

Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting  
of St. Vincent de Paul Church  
February 14, 2012

The meeting was brought to order by the Council President, Jim Casey, at 7:40 pm and a prayer was offered by Bill McNamara.

**In attendance:** Fr. Richard Lawrence (Pastor), Christopher McCullough (Pastoral Associate), Jim Casey (President, 9:30 Mass Rep.), Jack Bonner (Vice President, 9:30 Mass Rep.), Graham Yearley (Secretary, Corporator, and 12:15 Mass Rep.), Teresa Payne (7:15 Mass Rep.), Kevin O'Reilly (9:30 Mass Rep.), Jim Lochner (9:30 Mass Rep.), Dennis Flynn (Finance Committee), Pat Ball (Facilities Committee Chair), Audrey Rogers (Acting Chair Communications & Outreach Committee).

**Absent:** Peter McDowell (11:45 Mass Rep.), Peggy Meyer (Social Action Committee Chair), Kathi Jeffra (Education & Enrichment Committee Chair), Anne Marie Freeburger (Corporator).

**Pastor's Report**

Fr. Lawrence included three items in his report.

1. **National Church:** US Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) vs. President Obama. First, he noted that the current teaching on contraception is centuries old and based on a Neo-Scholastic application of natural law. The Papal Birth Control Commission voted that the teaching be abandoned in favor of one that better honored human personhood and the grace of the marriage act. The Curia did not accept this and ultimately pressured Paul VI to maintain his authority by upholding the current teaching. The Magisterium has the right to be wrong in fallible teachings and their prohibition remains official teaching despite not having been *received* by the faithful as relevant to their lives (the requirement for reception is also Church teaching). Secondly, he noted that the USCCB was precisely right in their response to the infringement of religious liberty principles and the letter from Archbishop O'Brien made available in hardcopy to parishioners was fundamentally correct. Finally he regrets the position of the USCCB in their response to the Obama compromise.

2. **The New Missal Translation:** Fr. Lawrence recounted his experience to date with the new translation which requires considerably more change for him than for parishioners. He stated his basic problem stems from the essential difference between Latin and English (a difficulty known to anyone who took first year Latin in high school). Latin is an inflected language in which the words change according to use: in translating Latin, one rearranges for the best sense in English. A literal translation without this 'rearrangement' loses sense and rhythm and makes real prayer challenging. While remaining adherent to the mandate, he will also fulfill his primary duty to lead the assembly in prayer which may mean slight changes in sense and rhythm.

**3. The New Archbishop:** Cardinal-designate Archbishop O'Brien will receive his red hat this Saturday and move fully to Rome. There is reason to believe that a new Archbishop for Baltimore will be announced this month (in the remaining two weeks) and be installed in March.

### **Central City Catholic Church Interim Report**

As reported in previous minutes, the five inner city churches (Basilica, St. Alphonsus, St. Ignatius, Corpus Christi, St. Vincent de Paul) have responded to the intentions of the Archdiocesan Strategic Plan (distributed last Fall) by developing- with Bishop Madden's approval- a plan for staffing themselves and providing an integrated Mass schedule in the event that the current clerical staffing changes. The draft plan has been shared with the congregation. In January, our council approved the final proposed plan to go forward, as did the corresponding decision-making bodies in the other four parishes. Before this could happen, however, the Archbishop was informed by someone that the inner city parishes were defying the plan he had outlined and his response to that claim made a favorable reception of the inner city parish plan very unlikely. It is not clear that the O'Brien planning strategy will be the same one favored by the new Archbishop. All strategic planning for how to address the looming priest shortage is therefore on hold.

### **Archdiocesan Capital Campaign**

One of the many items to be funded by this upcoming Archdiocesan Capital Campaign is the education of inner city children. Since we and our partner churches (Sts. Ignatius, Wenceslaus, Ann, and Francis Xavier: none with an individual parochial school) share responsibility and support for one Catholic parochial school (Queen of Peace Inter-Parochial School physically located at Sts. James and John's old campus) which indeed serves inner-city children, Father Lawrence proposed and it was accepted that what our parish is able to raise in the capital campaign will be matched by the Archdiocese and go *directly* to endowing QOP scholarships.

QOP has an annual budget of \$ 1.5 M, with 50% of that coming from the families of the attending students (it is noteworthy that the Archdiocese requires only 25% support come from tuition in its parochial school system). This family support is no small matter: it comes from family fund-raising and tuition. Tuition is decided on a sliding scale according to income but no one pays less than \$1600 per year which is a challenge for single mothers and grandmothers raising children, many on welfare. Often an extended family is involved in pulling together the costs. This tuition policy will not be reversed by the endowment for such sacrifice secures commitment, engagement, and serious school work by the student. The endowment is intended to make up the expected increase in the tuition budget deficit.

To date, this tuition deficit has been made up by Archdiocesan and community/business grants: neither of which can be relied upon as a continuing source of income. The current endowment amounts to \$ 1M which makes up about 3+% of the current annual tuition costs. With declining external funding, the endowment must expand to support 25% of

the tuition for the current enrollment. Fr. Lawrence estimates that the endowment should increase to \$7 M. He hopes to find \$ 5 M of that from private donors (\$ 3 M has already been pledged). This lowers the parishioner share to \$ 1 M, no small amount for our community, but pledge payments can be spread out over five years. He is exploring ways of offering named scholarships within the endowment so parishioners can honor the memory of family members. The launch of the campaign will be after Easter. Graham encouraged Fr. Lawrence to make all of these considerations very clear to parishioners.

### **Finance Report {Including Letter addressing Emergency Repairs}**

Dennis Flynn, standing in for Maureen Fitzsimmons, reported that the current budget is in reasonably good shape owing to utility savings from a mild winter. It was remarked that the situation in which ‘meat could be stored safely at the temperature inside the church’ must also be a factor in the utility savings.

The financial report, submitted tonight, covers income/expenses through January 31, 2012. Therefore it is not possible to determine if offertory income has changed in response to the Council’s letter detailing funding needs for emergency repairs (and other issues). However, the parish has received a \$215 K donation (\$ 150 K to the general fund; \$ 50 K for capital repairs in the Historic Trust Fund, and \$15 K in direct response to the issues of the letter). In addition, the parish received a \$ 40 K bequest. When these are added to the available money in the trust fund and the income expected from it this year, we are in the position of replacing the AC (estimated at \$200 K- see details under Facility Committee report), repair all of the stained glass windows on the south side before they fall apart. Fr. Lawrence suggested this could make it possible to install a Baptismal font next year to complete the church’s internal renovation. Audrey asked about plans to paint the exterior of the church and install missing gutters on the south side. Fr. Lawrence said there were no current plans. Chris noted that attention to this must be in a strategic plan for the future. Pat added that the Art and Architecture Working Group looks at all these pressing needs and generates priority lists. It was agreed that Council needed to be updated by Art and Architecture on schedules and costs.

### **Committees:**

**Education:** No report.

### **Liturgy:**

#### **1. Next Chair for 2012-2013**

Audrey Rogers volunteered to be chair for the 2012-2013 term. Committee is seeking a volunteer to be co-chair.

#### **2. Seasonal Themes**

The committee decided to let the current Ordinary Time be ‘theme-less;’ however, we will consider a theme for the Easter season at the next meeting.

#### **3. Lent 2012**

##### **a. Tenebrae**

It was decided to keep Tenebrae on Holy Week Wednesday.

b. *Lenten Theme*

In Cycle B Lent, the first readings from the Jewish Scripture focus on the Covenants that God entered into first with the patriarchs, Noah and Abraham, and then with the Israelites. The fourth Sunday's readings underscore God's steadfast fidelity in restoring covenant practice to Israel which they had lost in their unfaithfulness. The fifth Sunday proclaims Jeremiah's prophecy of a new covenant written on human hearts. The Liturgy Committee, therefore, has decided that 'Covenant' should be the overarching theme for Lent this year.

c. *Lenten Assignments have been made.*

4. *Altar Bible*

a. *New Ritual*

At a previous meeting, the committee had decided to have the second lector stand with Gospel held high at the altar during the sung acclamation to draw attention to the Gospel. S/he would then carry it to the ambo where Dick awaits toward the end of the sung acclamation. We decided to start this new ritual in Lent.

b. *Need to archive the electronic lectionary*

No one is quite certain where these files currently reside.

5. *New Missal*

Bill McNamara will arrange to provide additional pew cards.

6. *Parish Survey*

At the November meeting the committee decided that the Parish Council ought to consider if the liturgy survey we conduct every 3-5 years should be expanded to include other aspects of our community life. See *New Business*.

**Social Action:**

1. *The Resource Exchange:*

We continued to move/provide furniture and starter kits to neighbors. We did 2 move-ins on February 3rd.

2. *Jonestown Planning Council*

We discussed several plans to improve the neighborhood and gave our approval to all. 1) Greater Baltimore's Affordable Housing Corporation's plan for redevelopment of the Hendler Creamery Building and its block. It will primarily be residential rentals, not subsidized. 2) The city has almost blessed the Exeter Garden plan that will beautify the neighborhood. 3) Attman's Deli petitioned the city for approval to expand their restaurant. On the negative side there have been break-ins at multiple locations where computers, compressors and copper were taken. Neighbors were asked to be vigilant. The city planning department said they should complete the rezoning by the end of March.

3. *The Peace & Justice Subcommittee*

We sent post cards to representatives asking them to work against the death penalty and attended Maryland Citizens Against State Execution's fund raiser. We went with reps from the United Religions' Initiative to meet with Baltimore County schools to get a program for a classroom or an assembly on peace-making or non-violence. We are planning an environmental event for around Earth Day. Stay tuned. The group to San Juan de Limay took supplies and monies to help. The sale of Palestinian religious gifts netted about \$300 for the Limay trip.

Freda Barrington will be speaking on March 3 at Seton Keough at the Social Action Convocation. We have a conflict now because of the Pastoral Leadership Convention. Some of us are singing for two events and have a required practice that day. Please consider attending.

4. *Emergency Services*: Monthly gave out groceries to about 100 families.

5. *Other*:

Friday dinner attracted between 150 and 350 each week.

We delivered the rest of the mittens/gloves to St. James & John and worked in the Library.

Christopher Place men continue to help on the 1st and 3rd Saturdays and Helping Up Mission men on the 2nd Saturday of each month.

### **Facilities:**

#### 1. *Facility Cleaning*

The woman who had been cleaning the meeting spaces for us has not been able to continue doing that. However, our group of volunteers (small though it is) has continued to do the cleaning on a weekly basis on the schedule previously worked out. That schedule allows for the bathrooms to be cleaned every week and the other meeting spaces to be cleaned on the alternate weeks.

#### 2. *Facility Maintenance*

Larry has removed the torn and frayed carpet from the two side aisles in the balcony. He is scheduled to finish those floors and install trim between the existing carpet and the aisles. We will evaluate the noise level and then decide whether we need to re-carpet those stairs.

The roofing repairs have been done and the contractor gave us an evaluation of all areas of the roof for further consideration. For now, it appears that we have eliminated the leaks that have been identified.

Larry, Chris, Colleen, and Pat met on Monday, January 30 to review the facilities needs and Larry has also agreed to repair the wall in the nursery room now that the roofing repairs have been done. We will continue to meet on a regular basis to monitor facilities issues and plan for future projects.

#### 3. *Air Conditioning*

We have approved a contract with Gipe Engineering for the design of the new air conditioning system. We are still on target for the installation to be complete by the end of May, 2012. The contract is for producing the design and specifications of the system. The need to air-condition the Undercroft has not been decided: it is complicated by the cost, for it will require two separate AC systems. The contract cost for engineering one system is \$16,900; for two is \$ 18,800. We contracted to obtain the two system specifications. We will solicit bids for the installation of one system but simultaneously inquire for the cost of the two system installation. This gives us flexibility in light of our financial situation. Contractor costs for the installation of one system are in excess of \$ 180 K.

### **Communications and Outreach:**

Our committee met on February 12, 2012.

#### 1. *Website*:

- A website training/refresher will be conducted on March 25, 2012.
- We note with gratitude on the St V website a wonderful video of the Day of the Dead Liturgy produced by Jerome Bird.
- The committee will review website diagnostics at their April meeting.

## *2. New Ways of Providing Education*

We discussed exploring web-based technology but needed to know if the proposal would have support first from the committees who would be required to produce the content, and as importantly, from the parishioners who might use it. Our committee therefore submitted this item as **new business** for discussion.

## **New Business**

### *1. Proposal for a Parish-Wide Needs Assessment*

The Liturgy Committee conducts a hard-copy survey of parishioner satisfaction with the liturgy very 4-5 years (the last was in 2007). People frequently add comments and requests not relevant to liturgy (e.g. in education, facility, welcoming) for it seems they have had no other venue for expressing these needs. (Interestingly the new format for FFF came from a 2010 survey of families with children and subsequent parent meetings to determine why attendance was declining.) The Liturgy Committee therefore proposed that there be a parish-wide needs assessment to inform all mission-driven and mission-support committees and make them responsive to community needs. They further proposed there be an Ad Hoc Committee established for this purpose that can interact with all committees, groups, and programs to generate focus areas and items for the survey. It was noted that the survey needs professional review to avoid inadvertent bias in the way queries are posed. The Council accepted this proposal. Jim Casey noted the availability of many professionals in our parish and asked Council members to recommend people to serve on this Ad Hoc Committee. Jack asked that a description of the needs assessment approach be provided to Council. Audrey agreed and it is appended to these minutes.

### *2. Proposal for New Ways of Providing Education*

There is web-based technology to provide spirituality links, reflections on current education/enrichment offerings, ‘webinars’, even the capacity for virtual committee meetings. Because St V’s is an intentional community with most traveling large distances, evening offerings downtown become difficult-to-impossible for some of our older members, members with long and late job commutes, and members with small children. Being able to access offerings from home may be a viable option for providing parish enrichment and engagement to more community members. But before our committee evaluates in a systematic manner the ‘pro’s’ and ‘con’s’ of the many available options, we would need to know if the Council and the committees which would need to provide the content for such education, enrichment, or spirituality support the ‘jump’ to web-based options. This proposal received general support from the Council who sent it to the Liturgy and Education/Enrichment Committees and the DREs for consideration. It was decided that community support be assessed through the proposed needs assessment.

Bill offered to provide the Council with links to available web-based offerings so they might review and understand some of the available technology. These are appended to these minutes.

### *3. Proposal to change the April Parish Council Meeting*

The proposal is to change from Tuesday April 10 to Tuesday April 17 to give everyone time to recover from Easter. The Council accepted this date change.

### *4. Recommendation from the Homecoming Planning Committee*

The Planning Committee has asked Council to approve having one Sunday morning celebration Mass for Homecoming on September 30 (rather than the two routinely scheduled). Congregants and returning former parishioners can then move to the Undercroft directly after the Mass for a luncheon. Council gave approval.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:24 pm with the recitation of the Lord's Prayer.

Respectively submitted,

Audrey Rogers for the recovering Graham Yearley, Secretary to the Council

## **ADDENDA:**

### **A. Needs Assessment Approach** [provided by Audrey Rogers]

This is an approach to program planning and evaluation that responds to the voiced needs and desires of the community, rather than relying on programs developed with all good intentions but in a relative vacuum; or on programs routinely provided year after year without evaluation that no longer meet community needs.

Needs assessment is the process through which

- the wants and desires of the community are identified;
- the strength and breadth of support for these desires and wants are assessed; and
- the capacity of existing structures and programs to meet these needs is evaluated.

It is a process through which

- existing situational, organizational, and contextual factors are analyzed;
- new structures and procedures can be created if indicated;
- data critical for program planning are produced; and
- time-and-goal-measured program objectives can be objectively established.

Needs assessments involve a set of data-gathering activities:

- consultation with key influencers serving on parish committees and groups;
- interviews with parish staff with responsibility for current programs;

- focus groups with interested parishioners;
- focus groups with nominal groups in the parish (YAYP, FFF parents, etc.)
- parishioner-based surveys.

## **B. Introduction to Web-Based Conferencing** [provided by Bill McNamara]

Web conferencing is an IT product that allows meetings and other events to be shared with users at remote locations. Most vendors also provide either a recorded copy of the “meeting” or a means for a customer to record a “meeting”. The service allows information to be shared simultaneously, across geographically dispersed locations in nearly real-time. Applications for web conferencing include meetings, training events, lectures, or short presentations from any computer. A participant can be either an individual person or a group. System requirements that allow individuals within a group to participate as individuals, when an audience participant asks a question, depend on the size of the group. Handling such requirements is often the responsibility of the group. In general, system requirements depend on the vendor.

Most solutions require additional software to be installed, usually via download, by the presenter and participants. Some vendors provide a complete solution while other vendors enhance existing applications or services. Most also provide a means of interfacing with email and calendaring clients in order that customers can plan an event and share information about it, in advance. Additional value-added features are included as desired by vendors who provide them. As with any technology, these features are limited only by the imagination.

A link to a website which gives a reasonable review: [http://webconferencing-test.com/en/webconference\\_home2.html](http://webconferencing-test.com/en/webconference_home2.html)

Site with a video of my personal favorite (Adobe Connect) if money was no option: [http://www.adobe.com/products/adobeconnect/showcase.html#neroligallery\\_split\\_adobe\\_connect8\\_overview\\_640x360.mp4](http://www.adobe.com/products/adobeconnect/showcase.html#neroligallery_split_adobe_connect8_overview_640x360.mp4)

Free solutions include:

openmeetings: <http://code.google.com/p/openmeetings/>

onwebinar: <http://www.onwebinar.com/index.html>