

## General Assembly

20 June 2021, St. John XXIII Parish

### Minutes of the Meeting

The General Assembly was convened at 12:30 p.m. and chaired by Mr. Joselito Benitez, Vice President of the Parish Administrative Council (PAC). The meeting was attended by 21 parishioners/participants as indicated in Annex I (attached). The following officers of the Parish Administrative Council (PAC) were present:

Father Paul C. Friel	-	Parish Priest
Mr. Joselito Benitez	-	Vice President
Mr. Augustine Agyeman-Duah	-	Treasurer
Ms. Camille Roney	-	Vicariate Liaison
Mr. Jorge Flores	-	Fundraising
Ms. Sandra Simpson	-	Safeguarding (newly elected officer)
Mr. William McClain	-	Human Resources (newly elected officer)

#### 1. Opening Prayer

The opening prayer was led by Father Paul C. Friel, Parish Priest. After the prayer, Father Paul welcomed the participants to the General Assembly.

#### 2. Welcome and Approval of Agenda

Mr. Joselito Benitez, PAC Vice President, welcomed the participants to the General Assembly, including the PAC officers who were present. Mr. Benitez chaired the GA on behalf of the PAC President, Mr. Oscar Mbeche, who was in isolation.

As an introduction, Mr. Joselito Benitez informed the participants on the importance of the General Assembly. The General Assembly of the St. John XXIII Parish was established as the “legal body which reviews and approves the budgets and accounts, elects members of the Parish Administrative Council and reviews its work”. The Parish’s Catholic registered members from aged 6 and above compose the Assembly. Non-Parishioners attendees are observers.

Mr. Joselito Benitez informed the Assembly that the AGA is held under the statutes of the Parish under Article 8. It is held once a year and usually scheduled on the 30<sup>th</sup> of June.

However due to COVID-19, last year's GA was held on 26 July 2020. For this year, it was scheduled on 20 June 2021.

The Parish Administrative Council (PAC), as an elected body elected by the General Assembly, "is responsible for the Parish's day-to-day Administration and Finances, the Parish Office Staff, Grounds and Maintenance and Legal issues regarding the Canton and Diocese".

Mr. Benitez advised the Assembly on the composition of the PAC, as follows:

- |                         |   |  |
|-------------------------|---|--|
| a. Father C. Friel      | - | Parish Priest                                    |
| b. Mr. Oscar Mbeche     | - | President  |
| c. Mr. Joselito Benitez | - | Vice President                                   |
| d. Ms. Camille Roney    | - | Vicariate Liaison                                |
| e. Mr. Jorge Flores     | - | Fundraising                                      |
| f. Ms. Yvonne Moussy    | - | Property Management                              |
| g. Ms. Celeste Sandoval | - | Child Protection/Safeguarding (outgoing officer) |
| h. Mr. Gerry Lynch      | - | Human Resources (outgoing officer)               |

Mr. Benitez recalled the **Parish Mission Statement** which he read to the Assembly, as follows: " We, the English-speaking Roman Catholic parish of St. John XXIII, coming together to share our gifts as a community of diverse nations and cultures:

- a. Celebrate and live our faith through prayer and the Sacraments and service to others;
- b. Teach and proclaim the good news of our Risen Lord Jesus Christ;
- c. Reach out in solidarity with all people of goodwill to promote Truth, Justice and Peace."

Mr. Benitez further stated that *"In line with our Mission, and in celebration of the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the opening of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Vatican Council, we draw inspiration from the vision of our patron Blessed John XXIII for an openness of the Church to meet the challenges and needs of the modern world. We recommit our parish ministries to living out this vision, through our work in the parish, through our outreach within Geneva and Switzerland, and through our ministry to the wider world, to address in sincerity and love the issues of the times in which we live"*.

Mr. Benitez took note of the Assembly's approval of the Agenda of the GA meeting (posted in the Parish website).

### 3. Approval of July 26, 2020 General Assembly minutes

The minutes of the General Assembly held on 26 July 2020 was approved by the Assembly without objections and amendments.

#### 4. Parish Administrative Council (PAC) Report for 2020

Amidst the challenges brought about by Covid-19 in 2020, the PAC tried its best to meet its obligations and goals for that year.

Mr. Benitez presented the 2020 Report of the Parish Administrative Council (PAC) which included its accomplishments and activities in 2020. The PAC 2020 Report was highlighted by the following:

- a. The PAC extended its appreciation to the Parish's external auditor, Ms. Beryl Oriaro, who conducted the Parish's audit of its Statement of Finances for the year ended 31 December 2020. She also provided guidelines and recommendations for the improvement of the Parish financial activities.
- b. Mr. Benitez advised the General Assembly of 2 vacancies in the PAC, namely, the Safeguarding (new name) and Human Resources positions. Ms. Celeste Sandoval (Child Protection/Safeguarding) and Mr. Gerry Lynch (Human Resources) were outgoing PAC officers. The candidates for the 2 positions were to be elected and approved by the present General Assembly.
- c. The PAC conveyed its gratitude to the volunteers of the Parish who diligently provided their assistance at the start of COVID-19 last year up to the present. In particular, the PAC appreciated the Parish's volunteers in the following activities:
  - The Parish Pastoral Council (PPC) members, like Anna Berkeley, who in spite of COVID-19 have shown their diligence and perseverance in organizing and implementing pastoral activities of specific ministries.
  - Assistance of Menchie and Mark Castillo who set up the masses.
  - Assistance of Stephen and Petra for the live streaming of the masses during the early stage of the lock down periods and the present live streaming of the 11:30 mass for those physically unable to attend.
  - Assistance of Ms. Mary Bernasconi in delivering relevant talks in the online Confirmation Classes.
  - Assistance in all the masses (with restrictions and safety protocols), i.e. lectors during the masses, welcoming volunteers, providing sanitizers to mass attendees, sanitizing the seats after the masses, weekly mass collections, etc.

- Assistance provided to convene the Holy Communion, Reconciliations and Confirmations.
  - In the online registration of attendees for the masses and checking the list of attendees against the registration prior to the masses.
  - The choirs providing mass songs (under restriction and safety protocol).
  - In the preparation and selling of jams.
  - Filipino community had a pantry in the Parish.
  - Packed grocery bags for the mini Caravan de Solidarite led by Filipino volunteers;
  - Distribution of “hot meals” for the poor prepared by the Filipino-owned Viverra Café.
- d. Mr. Benitez advised the Assembly to offer prayers for the following: healing of all sick people; people who lost their jobs; bon voyage to Parishioners who were relocated. And, thanksgiving prayers to the following: for all who were healed from COVID-19, like Father Paul and Marigel; for God’s protection of Father Paul when a teenage burglar went inside the Parish building, fortunately Father Paul was not around.
- e. The PAC took note of the effects of COVID-19 on the fundraising capacity of the Parish in 2020. In particular, it reduced the Global Outreach funding ability by almost 50%. Another impact is the funding for the support of the Holy Family Parish in the Diocese of Lodwar, Turkana region, was reduced by 30%. In addition, the annual Kermesse, as the Parish’s major fundraising activity, was not held in 2020.
- f. The PAC extended its appreciation to a kind person who provided a notable financial assistance to the Parish amidst the decrease of its income collection due to COVID-19.
- g. The PAC also extended its deepest appreciation to the Swiss Government for its kind support to the Parish by providing a soft loan of CHF 78,000.00.
- h. The PAC emphasized the most important asset of the Parish is the children. In this regard, it gives importance to the Safeguarding policy of the Parish. It was previously called the Child Protection policy. This policy was approved by the General Assembly in 2018. It was updated in 2019 based on the Charter issued by the Diocese regarding child trafficking and against sexual abuse. The policy will be reviewed in June 2022. The Parish obligated all parishioners (e.g., Parish’s catechists) who are handling children and young people to undergo the Child Protection Programme held every year.
- i. The PAC took note of the following 2020 reports (*full reports have been posted in the Parish website*) of the Parish’s Activity Programmes:

- Global Outreach (prepared by Mr. Joselito Benitez);
  - Fundraising (prepared by Mr. Jorge Flores);
  - Property Management (prepared by Ms. Yvonne Moussy);
  - Religious Education (prepared by Ms. Anna Berkeley);
  - Vicariate Liaison (prepared by Ms. Camille Roney)
- j. Mr. Benitez appraised the General Assembly on the Catechism classes. In spite of the challenges brought about by COVID-19 since last year, the Catechism classes continued their classes online via zoom, since face to face classes or physical contacts are prohibited up to the present. The PAC extended its appreciation to the effective leadership of Ms. Anna Berkeley who made the classes possible. The PAC also appreciated the assistance provided by the Confirmation team, namely, Ms. Mary Bernasconi, Ms. Aleks Jasinka, Mr. Carlos Vergel Infante, Ms. Sarah Grummer Strawn, Mr. Antony Fake, Ms. Reka Tivoran, Mr. Carlos Dominguez Diaz and Ms. Katherine Doherty. The PAC was also grateful to those who have assisted in the First Holy Communion, namely, Ms. Sharon Heduvan, Ms. Luca Titus and Ms. Una Walsh. And, PAC gave thanks to those who have assisted in the First Reconciliation preparation led by Ms. Fedora and Mr. Oliverio Leon.
- k. Mr. Benitez informed the Assembly of the PAC's 2021-2022 Visions and Plans (to do list), as follows:
- Financial Policies and Procedures, tightening of internal controls by reviewing and rewriting (in progress);
  - Staff Job Descriptions, updating to be based more according to current standards (accomplished);
  - Efficient or Alternate methods for "giving" (i.e. monthly pledges, weekly collection, via automatic bank transfer). This is to avoid cash collection in the Parish for the safety of Father Paul, Parish staff and also for the protection of the Parish.
  - Attentively monitoring the Swiss Government's requirements and restrictions in gathering of people especially if there is food involved. In particular, the Parish is looking forward to continue the Parish activities such as the Kermesse, Advent Dinner and the Barrio Fiesta. It should be emphasized that these Parish's activities are important but not because to gain money or revenue but primarily to get greater engagements with all Parishioners.
- l. In conclusion, Mr. Benitez said that 2020 was a great year. He reiterated the Parish Mission Statements as the Parishioners' guide on how they should live in the future. He

advised Parishioners to start in the Parish by reaching out, talk, listen, and offer help. He counseled the Parishioners to work together to bring others closer to Christ and to build their wealth in Heaven. And for the Parishioners who have questions, Mr. Benitez suggested that they address or send them to PAC, or to the Parish Staff, or to Father Paul.

5. Religious Education Report 2020 (Director - Ms. Anna Berkeley)

The General Assembly noted and approved the Religious Education Report 2020 by Ms. Anna Berkeley, Director of the Religious Education programme of the Parish (*full report has been posted in the Parish website*).

6. Vicariate Liaison Report 2020 (Vicariate Liaison – Ms. Camille Roney)

The General Assembly noted and approved the Vicariate Liaison Report 2020 by Ms. Camille Roney (*full report has been posted in the Parish website*).

7. Report on Parish Finances (2020)

Mr. Augustine Agyeman-Duah, the PAC Treasurer, presented to the Assembly the report on the Parish Finances for 2020. He advised the Assembly that although the Parish's income (i.e. 2020 contributions) has decreased by 20% due to covid-19, the Parish is in good financial condition.

Mr. Agyeman-Duah advised the Assembly that the PAC has the responsibility to prepare and review the Parish's Financial Statement. On behalf of PAC, he expressed the PAC's appreciation to Ms. Lucy Odhiambo for doing good work in preparing all the Parish's finances. She has shown her notable dedication and commitment to the Parish

He highlighted the following:

a. Review and Approval of Parish Accounts

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Mr. Agyeman-Duah provided the following information on the Parish Accounts:

- i) The Parish is in good financial position with a surplus of CHF18,000.00.

- ii) There was a decrease in the Parish's income by 28% due to the effect of COVID-19 on the weekly offerings which is the Parish's main source of income. The weekly offerings decreased by 51%. On the other hand, the pledges increased by 16%. For 2020, the supposed income from Kermesse was a loss for the Parish. In 2019, the Kermesse provided an income of over CHF 60,000.00 to the Parish's income.
- iii) The Parish's expenditures were on track in 2020. There was a decrease of 36% in expenditures since the planned activities for 2020 were not held due to COVID-19. The expenditures were within the 2020 budget as approved by PAC and the General Assembly.
- iv) Mr. Agyeman-Duah highlighted and conveyed PAC's appreciation to the Swiss Government's kind support to the Parish by providing a soft loan in 2020 amounting to CHF 78,000.00.

The General Assembly noted and approved the Parish's Statement of Financial Position as of 31 December 2020 (in Swiss francs) including the accompanying notes which are integral parts, as verified by the Parish's official auditor, Ms. Beryl Oriaro (independent auditor). The Statement of Financial Position is attached to the Independent Auditor's Report (*has been posted in the Parish website*).

b. Independent Auditor's Report (by Mr. Beryl Oriaro),

Mr. Augustine Agyema-Duah read in full to the Assembly the Independent Auditor's Report prepared by Mr. Beryl Oriaro who was appointed by the General Assembly (*full report has been posted in the Parish website*).

The General Assembly noted and approved the Independent Auditor's Report, including Ms. Oriaro's opinion and advice.

c. Approval of Budgets

Mr. Augustine Agyema-Duah presented to the Assembly the Parish's 2021 Annual Budget at CHF 877,895.00 (previously presented to GA 2020) and the Parish's 2022 Annual Budget at CHF 749,895.00, which is a decrease of CHF 128,000.00 from the 2021 Budget. The Outreach Programme and the Parish Administration expenses were reduced in the 2022 Budget by CHF 45,000.00 and CHF 83,000.00, respectively.

The Statement of Functional Activities – Budget (2021 and 2022) has been posted in the Parish website. Mr. Agyema-Duah advised that any questions on the budget may be referred either to him or to Ms. Lucy Odhiambo.

The General Assembly noted and approved the Parish's Annual Budget for 2021 (CHF 877,895.00) which is being utilized for 2021, and the Annual Budget for 2022 (CHF 749,895.00).

d. Stewardship Campaign Update

Mr. Joselito Benitez extended the PAC's invitation to Parishioners to continue their support to the Stewardship Campaign as a voluntary commitment. The yearly pledges (and receipts) contribute to the Parish's annual budget to support its operations and activities/programmes. The annual pledges received in 2020 totaled to CHF 220,458.00.

The General Assembly noted and approved the Stewardship Campaign update.

e. Pledges and Loan Repayments

On the Parish accomplishments, Mr. Augustine Agyema-Duah shared the following:

- The Parish continued to meet its financial obligations which include the repayment of loans to the Eglise Catholique Romaine – Geneve (ECR). The Parish appreciated the ECR for its kind assistance by providing flexibility to the Parish's repayment of loans due to the effects of COVID-19. The ECR reduced the 2021 loan interest from 2% to 1.5%. On behalf of PAC, Mr. Agyema-Duah extended its gratitude to Ms. Camille Roney for her great work as the Parish's Vicariate Liaison and her efforts in negotiating for the decrease in the loan interest.
- The Parish was able to pay the 2020 loans amounting to CHF 59,490.00. This reduced the total loan, from CHF 5M of 10 years ago, to less than CHF 500,000.00 in 2021.

Mr. Agyema-Duah apprised the Assembly that the Parish is still facing some challenges. The Parish depends heavily on the weekly offerings and the pledges which are its main income. In this regard, he encouraged Parishioners to continuously extend their support to the Parish through their weekly offerings and pledges.

The General Assembly noted the pledges received by the Parish in 2020 amounting to CHF 220,458.00 was an increase of CHF 31,184.00 in spite of the challenges of COVID-19. This is based on the Parish's Statement of Activities, for the years ended 31 December 2020 (*attached to the Independent Auditor's Report, posted in the Parish's website*).



The General Assembly noted the Long-term Loan Payable balance for the year ended 31 December 2020 amounting to CHF 736,980.00. This is based on the Parish's Notes to Financial Statement, for the year ended 31 December 2020 (*attached to the Independent Auditor's Report, posted in the Parish's website*).

f. Future Projects

Mr. Augustine Agyema-Duah apprised the Assembly that the PAC plans to reduce further the loan balance for 2021. The PAC plans to launch new GIF campaigns for other infrastructures and the Parish's projects.

8. Parish Administrative Council (PAC) Elections

The General Assembly approved the following newly elected officers of the Parish Administrative Council (PAC):

- Mr. William McClain - Human Resources
- Ms. Sandra Simpson - Safeguarding Coordinator

9. Any Other Business

Father Paul C. Friel, Parish Priest expressed his gratitude to PAC and the Parish staff. He also commended the patience and diligence of the Parishioners and volunteers amidst the effects of COVID-19 since the beginning of 2020. In spite of this, the Parish was still able to face the challenges brought by COVID-19 affecting its activities and programmes.

Father Paul informed the General Assembly that the Pastoral life of the Parish has been challenging at the onset of COVID-19 since the Parish has to strictly follow the guidelines and protocols provided by the Federal authorities, the local canton, and the Diocese. In particular, there were restrictions and/or suspension on activities held inside the Parish buildings, on group meetings, sharing of food, face to face classes, etc.

These challenges did not extinguish the spirit of the Parish and even scored successes. He shared the following results of the Parish activities and programmes:

- a. Confirmation Programme: Father Paul expressed his appreciation to Ms. Anna Berkeley, Director of Religious Education, who managed to continue the Confirmation preparation classes by holding them online via zoom. It was a challenging experience for both the Catechists and students. Nevertheless, the classes were successful in

meetings their objectives. The Confirmations of young people were successfully celebrated back to back with masses. There were 24 young students from C20 class who received their Confirmation last 24 April in two ceremonies celebrated by Msgr. Pascal Desthieux. And, there were 38 young students in the C21 class who received their Confirmation last 8 May, in two ceremonies with Bishop Charles Morerod.

- b. First Communion: The First Holy Communion preparation classes were held online via zoom on Sunday mornings from January until the end of May. The first communion of 45 students from last year's Level 3 classes was convened in autumn. For this year, there are 48 students from the level 3 class who have received their first communion between end of May and early July.
- c. First Reconciliation: The First Reconciliation preparation classes were held online via zoom on Sunday mornings. There were 48 students from last year's level 2 class who took their First Reconciliation over two (2) Saturdays mornings in March.
- d. Catechism Programme at home: The non sacramental classes were provided with their learning materials/resources and activities about faith via the monthly 'Catechesis at Home' newsletter. The Catechism programme is in support of parents who are the first teachers of their children.

The Catechism classes will remain under restriction until end of summer and beginning of autumn. Father Paul informed the Assembly that the Parish is not a school and the authorities does not treat it as such. In this regard, the authorities advised to hold the Catechism classes as part of the Church/Parish activities which is more restricted.

Father Paul once again expressed his gratitude to Ms. Anna Berkeley for managing well the sacramental classes (Confirmation, First Communion and Reconciliation) and kept them ongoing in spite of the challenges of COVID-19. And, he commended Ms. Berkeley who was highlighted in an article in the American Theological Journal.

- e. Walking in Faith: This is a spiritual programme with weekly classes composed of 20 ladies. The Bible Study led by Giovanna Titus with a team of volunteers was held via zoom. Thanks should be given to Petra and Stephen for introducing the idea of live streaming of the spiritual programme, including during the weeks of Lent, the live streaming of the Stations of the Cross in the Holy land.
- f. Advent Programme: There were 150 Parishioners who participated in the online weekly advent retreat and faith sharing.

- g. The other Parish events:
  - for Holy Week, 97 Parishioners signed up;
  - for Pentecost Sunday (day of reflection), 45 Parishioners signed up;
  - for the online Continuation of Growth, Prayer and Reflective Living Programme, 18 Parishioners joined;
  - Ignatian Spiritual Exercises, 12 Parishioners participated.
- h. Baptism: Until recently, the Rites of Baptism was not allowed. There were a few baptisms scheduled after the GA.
- i. Funeral service: There were a few funeral services held during the first few weeks of COVID. These were held with limited attendees to meet restrictions and precautionary measures. Two funerals were scheduled the week after the GA (Tuesday and Wednesday).

## 10. Conclusion

In conclusion, Father Paul welcomed the new PAC officers, namely, Ms. Sandra Simpson as the new Safeguarding coordinator replacing Ms. Celeste Sandoval and, Mr. William McClain as Human Resources replacing Mr. Gerry Lynch. Mr. McClain has extensive Human Resources experiences both local and international. Since there were no other candidates for both positions, Ms. Simpson and Mr. McClain were nominated by acclamation.

Father Paul extended his gratitude to Mr. Oscar Mbeche, PAC President, who cannot attend the General Assembly since he was in isolation after a contact with a person with COVID-19. He shared that the Parish received few letters addressed to Mr. Mbeche which were opened by Mr. Joselito Benitez. The first letter pertained to the appointment of Father Paul as the Parish priest of St. John XXIII Parish. Father Paul explained that the PAC does not appoint the Parish priest in Geneva but the Bishop in Fribourg. He was appointed to our parish after the Bishop in Glasgow agreed with the Bishop in Fribourg to assign him. As an ordained priest, he follows the vows of obedience to the Bishop. The second letter was regarding the planned pastoral visit of Bishop Charles Morerod to Geneva. The visit was cancelled.

Lastly, Father Paul conveyed his appreciation to Mr. Joselito Benitez, Vice President of PAC, for replacing Mr. Mbeche with short notice.

## 11. Closing of the General Assembly 2021

**COMMUNAUTÉ  
CATHOLIQUE  
ANGLOPHONE**

**EGLISE  
CATHOLIQUE  
ROMAINE**  
GENÈVE

In closing, Father Paul C. Friel led the prayer. The General Assembly concluded at 2:30 p.m.

## **Annex I**

**General Assembly**  
20 June 2021, St. JohnXXIII Parish

### **List of Attendants**

1. Mr. Augustine Agyeman-Duah
2. Ms. Elizabeth Azi
3. Ms. Ma. Victoria Barnes
4. Ms. Maria A. (Marigel) Barrozo
5. Mr. Joselito Benitez
6. Ms. Evelyn Benitez
7. Ms. Anna Berkeley
8. Mr. Benjamin Branco
9. Ms. Cecilia Cuello
10. Ms. Vivian Escrai
11. Mr. Raphael Evoeme
12. Mr. Jorge Flores
13. Father Paul C. Friel
14. Ms. Maribel Mapanao

15. Mr. William McClain
16. Ms. Lucy Odhiambo
17. Mr. Ejeh Oliver
18. Ms. Menang Olga
19. Ms. Camille Roney
20. Ms. Sandra Simpson
21. Mr. Emmanuel Tanon