

Christ the Divine Shepherd Parish

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Greetings from Christ the Divine Shepherd Parish!

This is our second seasonal parish newsletter, and we're happy to have the opportunity to keep you up-to-date with parish information! In this newsletter, we're including our Holy Week & Easter schedule, a review of our "save-a-seat" program for Mass attendance, and an update on parish finances. In addition, we also wanted to keep you in the loop with the progress of our process to plan for the future of our parish. We'd like to hear your feedback on the information in this newsletter, so we've included a questionnaire – we'd like to ask that you fill it out and mail it back to us, or go fill it out online (www.cdsmp.org/springQ). Finally, we've enclosed information about the 2021 Parish Share Program in this mailing.

As we write this, our "save-a-seat" for attendance at Easter Masses has begun taking RSVPs. We expect that our churches will fill up for Easter Masses, so we recommend that you visit our website (www.cdsmp.org/rsvp) or call our office (412-373-0500, M-F 10am-1pm) to save your seat! We hope to see you at an Easter Mass!

Blessings,
Fr Larry & Fr Thom

Parish Financial Update

In late 2018, the MPH grouping of five parishes in Monroeville and Penn Hills was created, with the goal of creating our new parish (Christ the Divine Shepherd Parish). When the grouping was created, the financial status of our parishes was one of the most critical areas of attention: in 2019, each of our five parishes was operating in the red. In total, we had nearly a \$600,000 deficit in 2019. We shared that information with you at our parish assemblies and in our bulletins. In 2020, once CDS was created, we addressed this deficit in a number of ways: we worked hard to reduce expenses, we consolidated our office operations to a single site, and we embarked on two rounds of staff realignment to right-size our staffing. Last fall, we saw the first signs that our efforts were beginning to show a positive effect: our 2020 deficit had dropped to \$350,000. That's still quite a hill to climb, but things are moving in the right direction!

To help us plan for 2021, parish staff has been developing a "cash flow analysis" for the year. Our estimate for 2021 is that our operating deficit might decrease again, to around \$330,000 for the year. One of the reasons that we continue to run a deficit is the cost of maintaining six sites. In 2020, we estimate that the costs related strictly to the operation and maintenance of our six locations was in the neighborhood of \$400,000.

Another reason for our deficit is that the amount of collections each week generally runs about \$5,000 to \$7,000 less than the weekly expenses we incur. If you've been following the graphs that we publish in the bulletin, then you've probably become accustomed to seeing our expense line hovering well above our collections.

How do we make up that \$7,000 difference each week? It comes straight out of our checking account; each week, we cover our shortfall by dipping into the balance of our checking account. In 2020, our checking account balance was on track to decrease by \$350,000 (in other words, the exact amount of our 2020 operational deficit). A couple of things helped us out, though: we received a Payroll Protection Program loan from the government (and we're currently working to have that loan forgiven, under the terms of the PPP program), and we received a grant from the diocese to help pay the salary and benefits of our priest chaplains. Without these two sources of income, our checking account would nearly have been exhausted in 2020.

What are our prospects? Actually, we're very optimistic that we've turned a corner in 2020 and will return to sustainability in the next year or two! It will require us to make difficult yet prudent decisions about how we utilize our resources (include decisions on the usage of our six sites). It will require us to continue to be vigilant in our efforts to control spending. At some point, we'll have to ask tough questions about the level of stewardship and donations that our parishioners provide to CDS. And, in the meantime, we'll continue to be forced to rely on the balances in our checking account and savings accounts to buffer our shortfall.

We're hoping to offer in-person parish assemblies later this year, in order to meet with you and discuss our situation and our plans for the future, and to hear your perspectives. In the meantime, we're beginning to plan for "virtual" gatherings – such as "Zoom meetings" – in which we can meet to discuss our shared hopes and dreams for the future of Christ the Divine Shepherd Parish. As we look at our parish, I'm filled with confidence that, as we continue to steward our resources prudently, we will build a sustainable future in our parish for ourselves and future generations.

HOLY WEEK / EASTER SCHEDULE	
HOLY THURSDAY	
St. Susanna	7PM
GOOD FRIDAY	
St. Bartholomew	2PM
NAM	
HOLY SATURDAY BASKET BLESSING	
St. Susanna	11AM
St. Bernadette	12PM
EASTER VIGIL	
St. Bernadette	8:30PM
EASTER SUNDAY	
St. Bartholomew	8AM
St. Bernadette	8:30AM
NAM	9:30AM
St. Michael	10:30AM
St. Susanna	11:00AM

SAVE-A-SEAT AT
CDSMPH.ORG/RSVP
OR CALL 412-373-0050

Save your Seat for Mass!

In order to save a spot for you at our weekend and Holy Week Masses, we invite you to take advantage of our "Save-a-Seat" program! You can RSVP for a Mass by browsing to the CDS website (www.cdsmp.org/rsvp) or calling our offices between 10am and 1pm, Monday through Friday.

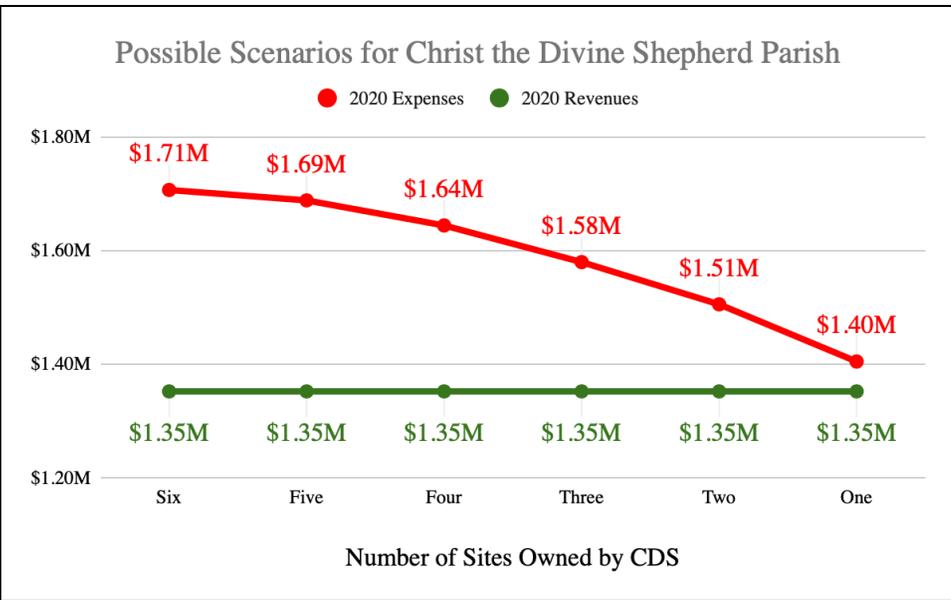
When you take advantage of our Save-a-Seat program, you are guaranteeing that we'll hold a space for you at Mass, and ensuring that you'll be able to enter the church quickly and easily!

Resource Planning Advisory Committee Update

In 2020, a “task force” comprised of parishioners from each of our five predecessor parishes was formed. The goal of this process was to evaluate our parish’s needs for ministry and evangelization, and discern the best use of our resources (funds, people, buildings) to achieve our goals.

As part of their effort, the committee visited every building at each of the six sites of Christ the Divine Shepherd Parish and evaluated it on four criteria: worship, impact on ministry, finances, and location. In early 2021, they completed that work. At a recent meeting of finance and interim pastoral councils, the financial portion of their evaluation and its cumulative impact on the parish was presented and discussed. We hope to have opportunities to discuss their findings with you, the CDS parish community, in the near future, both through virtual small-group discussions and through in-person parish assemblies. To begin that process, we wanted to share some of their results with you: We discerned that, in 2020, parish expenses were around \$1.7 million. Of that amount, approximately \$400,000 was spent to operate and maintain the buildings at our six sites. Unfortunately, parish revenues in 2020 were insufficient to meet those expenses, causing us to spend around \$350,000 out of the parish checking account in order to make ends meet.

2020 CDS Financial Overview			
<u>Debts</u>		<u>Expenses (estimated)</u>	
D&L Loan	\$1,178,178	St Bartholomew	\$106,053
PPP Loan	\$251,000	St Bernadette	74,393
		St Gerard	44,080
		St Michael	18,382
		NAM	100,719
		St Susanna	64,537
		<u>CDS (Other)</u>	<u>1,298,411</u>
<u>Income</u>		Operating	
Offertory	1,279,411	Expenses	\$1,706,575
<u>Other Income</u>	<u>72,445</u>		
Operating			
Income	\$1,351,856		



In our discussion of how we should best use our sites to support our mission, it occurred to us that we might want to examine what our 2020 financial situation would have looked like, if the parish had a smaller footprint – that is, if there had been fewer sites for our parish in 2020. (Please see the graph at left.) Our “actual” situation is reflected at the left of the graph: we operated six sites at a cost of \$1.71 million in 2020. The results of this analysis showed that, even if the parish had consisted of only one site in 2020, we still would have operated at a deficit.

Clearly, we find ourselves in a difficult situation: at current levels of contributions and of expenses, our parish

is not sustainable. We continue to spend money that we don’t have, and it continues to weaken our position and jeopardize our ability to provide ministry and outreach to the Catholic community of Monroeville and Penn Hills.

We face some difficult decisions in the months ahead: we must address the needs of our community and our ability to meet those needs. Looking not only at 2021, but to the years to come, we must ask ourselves how our parish will be able to serve the people of our community, and how we can bear the expenses of running the sites we operate. We must ask what the size of our site “footprint” should look like, in the service of the needs of our community, and in terms of what we can afford. Clearly, the “status quo” that we’ve become accustomed to experiencing is not sustainable. Nevertheless, we can be a parish that is sustainable in the long term! To attain this goal, it will take community consensus and decisive action to position ourselves for a bright future.

Our hope is to begin holding parish assemblies / meetings (either virtual and/or in-person) as soon as we are able to do so. At these assemblies, we will discuss our current situation, ask you to share your hopes and dreams for our parish’s future, and obtain consensus that will allow us to embark on a path to achieve our vision! Please keep an eye on our various communications channels (bulletins, website, Facebook, Flocknote) for more updates and information!

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In print at each church building, on the web, and receivable by email.

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