Summary of St. Mary’s Board Actions & Decisions  
February 2022

1. Meeting with Bishop Saraphim: on January 30, 2022, the Board met with Bishop Saraphim and discussed two main items:
   1. Fundraising and planning for a second church. Because the congregation continues to grow and our current property cannot accommodate the increasing numbers, the work on establishing a second church in the Columbus area will continue with Anba Saraphim’s blessing.
      1. The funds that have been raised so far for a second church will remain a separate, dedicated fund, and will be included in the treasurer’s responsibilities. This fund will be kept under the account with St. John’s tax identification number. It will also be reported on when the rest of the church’s financial report is issued. The funds for St. John currently stand at approximately $55,000.
      2. A committee is being formed, consisting of previous and new members, to work on finding land and on fundraising. Anyone interested in joining this committee is encouraged to talk to Mariam El-Shamaa.
      3. The Board is working on a financial plan to increase fundraising for the new building.
   2. Church Services. Feedback collected from a sample of the congregation before the meeting with the Bishop showed a clear theme: a desire for an increase in spiritual and social services. Look for announcements as we begin to implement some of the ideas proposed.
2. Updates
   1. COVID protocols:
      1. Given the recent CDC and Franklin County updates, masks will no longer be required in the church building, effective immediately.
      2. We do recommend that the vulnerable population (elderly, members with severe illnesses, the unvaccinated, etc.) continue to be cautious and consider keeping their masks on. This is a personal decision and we ask everyone to continue to exercise caution, and even consider wearing masks, in order to reduce the risk of transmitting the disease to the most vulnerable among us.
      3. The three front rows will continue to be taped off for vulnerable and elderly congregants now, and this will be adjusted accordingly over time. In addition, the chapel still has the liturgy being live-streamed for those who would like exercise additional caution.
   2. Kitchen Service: our volunteers will be serving meals again after Sunday liturgy. This will be a fundraiser, starting March 6. Each plate will be $3 (additional donations welcome). The lunches can also be taken to-go.
   3. Building Maintenance: the Sunday School classrooms along the west side of the building have been renovated, thanks to the hard work of some volunteers. Take a look!
   4. Building Maintenance: Still in process of obtaining design and permit for a ramp that would allow wheelchairs, etc. to access church sanctuary.
   5. Youth: Liturgy and Youth Day on February 12 included a cooking competition (boys vs. girls) and lots of memories made. Next Youth Day is March 19. Be on the lookout for more details.
   6. Finances: Hatem Benjamin was invited to present to the board about options for any surplus funds, including safe long-term investments. He also presented on what the budget of a church (or any non-profit) should look like, with some variation of course. This budget will be shared with the congregation as part of the presentation on Sunday, March 6, immediately following the liturgy.
3. Other items:
   1. Arabic Bible Study: a new weekly, virtual Arabic Bible Study is being led by Mamdouh Bishara. Please look for announcements via the church app or look for it on the church’s live stream.
   2. Cemetery Plots assignment (please see Hala Barsoum or Remon Wahba)
4. As a reminder, each member of the congregation is strongly encouraged to participate in service to the church. The committees formed so far include:
5. Youth Committee (Michael Sourial)
6. Maintenance Committee (Remon Wahba and Emad Gerges)
7. IT/ Communication Committee (Wagdy Iskandar)
8. Fundraising Committee (Hala Barsoum, Emad Gerges, Medhat Abdelnour)
9. Social (Mariam El-Shamaa, Hala Barsoum, Hope Asefa)
10. Evangelism and Outreach (Hope Asefa)
11. Medical Advisory Committee (Michael Sourial)
12. In addition, the congregation is welcome to address relevant concerns to the following:
    1. Treasurer: Medhat Abdelnour
    2. Secretary: Mariam El-Shamaa
13. As always, the Board welcomes input from the congregation. There is a suggestion box that has been placed in the back of the church and we invite anyone to place suggestions there. They can be anonymous if you wish. Alternately, Fr. Makarios and the members of the board would be happy to talk--please reach out to: Fr. Makarios West; Medhat Abdelnour; Hope Asefa; Hala Barsoum; Mariam El-Shamaa, Emad Guirguis; Wagdy Iskandar; Michael Sourial; and/or Remon Wahba.