

ST. VINCENT DE PAUL  
ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH  
BALTIMORE, MARYLAND



2013 -2014 REPORT TO THE  
PARISH COUNCIL

## September, 2014

It is the constitutional duty of the president of the Parish Council to submit an annual report to the Council in September and thereafter to the Parish.

This past year has been a very good one for us in many blessed ways. In July 2013, the Council committed itself to two major objectives: to undertake a Strategic Planning process to guide us forward and to establish a Family Life Subcommittee (under Education and Enrichment). More on these later.

Very early on, however, it became clear that with the addition of new staff the current level of parish income would not provide any margin for the growth that would be necessary to move the parish forward nor address some long-standing maintenance needs. Our financial picture was presented to the parish in a letter followed by an October Town Hall Meeting.

## Finances

The response of parishioners to last year's letter and meeting was both generous and gratifying. This is a community which our parishioners believe in and intend to flourish. There was a 13.8% increase in income and the end of FY 14 on June 30 witnessed an actual surplus of funds.

With the expectation that the observed level of giving will be continued into FY 15, much effort was expended to align the budget with the provisions of the Strategic Plan. Specifics include increasing the position of superintendent from part-time to a fulltime, increased funding to address a number of long-deferred maintenance projects, increased funding for staff development, new funding for the *Godly Play* Children's program, evangelization efforts, the support of the JVC volunteer, and the upgrading of computer technology. In addition, there will be a strategic reserve to support the program, outreach and evangelization initiatives expected to grow out of the Strategic Plan. Finally, the *Endowment for Operations*, now fully established,

## Parish Staff

Rev. Richard T. Lawrence, *Pastor*  
Christopher McCullough, *Pastoral Associate*  
Barbara Hodnett, *Director of Records and Sacred Vessels*  
Lauren Brunelli, *Administrative Assistant*  
Anne Gibson, *Minister of Education for Children*  
Joseph Organ, *Minister of Music*  
Sue Goodman, *Cantor*

## Parish Council

Rev. Richard T. Lawrence, *Pastor*  
Christopher McCullough, *Pastoral Associate*  
Audrey Rogers, *President*  
Bethany Gregg, *Vice President*  
Peter LaCount, *Secretary*  
Joe Yingling, *9:30 Representative*  
John Kober, *7:15 Representative*  
Denise Hamilton, *11:45 Rep.*  
Matt Hill, *Liturgy*  
Peggy Shouse, *Education*  
Peggy Meyer, *Social Action*  
Lauren Brunelli, *Communication*  
Dan Rolandelli, *Facilities*  
Mark Palmer, *Finance*  
Anne Gibson, *Minister of Education for Children*  
Anne Freeburger, *Corporator*  
Graham, Yearley, *Corporator*

## Corporate Board

Rev. Richard T. Lawrence, *Pastor*  
Anne Freeburger, *Corporator*  
Graham, Yearley, *Corporator*

is earmarked for maintenance projects that do not meet the Historic Trust Fund support criteria (viz. costing \$10,000 or more and expected to last 10 years or more). The Archdiocese has encouraged endowments like this to manage local church maintenance needs by exempting endowments from the Archdiocesan tax.

Fr. Dick and the parish staff have expended considerable effort to change the reporting format of parish finances in order to present a more transparent picture of our financial status to the Council and the parish. Our expenses are now presented as areas, some specific to our mission of Word (education), Sacrament (worship), and Service (social action, peace and justice, and charity); others more budget 'classic': pastoral leadership, administration, and maintenance/utilities. As would be expected, these last three comprise nearly 60% of expenses. These are the cost of keeping the doors open. More importantly, and true to our tradition, is that we have committed the largest mission amount to Service.

In October 2013, we asked parishioners to consider providing funding so we would have a margin for growth and the capacity to address long-standing maintenance issues. We believe this budget uses your generous response to meet that request.

Income	FY 14 Actual	FY 15 Budget
Offertory	270,261	275,666
Donations	268,062	273,423
Poor Box	34,469	35,158
Other	21,352	39,893
Total Ordinary Income	594,144	624,141
Expenses	FY 14 Actual	FY 15 Budget
Word: Education	27,284	53,659
Sacrament: Worship	37,121	30,089
Service	87,220	94,336
Pastoral Leadership	103,675	108,057
Administration	91,834	102,387
Archdiocese	63,231	84,070
Maintenance/Utilities	103,925	150,876
Total Ordinary Expense	514,290	623,473

### Finance Committee

Rev. Dick Lawrence, *Pastor*

Christopher McCullough,  
*Pastoral Associate*

Mark Palmer, *Chair*

Dennis Flynn, *Vice Chair*

M. Fitzsimmons, *Secretary*

Joe Strassner

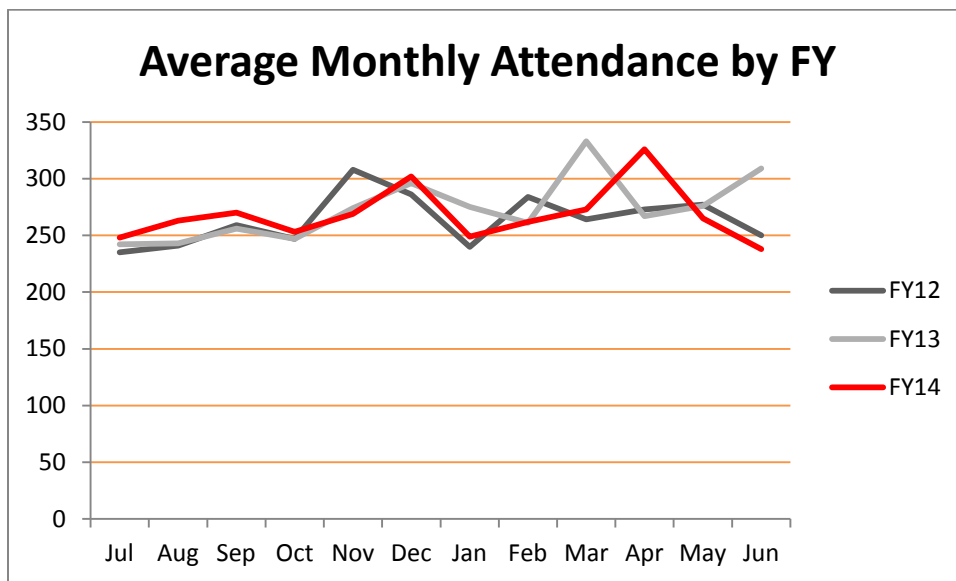
Kevin Dalv

The full FY 15 budget with estimated income and expense areas has been posted on our website. Your comments, questions, and concerns are welcome. You may do this through your Council Mass representative or by email to the Council at [parish-council@stvchurch.org](mailto:parish-council@stvchurch.org)

## Our Parish Community

We continue to be an intentional community, drawing parishioners from a 40 mile radius of our downtown location. We have 233 registered households, 13 of which are new registrations since 2013. We celebrated the initiation of 5 new members at the Easter Vigil. Our average weekly attendance has remained stable over the last three years (FY 12: 264; FY 13: 273; FY 14: 268).

People demonstrate the value they place on the mission and integrity of this community by the distance they travel for worship, but the reality is that travel time, transportation costs, and distance do have an impact on attendance, particularly in the dead of winter and in summertime.



*Note: June 2013 was Fr. Dick's 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Mass when we had 513 in attendance.*

## Living Our Mission: Word (Education and Enrichment Committee)

### *Children and Youth Programs (Parish Staff)*

This year, 36 children were enrolled in *Faith, Fun, and Fellowship* (our religious education program for children and youth) which met on the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Sundays after the 9:30 liturgy during the academic year. This enrollment represents 63% of the age-appropriate children in registered households (some non-participants attend parochial schools closer to home). Higher proportions of children in the sacramental preparation years (First Eucharist and Confirmation) were enrolled (75%) and these children

attended over 80% of the sessions. The pre-K group enjoyed the same level of enrollment and participation. Seven children received their First Communion in May and five youth were confirmed. Only half of the children in the older elementary and middle school grades were enrolled and only half of them attended half or more of the sessions.

Liturgy of the Word for Children provides children with an age-appropriate encounter with the Sunday scripture readings and occurs within the Liturgy of the Word at the 9:30 Sunday Mass. Participation is open to all children.

The Youth Program was reconstituted for faith formation and wide-ranging discussions; the group meets in the new youth room (the pastor's former parlor on the second floor of the rectory). Social and service components are planned this new year with the help of the Jesuit Volunteer Corps staff person.

*The Strategic Plan has called for a comprehensive evaluation of these programs which is underway.*

### *Family Life*

This new subcommittee was requested by the families with young children in our community and the subcommittee and its mission were approved by Parish Council in July 2013. The subcommittee has parent volunteers to staff each of the five mission areas (parental enrichment/education, communication, social and service projects, and family-based activities). The Council approved this subcommittee as an adjunct to the standing Education and Enrichment Committee and encouraged the new Family Life Subcommittee to coordinate their efforts with FFF and sacramental preparation for children. Over the past year, there have been a number of social and service programs for the families in addition to a Children's Good Friday service.

Members of this subcommittee have been responsible for introducing the children's religious 'experiential' education program, *Godly Play*, to the parish. *Godly Play* will be the education experience for pre-K and 1<sup>st</sup> grade children in the Fall of 2014.

### *Other Active Groups*

St. V has many flourishing parishioner-led groups. The long-established *Women in Ministry* continue to meet for book and film discussions. The *Married Couples Group* started in 1995 offers 25 couples on average a year-long experience in skill-building and spirituality. The **Education and Enrichment Committee** conducted the *Parish Retreat*, a long standing tradition; this year it was attended by 57 parishioners. The committee also coordinates *Dinner-for-Eight* which moved into its third year convening groups across our entire catchment area for community-building. Monday evening *Scripture Study* will start its third year this Fall.

## **Living Our Mission: Sacrament (Liturgy Committee)**

The heart of our community is our sacramental life, celebrated primarily at the weekend Masses. The Sunday 9:30 Mass continues to draw the majority of our parishioners. Parishioner involvement in

worship is obvious: St V has close to 50 trained lectors, about 12 liturgy planners, another 45 Eucharistic Ministers, and 32 Altar Dressers including 6 middle school youth.

This past year, our *Advent Lessons and Carols* program was combined with a recital by the Men's Chorus of Baltimore which made it a truly memorable event. The **Liturgy Committee** followed up on the Spring 2013 survey of Lenten Services by changing the format of the Lenten Stations and the Celebration of the Lord's Passion on Good Friday. The good people from Our Lady of the Fields who provide the hot food for our Friday evening meals for the hungry were invited as our guests at the Jewish Seder and afterward to have their feet washed on Holy Thursday. St V also conducted its all-night vigil on Holy Saturday night culminating in a joyous Easter morning celebration. The Liturgy Committee continued the thematic presentation of the Eucharist for the 2014 Summer Series. Throughout the year, the devotion and talent of our music director, cantor, and choir have graced us with exceptional music to give voice to our worship.

### **Living Our Mission: Service (Social Action/Peace and Justice Committees)**

The **Social Action Committee** is the umbrella committee coordinating all our service efforts with a number of primary responsibilities falling to its **Peace and Justice Subcommittee**. The many activities and initiatives these two committees support include: Convening the *Jonestown Planning Council*, our neighborhood organization of Jonestown; *The Resource Exchange*, the home –furnishing arm of *Health Care for Homeless Housing First* program for people who are experiencing homelessness- our parishioners have furnished nearly 175 apartments since the program started 3 years ago; *Friday Evening Dinners for the Hungry* – a joint effort with Our Lady of the Fields to provide a hot meal to the hungry and homeless of our neighborhood, the number served ranges from 125 early in the month to 325 at the end; our *Emergency Services* including the *Men's Clothing Program* and the *Food Pantry* continue to serve the nearby needy. Members of St V have in the past worked as part of the Churches United to help build housing through local *Habitat for Humanity*. St. V remains an active participant in advocacy. Committee members are active in the *Baltimore Regional Initiative to Develop Genuine Equality* (BRIDGE); attend the Archdiocesan *Beyond the Boundaries* effort; pursue Inter-Faith Activities; and promote environmentally sound public policies and good stewardship of the planet's resources.

### **Supporting Our Mission (Finance, Facilities, Communication/Outreach Committees)**

The three standing committees of the Parish Council that support our mission are Finance (whose work this past year has been noted above), Facilities, and Communications/Outreach. The **Facilities Committee** undertook a number of important projects this past year including photographically documenting the interior of our buildings for insurance purposes and systematically evaluating the campus for needed improvements or attention. These were included in a comprehensive list that was

submitted for funding within the FY 15 budget. The **Communications and Outreach Committee** established and maintains our parish website and Facebook account. This committee particularly needs the expertise of technically proficient parishioners in the upcoming year.

## The Implementation of Our Strategic Plan

The Parish Council accepted the recommendations of the Ad Hoc Committee and adopted the Strategic Plan last April. Prior to that, there were three Town Meetings: one on October 20, 2013, outlining the process we would take going forward; the second on January 26, 2014 when the findings of the data collection phase were presented and discussed with parishioners; and the last on March 23, 2014 when the recommendations were presented for comment prior to the Parish Council action. The parish was involved in many levels in collecting the data which were needed to inform the plan, especially an essay survey of the strengths and weaknesses we have within our community as well as the opportunities and threats our community does and will face in the future. This was followed by a survey examining our faith journey and the degree to which S V is able to nurture its members.

The findings of the data collection and the entire Report of the Strategic Planning team that was adopted by the Parish Council are posted on the Parish Council webpage on our parish website at <http://www.stvchurch.org/council-minutes-reports/>

Growth through evangelization is the primary objective of the Strategic Planning process. The plan is divided into two phases: the first an internal one and the second one of outreach and invitation. Separating the plan into these two phases became important because we learned things about ourselves in our self-evaluation that require us to undertake specific activities in order to optimize the efforts of externally directed evangelization.

First, we needed to address parish administration. There needed to be a budget planning process that was more closely aligned with the work and objectives of the standing committees and a process that could be communicated easily, understandably and transparently to the Parish Council and to the parish as a whole. We needed to facilitate parishioners' ability to provide consistent support by offering electronic payment options, instead of relying on offertory collections of cash or checks. We also needed to examine our administrative needs in a more systematic way. We must plan on how to configure our parish staff to the changing menu of core functions: program, finances, record-keeping, communication, and facility management. We also needed to establish accepted personnel policies. Although there are certain constraints, much of this is underway.

Secondly, we needed to ensure that our commitment to be a welcoming and inclusive community runs broad and deep. Guests need to be welcomed for certain but even more importantly new parishioners need to be carried into full engagement and participation in the life of our community. Our committees through which the critical work of our mission is realized must be open to the creativity and energy of new voices and be responsive to the needs of new members. The metaphor I hold to will be well known to any gardener: if you want your plants to grow, pay attention to the soil for if you give the plants good soil, they can pretty much take care of themselves. Matthew 13 has Jesus saying the same thing. This Fall, then, we pay attention to ourselves as the good soil that will bring forth the growth we desire.

Finally our focus in 2015 will be fully on evangelization. This term has taken on some unfortunate connotations in our contemporary society with hard-sell, bible-thumping, door-ringers telling of fire and brimstone. We also have to keep in check the perception that evangelization is being promoted to refill churches without attention to the important work of addressing why people left in the first place.

We need to avoid a quick or easy dismissal of evangelization based on these stereotypes and rather concentrate on its root meaning: to share the good news. What we have found at St V is precious. It is this good and joyful community of deep friendships but it is much, much more. The whole point of the parish community is to offer a personal encounter with the divine and evoke a transformation into the mind of Jesus. What we experience in Scripture, what we become in Sacrament, we render in Service. As a community we have always engaged the meaning of our faith, seeing it as Karl Rahner did: God's truth is beginning and emergence, not conclusion and end; and it is not only our right but our duty to understand it with our mind and heart. We are questioners and we are seekers, striving to live a thoughtful, discerning, incarnational Christianity. This is the good news we have to share. Now on to the work of creatively doing that.

## Final words...

There is so much that happens at St V. It is probable that I have overlooked reporting on some major effort that parishioners have undertaken. So many work tirelessly and quietly to make our worship, program, and service life a seamless tapestry. Forgive my omissions.

The Parish Council has begun its 2014-2015 term. We consider what we do as a sacred trust with the community. I have been honored with their confidence to serve another year as president. We ask for your prayers that we may be graced with gifts of the Spirit in our discernment, our planning, and our decision-making.

The peace of the Christ,

Audrey Rogers