

Parish Council Meeting Minutes
March 12, 2024

ACTION ITEMS

- **Colleen and Fr. Ray are to finalize the job description for the position to fill Anne Gibson's role.**
- **Conversations in the Spirit/Response to Synod on Synodality agenda item needs to be added to the next meeting.**
- **Lindsay D. is still seeking volunteers for help with Community Engagement.**
- **Mary Hennigan's email on parish culture also needs to be revisited.**

Attendance: (in person) Colleen McCahill, Lindsay Dierkes, Jim Casey, Fr. Ray Chase, Audrey Rogers, Anne Freeburger, John Gontrum, Kevin O'Reilly, Kate Volpe, Graham Yearley

(virtually) Leah Mank, Mary Hennigan, Catherine Mundy, Mark Palmer, Ray Heil, Barbara Bowles, Jill Huppert

Absent: Rita McMullin, Denny McMullin, Geri Sicola

As Geri Sicola is out of the country, Lindsay Dierkes is acting president. She read the Mission and Vision Statements and led us in prayer.

February minutes were approved.

Pastor and Pastoral Associate

Fr. Ray: No updates or new items.

Colleen: The Jesuit Volunteer Corps assigned 5 candidates to be interviewed by St. Vincent. Colleen handled all five interviews and determined 3 to be fantastic candidates. 2 of those 3 even shared that St. Vincent was their first choice of placement. However, when JVC offered the position to 2 of them, both turned the opportunity down (one cited a decision to commit to grad school, the other an unwillingness to live in Baltimore). St. Vincent has been placed in another round of matching and may need to conduct more interviews.

Anne Gibson, the Minister of Children's Education is retiring. This is not an immediate cessation. She has already told the Education and Enrichment team. Fr. Ray and Colleen have already begun working on a job description as they consider how to fill the role. Graham Y. asked if the position is salaried, to which Colleen answered yes, as part time. Lindsay clarified that the new role would be broader than just religious education (i.e. not confined to children, but to family faith formation). Colleen added that the position is in development and could be impacted by such things as Seek the City, but that she and Fr. Ray will bring forward the job description at the next meeting.

Facilitation at Parish Council meetings

Lindsay asked that we acknowledge receipt of Anne Maura's Feb. 12 email from Anne Maura. Council decided that this discussion is to be tabled for now.

New Constitution

This past week's election to ratify the new constitution ended in 85 yes votes and 4 against. The constitution is approved!

Committees

See appendix for individual committee minutes.

Education and Enrichment: Barbara B. said the retreat plans are already well underway thanks to Liz Hasan. It will take place May 31-June 2.

There will be another "Wait, wait, Do Tell Me" presentation on April 14 with Breaking Bread with the Hungry. The committee plans for another 2-3 of these in the months following.

John Moore is moving, so a new committee chair needs to be selected.

Social Action: The Green Team is working with Maryland Catholics for Our Common Home to support bills regarding the environment that are going before the general assembly. See point person Bethany Gregg or check the Facebook page if interested in generating and showing support.

Lay Preachers Group:

Audrey Rogers was present to share that the Lay Preachers decided it was time to put a strategy in place to continue this particular charism. There have been lay preachers at St. Vincent since the 80s, but where there were 8, there are now only 4. With the consultation of Fr. Ray and Colleen, the group has developed a program for recruitment and discernment. Brian Volck has completed that program and been affirmed by Fr. Ray. His name has been put before the council for confirmation. Council approved the motion, and Brian is set to preach in April.

Seek the City

Updates on the most recent meeting attended by Fr. Ray, Colleen, Lindsay D. and Kate Volpe: Fr. Ray shared that 230 people gathered at Our Lady of Victory Church for the next step of the Seek the City process. There was a large group introduction, followed by Geri Byrd's thoughtful presentation to set the stage. Participants then divided into regional groups (unofficial regions; crafted for this process only), St. Vincent being part of the "Center" region. Each region had been divided into two group meetings—laity and clergy—to provide greater freedom to speak openly. Each Center group was tasked with narrowing the number of 15 current worship sites to 3-5. (The Basilica is already certainly guaranteed as a worship site by the Archdiocese and is therefore counted in that narrowed number.) The clergy group looked at parameters for choosing a worship site, ranked those parameters as a whole, then broke into regional groups. There, they looked at churches in their region to begin to explore how to cluster churches

around 5 (at most) worship sites. Laity groups did the same. There could be no more than 3 iterations of those clusterings. The clergy group came up with an A and a B option; the laity group came up with 3 possibilities. All this information will go back to the Seek the City council for synthesis. Then, on March 22, pastoral representatives will again meet to determine final recommendations to the Archbishop and the Seek the City advisory group (includes Vicar bishops, Presbyteral Council Archdiocesan Pastoral Council). The models that have already been shared (mosaic, radiating and Catholic commons) are not set in stone, nor is there clarity about how they may evolve or be used.

The Town Hall set for Sunday, March 17, will allow people to ask questions about the process and to clear anxiety or uncertainty about how things may eventually unfold. The town hall will be an opportunity to identify what the issues may be so that we can appropriately address them and pass them on to ArchBalt. Fr. Ray asked: How do we address the emotional, spiritual, and pastoral struggles that people have already been identifying in this process?

John G. asked if there was consistency or commonality in the clusters suggested during the process. Fr. Ray answered that in both iterations, it was the same for St. Vincent; however, Colleen shared that it differed in the laity group's final submissions. There were some commonalities, but no one felt with certainty that one would be picked. It is a *consultative* process. Ray also added that we don't want to cause undue concern.

Discussion continued among the council to clarify things that will be discussed at the town hall. Graham asked if there's value in a town hall, or if it would create further anxiety since we have no obvious answers? This very question had been debated by the representatives who attended. Kevin O'R. observed that we attended a meeting where we had no real agency; Colleen acknowledged that it was harrowing and that data may not have been used effectively. Audrey asked if any churches were eliminated (there were not). She also shared that there was residual anger about the AoB approach to the sex abuse issue and this has only added to that. Fr. Ray reiterated that this is a new process that had to happen; not everyone participated; and they did the best they could with some mistakes. In response to Mary H. question about what outputs Fr. Ray wanted from Sunday's town hall, he stated 1.) to address what's happened so far in the process and 2.) to address concerns about how we're planning to address all the emotional, spiritual and pastoral issues at play. He'd also like to know what care and guidance we can provide going forward, and that we can offer those suggestions to the AoB. Mary H. suggested that the latter conversation take place in smaller conversations or calls. Colleen added that after the inevitability of what is to come, what needs to be done is to recognize and address the unique charisms of each individual church community as they merge with others. Colleen hasn't seen this addressed yet, but it needs to happen to preserve Christian community. Mary asked if we will record the town hall? Colleen said that we can make it private immediately after if there is any concern. Council agreed to record the meeting. Jill suggested that we frame it as what we are called to do—a reminder that God calls us to discomfort and to see the hand of God in all these changes. Kevin O.R agreed that giving a progress report is important to keeping everyone on the same page. Fr. Ray reminded us to look at ourselves as part of a larger community and a city who needs our pastoral care. Mark P. said don't assume that people are familiar with what has transpired before, and to remind them that the current

reality of the Catholic Church in Baltimore is unsustainable; therefore, whatever happens is for the good, as challenging as it may be.

Colleen questioned whether we are requesting written feedback. John suggested we can leave it up to parishioners about how to respond. Fr. Ray suggested that we ask what would be useful to make the process most helpful or creative—both on the parish and archdiocesan level. John G. added that we ask parishioners to think about what we/"I" need to keep the church relevant in our lives and that we then facilitate how to accomplish this. In other words, he said, we ask the question, "What is it you want us to do for you, knowing this is the reality?" Council decided that the Town Hall should be reframed as a "Progress Report" so as not to confuse or disappoint people.

Meeting then closed with The Our Father.