



December 4, 2023

**The Abbey of St. Nicholas**  
**House Blessing & Celebration**  
**Wednesday, December 6, 2023**  
**The Feast of Nicholas of Myra (Saint Nicholas)**  
**6:00 – 8:00 p.m.**  
**3010 Pioneer Avenue, Pittsburgh, PA 15226 (Brookline)**

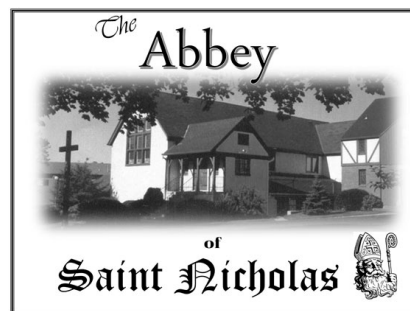
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Previously, we introduced the Abbey of St. Nicholas as a missional project led by the Rev. William “Biff” Carpenter that will adopt the traditional abbey model in that it will become financially self-sustaining and encourage a form of discipleship that is aimed at making a lasting impact on its participants and on the surrounding community. It is with excitement for this new community in our diocese that we present further information about the Abbey including the discernment for why the Abbey will be in the Brookline community and what connections it has to the community.

Fr. Biff lived in Brookline for a time in the early 2000’s and had connections there. At the time Brookline was composed of blue collar middle-class American workers who were reaching retirement age, and its homes were on the precipice of decline because they were older homes which had not been worked on in years. When Fr. Biff came back to visit, he describes seeing contractor signs in the front of almost every yard and realizing that young families were now buying those homes and renovating them. Fr. Biff says, “As I walked the streets over and over again, I stopped and talked to people. ‘Hey! What’s your name? What are you up to? Tell me about the town.’ And every one of them was unchurched, had no connection to church; it’s this beautiful field. And, in fact, one night when we were chewing on this and on whether or not this was going to be the location, I drove up, and there was a little bit of construction, so I pulled off, and I looked down and saw all of these hills with thousands of homes and I just thought ‘this is a huge missional field waiting to be worked.’ It just made sense. Brookline is a really close community in that people visit local shops. I love the sense that it’s its own self-contained community where we can start to build something. And so, it just made sense.”

The connection with the community has already unfolded in an organic manner. Fr. Biff reflects that “those things that God wants to happen will happen naturally and that’s one of the discernment tools we need to use as clergy. It’s not just ‘what do we want to do’ it’s what’s there.” In the Brookline community, there were already at least two pre-existing organizations that Fr. Biff wanted to connect with: Brookline Together and Brookline Teen Outreach Center. As it turns

out, both organizations happen to have the same director and when Fr. Biff met with her and expressed his vision for the Abbey, she said: “That’s exactly what we want. Someone to be a presence in the community who isn’t trying to proselytize, who’s not trying to convert, who’s not trying to get people to go to church but who is making themselves available as a spiritual counselor.” In light of this new relationship, Fr. Biff observes “The relationship with both of these organizations just blossomed



immediately. She invited me to start teaching classes at the Teen Outreach Center. These were doors I didn't plan on; they just opened."

As Fr. Biff has been building relationships with the community and discerning what plans God might have for this ministry, he observes that "it's just been really fruitful already. I haven't even moved there and they're waiting for me to get there so that's a good sign."

In upcoming communications, we will discuss how the Abbey plans to sustain itself and why it is called the Abbey of St. Nicholas.

The Abbey can be found on the web at [saintnicksabbey.org](http://saintnicksabbey.org) and can be contacted at [saintnicksabbey@episcopalpgh.org](mailto:saintnicksabbey@episcopalpgh.org).



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