

#1. Upon my installation as Pastor, I was already talking wherever possible about conducting a needs assessment. Fr. Tom Tyler and Msgr. Charles Kaza came to install me as Pastor.

New pastor returns to serve in Elk County

Behind the Scenes...

By Amy Cherry
Staff Writer

Although relatively still new at St. Boniface Parish in Kersey, pastor Fr. Jim Faluszcak, 41, has been working on getting to know more about its parishioners and their needs.

Fr. Jim is no stranger to the area, having taught theology and acting as Campus Minister at Elk County Catholic High School from 1997 to 2001.

"I love Elk County and would like to stay here for as much time as I can do good for people," Fr. Jim said.

Since his arrival at the parish on June 7, Fr. Jim said he hopes to conduct a complete census of the parish, especially since Fox Township has been continually growing over the past several years.

"With some demographic shift we can get a better sense of the local area's Catholic population. Masses are very well-attended," Fr. Jim said. "We have a thriving grade school and my number-one goal is to continue to support its excellent principal and set of teachers, and to ensure the school stays strong. Our grade school is one of the oldest in this part of the Erie Diocese."

Fr. Jim said that St. Boniface Church is in need of some minor renovations, specifically new paint and carpeting.

"People are very proud of this church and rightfully so," he said.

He noted that a needs assessment also should be completed

and he has already begun to talk to parishioners to see what they need to happen in the church.

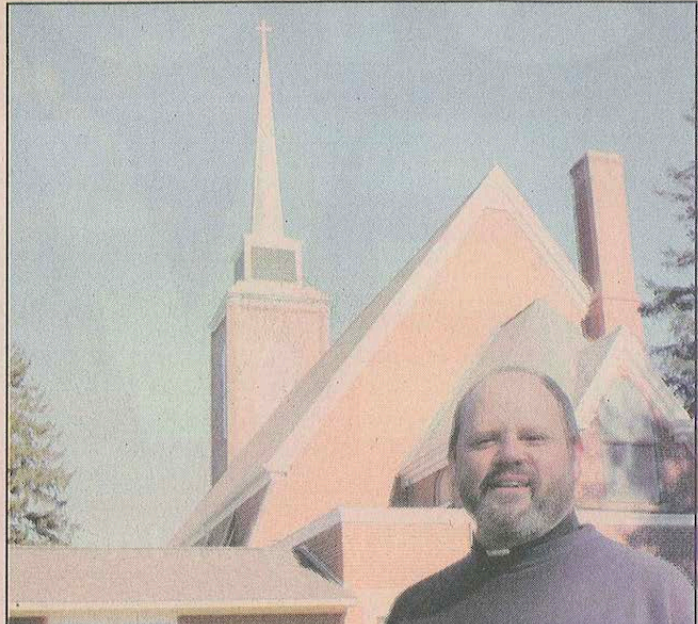
Answering the call to serve

As the youngest of four siblings, Fr. Jim is the son of Barbara and Stephen Faluszcak of Erie. He attended McDowell High School, then pursued an accounting major at Gannon University.

Fr. Jim explained that in high school he thought becoming a priest would be the most satisfying way of life.

"I knew I wanted to serve people," he noted. "I felt God's love in my life very strongly and thought this would be the best way to pass his love along."

He added that he felt it was his responsibility to learn about his faith since it was not being taught to him in high school.



#2. What started as the Church Study Group eventually became the Building Committee. This shows some of the process of identifying and prioritizing work needed in the existing church building. Each member had an allotted number of votes, which they could put on one or multiple priorities. Everyone was satisfied with this method of building consensus, and the wider parish trusted the method and its conclusions,

MEMO

To: Members of the Church Study Group
 From: Fr. Jim
 Date: May 7, 2011
 Re: Third Meeting

Our next meeting will take place at 6:00pm this Saturday. We are considering moving either to the rectory or school.

Enclosed you will find a four column progressive list of items that ultimately progresses to a categorized set of priorities.

Some items (in red) were eliminated because they were subsumed into other items. The first column is in the original list. I made some adjustments in wording on the six sheets. I made some adjustments in wording reflected there, and whether it makes its way into the final list.

This is a first draft. We will use our time together to be considering. If we come to the same general consensus in position to begin to seek estimates.

All of our discussion continues to be part of a process leading to any decisions, especially since we will need to present to Finance Council and Parish Council before that which is central to this process.

My hope, also, for our meeting Monday is that we can bring maintenance concerns to a more deliberate discussion and sense of community. Refer to the materials I gave you along with this.

An additional task which must be completed as part of moving into the bell tower and attics of the church for the interior inside of the roof and the attic side of the plaster. We need people since it is a potentially dangerous undertaking.

Please look at the calendar before the meeting: May 23 or May 24, either at 6pm or 7pm. It will be more difficult to get the group together once June gets here, and we will be needing some time to track down estimates anyway.

By Category	
Lighting & Electrical	
Larger fans	6
Update light fixtures	4
Central electrical controls	3
Exhaust fan	
Excavating	
Connect to municipal sewer line	2
Masonry	
Flooring	
Floor in priest sacristy	7
Carpet	3
Dip in floor - back aisle	3
Laminate flooring	3
Raise pulpit	3
Update tabernacle & surrounding	2
Extend altar; include ramp	1
Raise altar	
Plaster & Paint	
Examine & restore murals	7
Redo walls: plaster & paint	5
Cracks in sacristy	3
Doorways chipped	1
Gold leaf design on wall behind altar	1
Audio & Video	
Better microphone placement	2
Project lyrics/hymnal responses	1
Carpentry & Finishing	
Confessional privacy/odor	5
Cry/changing/bride room	5
Insulation for choir loft storage/dock	5
Open dead space in back of church	4
Reorient crucifix/Resurrection window	4
Wainscoting needs replaced	4
Pews	4
Janitor closet	3
Modify side altars	3
Harmony in woodwork	3
Open stained glass window in tower	3
Open baptismal area	3
Tower stained glass needs reframe	2
Replace window ledges (soft/peel)	2

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Choir down front	1
Enshrine scriptures	1
Secure door to rectory from sacristy	1
Bathroom upgrade/distraction	1
Sacristy cabinets: plumb, replace, etc.	1
Centralize/Minimize donor plaques	
Curve behind altar/move servers	
Liturgical Appointments	
Devotional statuary	2
Art in sanctuary	1
Stained glass: wording/lead	1
Make sanctuary lamp more visible	1
Area for banner placement	1
New song number board	
Restoration	
Stations: Clean & restore	6
Examine & restore murals	7
Statue shelving cracked	
Plumbing & Heating	
Standing water in basement	2
Efficient furnace	2
Connect to municipal sewer line	2
Sacristy sink: reconfigure, hot water	
Punch List	
Mission statement re-presented	
Fire extinguishers need marked	
Consolidate literature	
Mirror in sacristy	

Portfolio Artifacts:

Pastor
St. Boniface Church & School

#3. We planned for, and achieved, every need. We put on an addition for gathering, wakes, dinners, and fundraisers, though the primary use of the addition is an octagonal baptistry.



Portfolio Artifacts:

Pastor
St. Boniface Church & School

#4. The cultivation of advance gifts allowed us to move expeditiously on preparatory goals, such as a key property purchase. I encouraged the cultivation of donors who would be involved because of their greater stake. I was edified to witness multiple servant-leaders among the parishioners at St. Boniface.

St. Boniface Catholic Church

355 Main Street
Kersey, PA 15846
814/ 885-8941
stbpastor@ncentral.com

January 4, 2011

[REDACTED]
Kersey, PA 15846

Dear [REDACTED]

St. Boniface Church and School are most grateful for your ongoing generosity, and for the extraordinary gift you gave us at Thanksgiving. I found your note to be edifying in that you offered us this gift out of a sense of your own gratitude. Thanksgiving is one meaning of the word Eucharist, and you are helping to build our community into a more Eucharistic people.

I am also grateful for the vote of confidence which you expressed in your note. There have been other opportunities to come back to Elk County, but they were never quite right. I was overjoyed when the bishop suggested Kersey. This has been an easy transition for me, and I hope the parish, because of the generosity and commitment of people like you.

As the parish moves forward with significant initiatives, particularly with regard to the church building, it is important to me that you feel comfortable offering me your advice. Specifically, I would appreciate some type of greater involvement in the decision-making processes of the parish. In our meeting today I have offered one suggestion. Consider it to be an invitation. You are the best judges of your time and talents, but I would like to offer you this opportunity to participate in the future of the parish.

We are most grateful for your support of St. Boniface. In whatever way we move forward, be assured of my prayers and best wishes for you, your family, and everything you undertake in the Lord's name.

Sincerely,

Rev. James G. Faluszczak

St. Boniface Church

355 Main Street
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negotiation with you for the purchase of
sent to the parking lot of our school

es that the Pastor of the parish consult
e permission of the Bishop to move

to the Bishop when you inform us

St. Boniface Church is in the process of securing an appraisal of the property. We expect that we would consider in any offer the appraised value, less considerations for updating the property or otherwise converting it to our purposes.

Recognizing that there exists no legal agreement between you and ourselves, we ask that you consider the possibility of entering into a negotiation with us at your convenience.

Sincerely,

Rev. James G. Faluszczak
Pastor

Cc: John Caimi, Finance Chair
Thomas G. Wagner, Esq.

#5. My introduction to the Case for Support. Having conducted a feasibility study with a diocesan expert, we began with the baseline of \$450,000 and the interior renovation of the existing structure. We quickly raised \$750,000 and completed the addition. We added air conditioning, and funds raised were nearly \$1.3 million by the completion of the campaign.

Dear Parishioners,

The forebears of our parish cleared the land of what was the Old Buffalo Swamp, hewed rock out of the earth, and established the present church on one of the highest points in the county. They established our church as a beacon to attract the people of their day not to a building, but to Christ and the life he offers every person who seeks him. Take a walk in our cemetery and you will see their names carved in stone. They used their skills and the materials available to them, but they themselves were living stones. They were the edifice that gave God glory.



As for all Catholics, their efforts were not a response to some external obligation or request. Theirs was a response to the interior invitation of Christ to follow him. They made sacrifices because Christ made sacrifices. In the everyday giving of himself and in the moments when he made the ultimate sacrifice, Christ showed you and me the way to eternal life. It is in sacrifice that we are transformed and how we best resemble the God who created us from nothing. Each of us is a living stone, a trusted coworker of the Lord, and part of the edifice that today gives glory to God.

Still a beacon and revered by all of us, the physical structure of the church is not just showing signs of wear; in places, the interior is peeling, cracking, crumbling, and sagging. Renovations of a prior time reflect the changes that were taking place then. While our worship is dignified, the focal points of the Mass lack unity and some of our rituals are not as full as they should be. What we have today reflects the transition of the 1960s and the initial and, at the time, tentative movements of Vatican II.

God deserves our worship everywhere and at every time. We seek to commune with him throughout the weeks, days, and hours of our life. More than any other way, we learn about God and experience his care through other people. This is why our worship together and our house of worship are so important. God is everywhere, true enough, but our reverence for God and empathy for the needs of others are enshrined and enlivened by our church building. Since the members of the church are a living body, the church itself enlivens us by our participation in its life and our worship there.

Each of us is a living stone and this is our time to build the church anew. Our generation of parishioners is the one people will remember as setting a new foundation. We are the ones people will talk about as having had the foresight to do what needed to be done. We are strengthening our parish now and ensuring that it will continue to be a beacon. This is an opportunity to imitate the sacrifice of Christ and to be transformed into his likeness.

Our sacrifice on behalf of the church is no easy thing to pin down. Only you know what level of support you are able to offer. To be able to complete the necessary work in the church, I am asking parishioners to consider a donation of \$5,000 over the next five years. This is certainly significant, but after a 10% down payment of \$500, the remainder would be \$75 per month.



Please know how grateful I am to be your pastor, and especially grateful for all you do for our parish. You are living stones who are building our church into what it will become tomorrow.

Sincerely,

Rev. James G. Faluszczyk

Portfolio Artifacts:

Pastor
St. Boniface Church & School

#6. I had my own list of priorities that I never shared with the committees. Having educated themselves about the expectations of the wider Catholic Church, they saw and addressed every need out of devotion to their church. I feel like the church looks bigger in the after pic.

My Renovation List:

Necessary

Murals: flaking, unevenly dirty, cracks, water
Sewer: tank/leach system, against code, park
Plaster work: cracks of varying types (any str
Painting entire church
Cabinetry: insufficient, out of square, drawer
Pews: worn, veneer flaked, water stained, pro
Wainscot: warping, joints cracked
Confessional: privacy issues, odors from bath
Bell tower interior: stained glass window, insu
Sound system: inadequate for choir/soloist, n
Lighting: broken fixtures, joints
Carpet: worn at entrances, new flooring
Stations: flaking, considerable cracking
Electrical controls: spread out, not deciphera
Donor plaques: outdated, multiples
Janitor closet: nonexistent/in basement
Non-devotional statuary: "Boniface", Infant of Prague, no dedicated statue of Mary



Wishful

Lack of unified woodwork
Sanctuary art lacks merit
Crucifix/resurrection window
Non-necessary altars
Cry/bride room
Window trim natural wood, instead of painted
Usher storage
Outdated lighting
Choir loft
Air conditioning
Bathroom: distraction



If not now, then perhaps 12 years from now.

#7. I did not tell the parish or its committees that I did not originally want to embark upon a renovation. In Clarion it consumed all my time, and left little time for ministry. I got to work with the best people in both instances, and here the ministry was already thriving.

March 22, 2014

Dear Parishioners,

St. Boniface Parish has a noble history of hard-working people who are dedicated to their faith. Our people have always come together in support of their church and the ministries in which it engages. As soon as I was appointed your pastor four years ago I was made aware of tentative plans to begin a renovation of the church. While all of the standing committees supported a set of plans, it was clear that the wider parish had some trepidation. Was it really needed? Could we really afford it? Yet we all knew something needed to be done if our church would continue to be a beacon of hope and a center of community life.

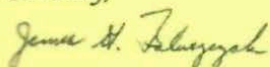
I made my own reservations clear: having come from a recent building project at Clarion Campus Ministries I knew the potential pitfalls. With a project such as this, there is sometimes a tradeoff of ministerial focus in favor of an emphasis on buildings and money. I also was not looking forward to the potential personal toll it might take. Having communicated these concerns to you from the beginning, you responded generously at every turn. Knowing that a pastor is the one who is assigned praise or blame by the generations who follow I want to take this opportunity to acknowledge who really made this happen.

By your faith you have built on the foundation laid by so many generations before you. Your commitment to volunteer, to advise, and to donate to this renovation proves that our parish is built of living stones. You have been generous because you trusted those who made the plans: Parish Council, Finance Council, and the Renovation Committee. These men and women set the stage for everything you see here today. In most cases, I had less input than any of them. This was especially the case where the design of the renovation and addition were concerned. My job was to present the expectations of the universal Church and the Diocese, but the committees made the decisions. You should be proud of the work they undertook, and proud of yourselves.

Our parish owes a debt of gratitude, especially, to several individuals. The original plans and process undertaken by Ed and Clythera Horning and Larry and Marion Johnson provided us with a strong reminder to take care of what has been entrusted to us, and with the momentum to begin the work. John Caimi's wise stewardship and cautious voice ensured that we would have the resources we needed and that we would work within a prudent set of expectations. I can tell you now that I would not have embarked upon this project without the daily assistance of Dave Kronenwetter. Suffice it to say none of us will ever know the full extent of his assistance.

Even as we celebrate the substantial completion of the renovation, the parish must now refocus its attention on the spiritual welfare of the Catholic people and those they love in Fox Township. Life is more complicated today than it was for our forebears and the challenges of evangelizing the culture are even greater. We are up against pagan influences even as our Namesake Patron was. Let us see our recent endeavors as a recommitment to creativity and generosity in bringing Christ and his Gospel to the people of our day.

Sincerely,



*Rev. James G. Faluszczak
Pastor*

Portfolio Artifacts:

Pastor
St. Boniface Church & School

#8. Given my background in education, it was natural that I be involved in the parish school. My supervision of the Principal, interaction with the teachers, and coordination of community events increased through the building project, and culminated in renewal of our Middle States Accreditation.

MEMO

To: St. Boniface School Teachers
From: Fr. Jim
Date: May 23, 2011
Re: End of the year meeting

The timing of my appointment as Pastor last year prevented us from meeting at the end of the school year, a practice which we can begin this year. Marie has already alerted you of the intention of the Erie Diocese to move toward the implementation of a morals clause in teacher contracts. This could sound ominous but you need not worry. We will be following the diocese as this practice unfolds. My hope in meeting with you is that we can begin to be comfortable with a conversation about these matters.

Additionally, Marie will be sharing with me the yearly evaluations which you complete with her. The ordinary tasks of supervision will continue to remain as they have been. My responsibility as the principle teacher of the parish requires me to be familiar with your strengths, which are many, as well as the areas you would identify as needing growth. My experience of you thus far is that you do an outstanding job teaching the Catholic faith, as well as articulating the curriculum within a faith-filled environment.

The Church's self-understanding of the Pastor. After one year of. The evidence of your work seen as a family speaks volumes.

When we sit down to talk

1. Your progress report you will also receive a certificate, and
2. One self-identified area of growth
3. I will ask how you plan to address this area

Finally, I would like any input



#9. Having encountered the St. Marys Catholic Foundation in other work assignments, and at the [FADICA](#) Future Foundation Leadership Venture, I was sure to keep this important grant source up to date with what was happening in our schools.

St. Boniface Catholic Church

355 Main Street
Kersey, PA 15846
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September 1, 2010

Mr. Conrad J. [Kogovsek](#), III
St. Marys Catholic Foundation
251 State Street
St. Marys, PA 15857-1658

Dear Mr. [Kogovsek](#),

St. Boniface Parish School has been educating children within a community of faith in this part of Elk County for 125 years! Father John Link opened a school on February 2, 1885 with students in two classes. Today, we have three classes of preschool and six classes through fifth grade. St. Boniface School was the first school in Elk County and is the oldest one still in operation in this part of the Diocese of Erie.

You well know the unique challenges facing the enterprise of Catholic education today. Our school has maintained a proud tradition through difficult times. Today we are thriving under the capable leadership of Marie Giazsoni, our Principal, and the outstanding teachers and staff she has assembled. She has forged an effective partnership with parents, business leaders, and other stakeholders to advance the mission of this unique ministry.

Our school and parish communities are grateful for the enduring commitment of the St. Marys Catholic Foundation to St. Boniface School. We consider you to be a sustaining partner in our mission of providing our children with the necessary foundation for future success. Your foundation has knit a fabric of support among our local communities. We are grateful for your financial support! We are grateful for that connection!

Plans are being formulated to commemorate the occasion of the 125th Anniversary of St. Boniface School. You and the members of your foundation will be invited to be part of the celebration as the year progresses. Thank you for your support of St. Boniface School and the important work of Catholic education in Elk County.

Sincerely,

Rev. James G. Faluszczak
Pastor

#10. After two visits to Japan in two years, I was again asked to give a talk on inter-religious dialog to my own parish and school, and another local rural parish. I used talks I developed at Clarion University and basically settled on this distillation of my experiences:

Clarion University: The prayer service for 9/11 had eleven Christian ministers, plus one Jewish and one Muslim faculty member. We all got up to say a few words, mostly prayers for the victims and their families, but also for the country as a whole. It was mostly meaningful. The Jew and the Muslim got up first, followed by the eleven Christians. When the president of the ministerium got up last he gave a fire and brimstone speech. His last line was "The only answer to terrorism is to accept Jesus as your savior and Lord." All the Jews and Muslims in the auditorium got up and walked out.

Describe your experiences in talking with people of different religions?

- 1 Be yourself. Don't act like an expert if you're not. Don't be afraid to admit what you don't know.
- 2 Don't be afraid. Is your faith true? If Jesus true to you/true to his word? Then there is nothing to fear. Fear leads to defensiveness; we feel like we have to stake a claim. Fear leads to an offensive approach: we have to vanquish the enemy before they destroy us.

First Hospital Visit: During my senior year of college I was a chaplain intern at St. Vincent Hospital in Erie. My supervisor, for my first visit, sent me in to see a woman she already had visited. The patient was on a cancer ward awaiting her diagnosis. As we talked she told me she was a Baptist. I didn't know how to respond so we made small talk over it. Eventually she related how, for many years, she sang in the choir at church. She wanted more than anything to return. She surprised me when she asked me to pray for her, right there at that moment. I was dumbfounded so I asked her what I should do. She was surprised that I was surprised. After a minute I thought we could pray Psalm 150 together.

- 3 Be open-minded. If nothing else, we gain cultural understanding from people who believe differently than us. Two-thirds of the world does not believe like we do. Four billion people believe differently than we do. What would Jesus do? We need to know how others think, and act, and pray in order to understand them. If we don't want to understand them we are walling ourselves off from the rest of humanity.
- 4 You are the face of the Catholic Church, but not its spokesperson. You should talk about what the church teaches if you know what it teaches, otherwise admit that you need to learn more. We don't have the right to make our own compromises on behalf of the Church. This only sets people up for confusion when they run up against some other inconsistency.

Can you identify one issue or area of belief where our religion agrees with that of another? Maybe in matters of social or economic morality, work for peace, disarmament; what about the centrality of prayer?

- 5 Don't COMPROMISE your beliefs, and don't imply that anyone else do so either. Don't try to CONVINCe someone that our/your way is better. No one likes a hard sell and, anyway, we shouldn't feel like we have to push the work of the Spirit. Seek CONVERGENCE, or issues or areas where we agree.
- 6 Engage others in appropriate dialog. First know what you believe and feel secure in it. Make sure there are at least clearly implied ground rules: inquisitiveness, mutual respect, the ability to hear and not react to misunderstanding, a shared desire to work toward understanding, recognized human and cultural value.

Buddhist Monk: On a visit to Japan I had the opportunity to speak to a Buddhist priest after prayers one day. I was curious about the life of a monk there and what similarities there might be between Catholic monks and Buddhist monks. While we were discussing this I thought to ask him the most basic question: "What is your purpose?" His response was to say, "I try to give the young monks and pilgrims to our temple an experience of transfiguration." He didn't know at this point that I'm a priest, and I was curious about his choice of the word 'transfiguration'. So I simply asked him what he meant. "I want to give them a glimpse of the perfect enlightenment that is to come; we believe we can get a sense of this in this life, in this body."

What is it like to pray with people who believe differently from yourself? Could you do this?

NB: I have 900+ supporting documents from my tenure as Pastor of St. Boniface Church & School.