

Meet the Parish Pastoral Council (PPC) 2026/2027



OFFICERS:

Chairperson – Jola Oliver; Vice-Chairperson – Conora Shaw; Secretary – Karen Barzman

Karen Barzman moved to Chicago in 2022 to retire in a city with major-league baseball. An art historian specializing in sacred imagery of the Italian Renaissance, she was also on a decades-long journey leading her to Catholicism. She was drawn to Assumption Church by the Servites' devotion to Mary. It was the clergy's emphasis on loving service and the community's warmth that prompted her to make Assumption her spiritual home. Karen was part of one of the largest OCIA classes in Assumption's recent history and was confirmed at Easter 2026. She teaches part-time (at DePaul and Loyola) and is happy to share her knowledge of devotional art by giving lectures or on-site tours at churches and museums. She is deeply humbled to have been called to serve on the Parish Pastoral Council.



Albert Ferolie is an attorney specializing in general civil litigation who has been a solo practitioner in the West Loop since 1994. Born in Rockford, he's a graduate of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign and John Marshall Law School (now UIC Law). Albert began attending Assumption Church shortly after he and his family moved downtown from Sauganash in 2014. Al is a lector at the 9 o'clock mass and was previously a member of the Parish Pastoral Council from 2018 to 2021. He often volunteers to feed the homeless through the Chicago Help Initiative at Catholic Charities.



Bob Gordon is fed and fulfilled by attending daily Mass at Assumption. He enjoys being part of this faith community where he receives Jesus in the Sacraments. He is also a Knight in the Knights of Columbus and volunteers with Big Shoulders. He is a graduate of Notre Dame, works in the financial services industry, and also moonlights at NBC Sports. He can be found sitting near the statue of St. Patrick in church. Bob is usually praying for Notre Dame, the White Sox, and the Bears ... it's full-time work, but a labor of love.



Anthony Henderlong is originally from the Midwest. He holds an MBA in Finance/Intl Business and a Master of Accountancy from the University of Denver and has spent a decade in the tech industry. Anthony is a true adventurer with a wide array of passions, including traveling, golfing, surfing, racket sports, photography and aviation—he is both a recreational pilot and a licensed boat captain. A lover of languages and culture, he is fluent in German and actively studies French, Spanish, and Japanese. Anthony has also completed seven marathons. Deepening his faith has taken him on pilgrimages to Fatima, Stone Gate, Medjugorje and the Vatican. He is honored to be part of the Parish Pastoral Council, eager to meet the larger Assumption community, and dedicated to serving the needs of the Parish.



Bill Ladewski began attending Assumption shortly after moving to the River North neighborhood in 2003. He found it to be a vibrant and welcoming community and became a parishioner soon after. He looks forward to serving in now his second year on the Parish Council. Most recently, Bill has participated in Assumption's Adult Catechism course led by Deacon Kevin, and also the varied Bible study courses led by Assumption leaders. Professionally he works in the association management industry and currently serves as executive director for a national professional association.



Turn over for more!

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Theresa O'Connor and her husband, Bryan, have been parishioners at Assumption for the last ten years. During Covid, Therese volunteered to greet and clean at daily Mass giving her an opportunity to meet many wonderful people. The O'Connors serve as lectors at the Saturday evening Mass as well. Having previously served on a parish council at her former parish, Therese feels that she could serve in this capacity as well at Assumption. She is able to devote time to the council since she retired as a CPS teacher/librarian.



Jola Oliver became a parishioner at Assumption in March of 2024. She was actively involved in her previous parish leading the Evangelization team and being part of the Pastoral Council, as well as leading scripture studies. Jola is a consumer insights director and strategic leader who uses data driven processes to bring insights to help organizations get closer to their customers. She loves to invite and engage parishioners to learn about Christ and develop a deep relationship with Him, and to share her joy with others. She is happy to be a part of the Parish Pastoral Council and to serve the lovely people at Assumption Church.



Conora Shaw is a Chicago native and mother to two children. She came to Assumption through prayer in 2023, stayed due to the warm welcoming of the Parish, continued with RCIA (now OCIA) and was confirmed at Easter 2024. As her children witnessed Conora's joy they too decided to continue with OCIA for children and were confirmed at Easter 2025. Conora has a BA in Business Administration with a Concentration in Accounting and a Minor in Psychology from East West University. She is currently working as a Consolidated Plan Manager for Illinois. She enjoys vibrant colors, advocating for children, spending time with Seniors, all things dealing with water, traveling, live music, and laughter. You can find Conora volunteering in various roles around the Parish. She is honored to be a part of the Parish Pastoral Council and serve more members of the Assumption Community.



Griffin Thompson and his wife Carmen started attending Assumption shortly after moving to Chicago in 2021, from the Washington D.C. area. Their daughter Cami has been a parishioner since 2018. Griff converted to Catholicism while a student at Gonzaga University and he did his graduate work at Georgetown University. He is a retired U.S. State Department official who worked on climate change and energy diplomacy issues. He now teaches courses in the political science department at Loyola University Chicago. Griff, Carmen and Cami enjoy exploring the Chicago area and are particularly enamored with the lake and all that it offers.

