and Grounds Committee, chaired by Brian Maite, continues to meet monthly to review property and plant upkeep. The latest project is the replacement of the School Gym roof and the repair to interior damage. Other projects completed during the last 12 months include a new floor in the 3 year old classroom, upgrades to the Pine Room kitchen, plumbing repairs in the school, replacement of church AC compressor and replacement of 2 drain sewers.
- 2) Estate Planning, chaired by Bob Gale
- 3) Increased Offertory Appeal, chaired by Joe Ponzio
- 4) Annual Archdiocese Appeal, chaired by Jerry Trakszelis
- 5) Annual Budgeting, chaired by Joe Ponzio
- 6) Investments, chaired by Michael Kelly
- 7) Development, chaired by Gabriel Romanucci
- 8) Audit, chaired by Joe Ponzio

## *Parish Council*

### Membership:

Joshua Quail- President  
Jonathon Zivojnovic- VP  
Pat Wallenberg- Secretary  
Marty Christensen  
Richard Cook  
Rose Filipe  
Mark Gannon

Carmelina Mazzulla  
Nancy Morelli  
Cathy Neri  
Ruth Skinner  
Jerry Trakszelis  
Veronica Zemgulys  
Ai-Xuan Holterman

The Parish Council meets on the second Thursday of every month rain or shine to engage in spirited discussion on the mission of SVF. As a council we are the eyes and ears of the parish and as such we take we hear each week in the pews and other councils and committees to the pastor. This is our research and our council exists to foster the ideas and hopes of parishioners; to support existing ministries; and to plan for the parish's future by recommending policies, procedures, and programs that will fulfill the greater Church's mission.

2007 saw our council implement the recommendations from the extensive parish survey conducted the prior year. In 2008 we will work to help form a welcoming committee-something missing for several years. Our council is chiefly responsible for the parish picnic this year which has been moved forward in the calendar to September 21<sup>st</sup>. We will continue to liaise with our twinning parish, St. Pius V and the Deanery committee.

Including the pastor, the council has fifteen members, all of which serve a two year term. Every year three members fulfill their obligation and need to be replaced in June. This is your opportunity to become involved in this dynamic and important council that has its finger on the pulse of the entire parish.

-Joshua Quail

## *Social Ministry*

Social Ministry consists of lay volunteers who offer our time and services gratuitously to members of our community. We bring with us no special skills or training; we simply put into practice our love and caring by responding to requests for small services from our neighbors who would otherwise have to do without that added help or contact which can make their lives a little easier.

Board Members:

Cathy Platt-Contact Person

Alfia Sassetti-Home Visiting  
Referrals & other services

Peggy Van Zeyl-Finances  
Food Pantry

Terry Shaker—Finances

Antia Brennan-Meals

Josie Karr-Transportation

Mary Giuffre-Invalid Sitting  
Elizabeth Jurjevich-Invalid Sitting

We have a list of many volunteers who are willing to assist in a select category. More volunteers welcome.

## ***Italian Catholic Federation Branch 358***

The ICF conducts their meetings every 3<sup>rd</sup> Tuesday of each month, at S.V.F. parish center. (Except the months of January, July, and December)

This organization consists of Italian Americans and is open to anyone who wishes to join.

ICF originated in California in 1924 with 240 branches and now has more than 20,000 members in the states of California, Nevada, Arizona, and Illinois.

The main emphasis of the ICF is charitable and apostolate work.

Italian Catholic Federation Sponsors the following:

1. Scholarship Programs
2. Bishops Day (Financial support to local seminarians for religious vocations)
3. Cooleys Anemia
4. Pope John XXII Award

Local fundraising, bake sale, St. Joseph Table, ICF Cook Books and calendars

From these fundraisers, we also help support our parish, St. Vincent Ferrer.

## *Art & Environment*

This committee has as its goal to enhance the beauty of the Church during the various liturgical seasons. The seasons of Advent, Christmas, Ordinary Time, Lent and Easter take on their own distinctive meanings. Through the use of color and appropriate symbols meaning is achieved.

Recent projects have included; the Shrine of the Americas, placement of the statues of the angels and St Vincent Ferrer; new framing for the stations of the cross during Lent/Easter and Icon framing. Works in progress are white oak frames for the Stations of the Cross (non Lent/Easter season), recycled light fixtures for Our Lady of Pompeii and St Vincent Ferrer shrines. The environment for Christmas 2008 is presently under consideration.

Members of the committee: Peggy Van Zeyl- chair, Ed Bellock, Stella Gigante, Janet Homer, Lupe Jimenez, Fr. Tom Noesen, Sue Parro, Cathy Platt, Terry Shaker, Gus Unti, and Bill Walsh.