

Minutes of the Parish Council Minutes
St. Vincent de Paul Church
February 12, 2013

The meeting was brought to order by the Council President, Jim Casey, at 7:30 pm with an opening prayer.

In attendance: Fr. Richard Lawrence, *Pastor*; Chris McCullough, *Pastoral Associate*; Jim Casey, *President and 9:30 Mass Rep.*; Jack Bonner, *Vice President and 9:30 Mass Rep.*; Graham Yearley, *Secretary, 12:15 Mass Rep. and Corporator*; John Kober, Jr., *7:15 Mass Rep.*; Rosie Graf, *9:30 Mass Rep.*; Pete McDowell, *11:45 Mass Rep.*; Lauren Brunelli, *Communications and Outreach Committee Chair*; Kathi Jeffra, *Education and Enrichment Committee Chair*; Audrey Rogers, *Liturgy Committee Chair*; Dennis Flynn, *Finance Committee Vice-Chair*; Pat Ball, *Facilities Committee Chair*; Peggy Meyer, *Social Action Committee Co-Chair*; Anne Marie Freeburger, *Corporator*. Caroline Umana, *Parishioner*.

Absent: Sara Kelley, 9:30 Mass Rep.

Pastor's Report

Fr. Lawrence commented on yesterday's announcement by the Pope of his resignation at the end of this month. He thought the resignation was a "big step forward" in that the Pope realized his human limitations and that he could not carry the responsibilities the papacy entails. He added that candidates from Africa or South America, despite their doctrinal conservatism, might understand better from their experience that the Church is not "one size fits all" than a European candidate who might be more liberal.

Transition in Housing

As he reported last month, Fr. Lawrence has a bid on a condominium at Scarlett Place. The down payment of \$150,000.00 will be shared fifty/fifty between a redirected gift from a donor parishioner and Fr. Lawrence himself. The mortgage payments on a loan of \$200,000 and condo fees should be within Fr. Lawrence's means. The condominium will be left to the parish upon the pastor's death. Fr. Lawrence hopes to go to settlement within the month and move on June 30th of this year.

Finance Report

The church has some \$12,000.00 in the bank; one-third of this immediately available. While the offertory is down about \$500 from this point last year, the general financial status of the parish is reasonably stable.

HVAC Service Contract

Pat Ball looked into what other comparable parishes are paying for their HVAC systems and their maintenance. Dennis Flynn suggested if the parish could enter into a service

contract with other churches in our cluster, we might end up paying less. The current service contract bid from Hartford would cost about \$7,000 a year, but they also know our system from working on it. Hartford also offered a contract that would give the church 24 hour emergency repair coverage for \$12,500, but this was felt to be unnecessary given the investment in recent repairs. The Council has consensus on the need for a service contract but requested, for the sake of comparison, an estimate from Dynastics, Inc., the company providing service to St. Ignatius and Corpus Christi.

Communications and Outreach Committee Proposals

1. The committee proposed surveying parishioners to evaluate how they receive information about the parish and what other venues might be desirable. Council policy requires all surveys be approved. After review of the draft survey which was submitted, the Council approved this survey to go forward.
2. The committee has focused attention on outreach to the neighborhood and is proposing that a canvas banner (which would cost very little) be hung on the west side of the property stating who we are and listing the mass times, so people coming to the farmer's market will see it. A second sandwich board sign on the edge of the parking lot to give more detailed (perhaps seasonal) information about what we do as a parish. Chris mentioned we already have a sandwich board sign that could be used. Council approved these steps.
3. The committee intends to create a St. Vincent's Facebook page to increase our visibility on line. Certain controls on who could post on the page would be necessary and it would require regular oversight and updates. This was brought to the Council for information.

Young Families and Young Persons Groups

Rosie Graf has been approached about the need for programs for families with young children and she has tried unsuccessfully to identify individuals who would be willing to take the lead in starting it. This was discussed by the C+O Committee for whom young families are outreach populations of special interest and referred to Council because of its programmatic nature. It was suggested this group needs someone to meet with them to help them discern what sort of group they want. It was also brought up that the Married Couples group already has some younger couples in it and could help other couples to focus on their marriages which are, after all, the foundation of families. However, the perception among young families is that the Married Couples Group is mostly older couples whose children have grown. It was also noted that Young Adults/Young Professionals Group is floundering because of the lack of central coordination. Jim Casey noted that the future reconfiguration of parish staff has been intended to remedy these kinds of issues and hoped that Chris McCullough and Fr. Lawrence could discuss it.

New Business

Caroline Umana, a parishioner, has already started a garden project at a west Baltimore charter school. She would like to expand it and add five more beds. She thought this might be a service project for younger families, like her own. This project could be alternated with purely social events that are “family friendly”. Caroline is seeking a \$750 grant from the Johns Hopkins School of Public Health to support the gardening initiative; the deadline for applying for the grant is March 1st. These grants are to faith-based organizations. Caroline therefore needs to partner with St. Vincent’s community who would be expected to supply half of the gardening labor. It was suggested to Caroline that the project be presented to the whole parish as individuals and groups other than the young families may be interested in helping. Volunteers could join a gardening club Caroline has begun and work after school or a weekends. A three hour commitment by a few volunteers a month (varying by season) would probably meet the project’s needs. The Council gave its approval to Caroline to seek the grant and two Council members volunteered to work on the project.

Vatican II Series

Catherine Combier-Donovan has agreed to present the last of the Vatican II lecture series on June 10th, this one on the document: *Sacrosanctum concilium*, The Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy.

Parish Transition Town Hall

The Town Hall has been scheduled for Sunday, April 7th between the 9:30 and 11:45 Sunday Masses. Jim Casey will attend both the 7:15 PM and the 12:15 AM Masses to ensure that these Mass communities have the information to be presented at the Town Hall.

New Business

Peggy Meyer asked if she should continue to pay Ella to watch the bathrooms downstairs during the Sunday morning masses. It was noted that the waiting times in the church bathrooms have improved. The Council approved this continuing payment.

Transition Planning

As the hour was late, Jim Casey tabled the presentation and discussion of a one year strategic plan timeline, the job description for a part-time administrator, and a facility-use plan for the vacated rectory. Chris McCullough will present these proposals next month.

Committee Reports

Social Action Committee (Peggy Meyer, Co-Chair)

- The *Social Action Convocation* is 3/2 at Seton Keough High School. Please consider going. We delivered additional gloves and hats to St. James & John school children collected in January from late givers.
- The Resource Exchange: We supplied 9 individuals, whom Healthcare for the Homeless placed in apartments, with furniture and starter kits in January. Many volunteers picked up furniture, shopped for needed items, put together starter kits, sent letters and conducted moves.
- We are working with a man who received a grant to produce a film that will focus on gun violence in the inner city. He will interview guests (on a volunteer basis) from our Friday evening dinner so that those who have been touched by gun violence will have a voice. The plan is to give it to Governor O'Malley.
- The Peace & Justice Subcommittee: We participated with BRIDGE in 2 rallies in Annapolis, 1 for *Raising the Minimum Wage* and another for *Repealing the Death Penalty*. We talked to representatives at both. After providing postcards for mailing to Representatives in support of the Repeal, over 80 parishioners submitted them. We had Rosalie Riegle talk at St. Vincent's about her books that are 'How To' books on peaceful resistance.
- Jonestown Planning Council: We did not meet on 2/4/13 so our next meeting will be in March.
- Emergency Services: We gave groceries to about 100 families and spent about \$900 in January.
- The Men's Program gave clothing to 54 men in January and spent about \$1400.
- Friday dinner: We continue to serve 150-250 guests each Friday evening.
- St. Vincent Park: Helping Up Mission men clean the park the first Saturday of each month so parishioners don't have to cover that day.

Communications and Outreach Committee Report (Laureen Brunelli, Chair)

The C&O Committee has met twice, January 20 & Feb 3, since the last Council meeting.

● Internal Communications

At the January 20 meeting, we discussed the status of our current internal communication venues:

Website: Consensus was that the website with its multiple editors is functioning well enough with timely and appropriate material.

Bulletin and Mass Announcements: No problems were raised with the bulletin format. Audrey reports that the Liturgy Committee has just about given up on moving the announcements outside of Mass.

Together Sharing Christ: We will now post its availability on our homepage with a link to its webpage (rather than link to a *pdf* file). Doing so permits us to track 'hits' with our website diagnostics. It will be one tool for evaluating impact and readership.

E-mail Tree: The email tree was started as a mechanism to distribute prayer requests for parishioner needs and to share news about parishioners. We need to ascertain from parishioners what kind of information this venue should provide and the frequency with which they want to receive it. Because it is sent from

Terri's private email address, there are no metrics showing its open rate or which links readers click on.

Social media: Everyone agrees we need to work toward this capability.

Staff vs. C&O Committee's communication functions. As Chris reorganizes staff in the coming year, there had been some optimism that certain communication functions could be undertaken by staff or regular volunteers.

Communications Survey In order to assess the feasibility of new communication methods such as social media or to improve existing ones and to effectively use staff time in communications, our committee needs more information. We need to determine how and when parishioners want information, what venues they currently use, and which ones they do not (and why). We will work over the next several months to have a survey ready by the April Town Meeting so it could be completed within that format (as well as being available in other venues).

Lauren Brunelli **will take this issue to Council.**

- Discussion of Outreach Goals

At the February 3 meeting we discussed external communications and outreach: We discussed the 2010 Parish Council Ad Hoc Committee on Organization and Growth (AHCOCG) Report. We focused on outreach proposals that addressed the three target groups in social marketing: nominal groups (families with young children), networks (young adults/young professionals), and neighborhoods (the developments around Harbor East). Each suggested its own strategy.

For families with young children and young adults/young professionals, the challenge seemed to be the need for one or more persons to be an organizing presence, setting dates, planning and coordinating events. While direct responsibility for such coordination is beyond the mandate of C+O, we need to ask for Council attention to this issue because the lack of engagement and support for these nominal and network groups inhibits our outreach and engagement efforts. Rosie Graf will **take this issue to Parish Council.**

The last target group, the neighborhood, was discussed. Our proposal to Council for a sign at the edge of the park has been tabled for lack of funds. We noted the large numbers of people drawn to the Farmers' Market every Sunday morning and explored ways--in addition to a sign--of outreaching to those attending. Lauren Brunelli will look into the possibility of inexpensive signage along our fence and **take this issue to Parish Council.**

We also discussed recruiting the Sunday 9:30 Mass 'greeters' in more effective engagement of visitors. Ideas include signing a guest book with follow-up by the parish (perhaps a 'get to know us' coffee).

- Social Media and Outgoing Communications

Website diagnostics show a bump in 'hits' when the availability of Council minutes and the current issue of *Together Sharing Christ* was announced with website links in the email tree. There are approximately 300 addresses on the email tree; 40 people accessed the minutes and 50 people accessed TSC on the day their availability, up from typically 0-2 hits on those pages. This is the first time we have had the capacity to track interest in either item. We hope the

proposed C+O survey will provide more information on how to use the email tree more effectively. We discussed the desirability of social media in our outreach effort. Because social media is by its nature dialogic, the next step is to provide some interactive venue (such as a blog) tied to our website and to a *Facebook* account. Rosie suggested establishing a *Tumblr* account to create a blog.

Different ideas and selections can be posted and comments invited to start the interactive dialogue.

However, we would start with only a Facebook page and add the blog later. There was agreement that the Facebook page would need 2-3 ‘administrators’ who would select content and monitor the comments. Before launch, we would need to establish a policy for the monitoring of comments and their removal. Ideally the administration of the Facebook page should fall to a parish staff person who would have specific responsibilities and accountability to the pastoral associate. If this position cannot be afforded, any volunteers who are recruited would have to function in the same manner. Lauren Brunelli **will notify the Parish Council** of our intention to establish a *Facebook* account.

Facilities Committee Report (Pat Ball, Chair)

1. Heating System: Harford has completed work on the heating system. The work included updating not only its mechanics but also its wiring and relay systems. It is now tied into our programmable thermostat so it can be staged for better efficiency.
2. Baptismal Font: The project is moving forward. The font is prepped and ready to receive the stone which should be in place or in the process of being installed by the time of the PC meeting.
3. Sacristy Windows: Chris met with Anderson and Baltimore Trades guild regarding replacing the windows, estimated at \$18k. To restore them would cost approximately \$5k. BTG can start work immediately if we desire it.
4. Repainting the church exterior: Chris has met with Baltimore Paint Authority and Baltimore Trades guild to ask for estimates. Bids should be available for consideration in March.
5. Earthquake Damage: Baltimore Masonry completed work that was identified by inspections after the earthquake. BM identified a dangerous condition of our trusses in the upper croft of the church which needs to be addressed.
6. Building Elevator: The annual elevator inspection occurred making our elevator officially safe to use for another year.
7. Kitchen Issue: Our kitchen was cited by the city for not having a use and occupancy permit. Chris has begun the process for getting a permit.

8. HVAC: Pat Ball contacted 3 parishes for information on maintenance contracts for their HVAC systems. See above for Council for discussion.

9. BGE Energy Audit: Pat Ball also contacted BGE about a possible energy audit. We do qualify for a free energy audit. Chris has the contact information for the company assigned to do the audit and will arrange to have it done. Once we receive the evaluation and recommendations, should we choose to implement any of them, BGE will pay 80% of the cost.

Education and Enrichment Committee Report (Kathi Jeffra, Chair)

- Retreat: after conference calls with the sub-committee 1 candidate took himself out of consideration, leaving us with Dr. Jack Buchner. The theme will be based on his "Seven Dynamics of Eucharist." A face to face meeting will be scheduled in the coming month to plan more specifics.

- Dinner and a Movie- Chris is working very hard on this, there are so many worthy films around the theme of Eucharist. We will be formulating discussion questions this week. Committee members will provide soup, salad, and bread.

- Book Study- *Our One Great Act of Fidelity* by Ronald Rollheiser will be the focus of our next small group book study to commence after Easter.

- Dinner for Eight- Rita has sifted through the feedback from the first groups and is preparing to shuffle the deck in a slightly less random way, with the next set of dinners to be held between Easter and Labor Day. We hope to reach out to more young families, recently joined parishioners, and others while still avoiding demographic-based or geographic-based groups.

- Earth Day- Jim Lochner has agreed to help with another Dinner and a Movie: "*Journey of the Universe*" hosted by Dr. Brian Swimme. I asked Jim to help because the science in this film is new and challenging in several ways. The task is this: Indigenous peoples' theology was informed by their understanding of the cosmos. In the same way, as our understanding of the cosmos grows, we must consider the implications for our own theology. What is being revealed to us through this "primary scripture?"

Liturgy Committee Report (Audrey Rogers, Chair)

Our committee met on January 28.

- Liturgical Resources on St V Website

We decided to post three types of website resources: [1] liturgical resources for committee use and reference on the committee's webpage; [2] prayer sites for parishioners; and [3] spirituality sites for parishioners who want support in specific spiritual practices.

- Lent Schedule

Ash Wednesday (Feb 13)
 First Film Night (Feb 20)
 Stations of the Cross (Feb 27)
 Second Film Night (Mar 6)
 Reconciliation (Mar 13)
 Third Film Night (Mar 20)
 Palm Sunday (March 24)
 Tenebrae (March 27)
 Holy Thursday Seder 6 PM (March 28)
 Holy Thursday Service 8 PM (March 28)
 Good Friday (March 29)
 Vigil (March 30-31) Easter Sunday Morning: Blessing of new Baptismal Font

- Eastertide Scheduling:

2nd Sunday of Easter (Apr 7) Renewal of Vows by Holy Union Sisters
 3rd, 4th, 5th Sundays of Easter (Apr 14, 21, 28) Baptismal Homilies

- Summer Series:

The series will focus on the Eucharist this year and occur on 3 Sundays in July (7/7, 7/14, 7/21).

- 50th Anniversary Celebration of the March on Washington and Martin Luther King "I Have a Dream" Speech: We will commemorate the anniversary of this event at the August 25 liturgy.

- Resurrection Crucifix

Mary Otterbein (Liturgical Environment) expressed her concern about the wilting of Easter flowers above the altar before Easter season is over and the unfortunate visual effect this produces. She and Janice Bonner will produce a Resurrection crucifix to hang during Eastertide (similar to the concept employed at Christmas time).

- 2012-2013 Committee Goals

The committee reviewed progress on meeting the 2012-2013 goals that we set, noting that we have accomplished two of the five (Eucharistic and baptismal study); have worked on EM training and hope to accomplish lector training; and that the reinvigoration of our committee is a goal we share with other Council committees and trust that Council attention will help us. All committee members were asked to continue to reflect on how we can further 'enhance the conscious participation of the congregation in liturgies'.

- Update at Council: Training for lectors and liturgy planners has been scheduled for February 23, 26, and 28. Notices have gone out.

The Meeting was adjourned at 9:43pm with the recitation of The Lord's Prayer.

Minutes submitted by the Secretary to the Council,
Graham G. Yearley