

ST. VINCENT DE PAUL
ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH
BALTIMORE, MARYLAND



2014 -2015 REPORT TO THE
PARISH COUNCIL

June, 2015

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. With the permission of the Council, this report is submitted in June at the end of the current president's term.

Parish Staff

Rev. Richard T. Lawrence, *Pastor*

Christopher McCullough, *Pastoral Associate*

Barbara Hodnett, *Director of Records and Sacred Vessels*

Lauren Brunelli, *Administrative Assistant, Director of Evangelization*

Anne Gibson, *Minister of Education for Children*

Joseph Organ, *Minister of Music*

Sue Goodman, *Cantor*

Jim Dimmer, *Superintendent*

2014-2015 Parish Council

Rev. Richard T. Lawrence, *Pastor*

Christopher McCullough, *Pastoral Associate*

Audrey Rogers, *President, 9:30 Mass Representative*

Bethany Gregg, *Vice President, 9:30 Mass Representative*

Peter LaCount, *Secretary, 9:30 Mass Representative*

Joe Yingling, *9:30 Mass Representative*

John Kober, *7:15 Mass Representative*

Denise Hamilton, *11:45 Mass Representative*

Valerie Rolandelli and Matt Hill, *Liturgy Committee*

Peggy Shouse, *Education and Enrichment Committee*

Peggy Meyer and Ray Heil, *Social Action Committee*

Michael Keating, *Outreach and Engagement Committee*

Bob Betta and Dan Rolandelli, *Facilities Committee*

Mark Palmer, *Finance Committee*

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*

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I. Finances

This annual report is being submitted prior to the close of Fiscal Year 15 (June 30, 2015) and the finalization of budget plans for the next fiscal year. The Pastor will be reporting the state of the parish finances to the community.

Members of the Finance Committee are Rev. Dick Lawrence, *Pastor*; Christopher McCullough, *Pastoral Associate*; Mark Palmer, *Chair*; Jack Schmidt, *Vice Chair*; Maureen Fitzsimmons, *Secretary*; Dennis Flynn, Joe Strassner, Kevin Daly, Graham Yearley, and Joan Urban Fulton.

II. Our Parish Community

As an intentional community, we draw parishioners from a 40 mile radius of our downtown location. Our average weekly attendance while previously stable (FY 12: 264; FY 13: 273; and FY 14: 268, appears to have dropped in FY 15 (as of May 1): 243. The pastor reports that although the attendance at the 9:30 Sunday Mass has remained steady with some increase, the attendance at the other two Masses (7:15 pm Saturday and 11:45 am Sunday) has continued to fall. In addition, travel time, transportation costs, and distance do have an impact on attendance, particularly in the dead of winter. The early winter months of 2015 were full of weekend snowstorms and icy conditions and these affected attendance.

Living Our Mission: Word (Education and Enrichment Committee)

Children and Youth Programs (Parish Staff)

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. At a training this year, parents who conduct the sessions evaluated and suggested reformatting the presentation to stress the scripture readings. This year, too, presentations on the Gospels of Mark and John were made available during the spring at the same time as the children's *Faith, Fun, and Fellowship* sessions to help the parents better present the scripture.

Faith, Fun, and Fellowship (our religious education program for children and youth) met on the 2nd and 4th Sundays after the 9:30 liturgy during the academic year. *Godly Play* was implemented as the education experience for pre-K and 1st grade children in this past academic year. St. V's is certainly blessed with devoted and committed teachers. The Youth Program has met in the youth room for discussion; social and service components have also been included this year. The youth produced the Lenten banners and composed the petitions.

The religious education program for children was formally evaluated as part of the Strategic Plan. (See below).

Education and Enrichment Committee, Family Life, and Other Active Groups

The **Education and Enrichment Committee**, the principal ministry for community-building, has conducted the *Parish Retreat*, a long standing tradition; and *Dinner-for-Eight* which moved into its

fourth year convening groups across our entire catchment area for community-building. The committee sponsored a *half-day of reflection* with Dr. Robert Wicks at the Franciscan Priory in late February that was attended by fifty parishioners. Monday evening *Scripture Study* has met bimonthly and has studied the Gospel of Mark (Fall) and First Corinthians (Spring).

Family Life and Other Groups

Family Life was established by Parish Council in July 2013. The subcommittee has parent volunteers to staff each of the four mission areas (parental enrichment/education, communication, social and service projects, and family-based activities). Over the past year, there have been a number of social and service programs for the families. In May, Family Life sponsored a Mary May Ceremony involving the children, their parents, and parishioners in honoring God's gift to us in Mary. The Parish Council has also relied on them to assist with some administrative functions. This group of involved, creative, and committed parents has become a real asset to our community and deserves our full support.

In addition, St. V has many flourishing parishioner-led groups. The long-established *Women in Ministry* continues to meet for book and film discussions. The *Married Couples Group*, started in 1995, offers an average of 25 couples a year-long experience in skill-building and spirituality. In 2014, they sponsored a day-long summer retreat for couples at the Franciscan Priory that will be repeated in 2015.

There are other important *ad hoc* groups who form to manage and conduct traditional community celebrations. Many parishioners show up year after year to support the Holy Week Seder from table set-up, to food preparation and serving, to the songs and prayers of the ritual. Most turn around and repeat the effort for the Easter Sunday breakfast. We are a community who knows how to celebrate and thankfully we have parishioners who graciously make that happen.

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.

Our *Advent Lessons and Carols* program combined again this year with a recital by the Men's Chorus of Baltimore providing another memorable event. The **Liturgy Committee** at St V has a wide array of responsibilities in the worship life of our community. Besides training and scheduling the liturgy planners, lectors, Eucharistic ministers, and altar dressers, the committee planned and implemented seasonal themes for Advent and Lent followed by the all-night vigil on Holy Saturday night culminating in a joyous Easter morning celebration. A special *Children's Good Friday Service*, modelled on the more adult Triduum service for Good Friday, was again conducted in 2015 with twice the attendance. Joint *Advent and Lenten reconciliation services* continue to be held with Corpus Christi and St. Ignatius. The Stations of the Cross, redesigned last year to be scripture-based, had increased attendance this year. 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 and working on interfaith and environmental issues.

And the service initiatives that directly implement Matthew 25:

The Resource Exchange, the home –furnishing arm of *Health Care for Homeless Housing First* program for housing people who are experiencing homelessness through which our parishioners collect and repair/clean household goods and furniture, deliver and set up, and celebrate a housewarming with the new apartment dweller; these are truly giving substance to our service mission;

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; there are about 15 St V parishioners who regularly host, set-up, serve, and clean up the Undercroft every Friday; St V has made this outreach program of OLF possible despite the weather; volunteers from Our Lady of Perpetual Help are now regularly helping as well as neighborhood volunteers;

Emergency Services including the *Men's Clothing Program* and the *Food Pantry* which continue to serve the nearby needy.

As of May 31, the 2015 year-to-date services provided by our parishioners include:

- Served 4,982 dinners on Friday evenings to homeless and hungry poor of Jonestown
- Gave 195 men clothing
- Furnished 39 homes of those once homeless
- Distributed 295 bags of food
- Gave \$ 1,436 in aid from Poor Box for utility/eviction help, transportation, or prescriptions

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

The three standing committees of the Parish Council that support our mission have been Facilities, Finance, and Communications/Outreach.

Finance: The work of the Finance Committee will be reported separately by the pastor.

Facilities: The Facilities Committee has evaluated a number of campus needs including security. They have also coordinated efforts with the new superintendent, Jim Dimmer, who has focused attention on correcting long-standing facility issues, particularly in proper storage and organization. Hirsh Electric a company under contract to rewire the bar area used for Sunday coffee offered to complete the entire undercroft rewiring *pro bono* and this was gratefully accepted. The accessibility project authorized by Fr. Lawrence was initiated in March; this will provide wheelchair access to the front second floor rectory rooms. The exterior restoration of the church began this year with the west wall being completed

by December. The foundation and south wall are scheduled to begin before the end of this fiscal year. The park is discussed elsewhere.

Communications and Outreach: It became apparent that parish-wide communications needed to be centralized as a staff function. Since this was to be addressed administratively, the Council's committee was reorganized into the **Outreach and Engagement (O+E) Committee** with a new charter approved by the Council in January, 2015. This O+E Committee was then appointed by Council as the Evangelizing Team for the Parish. The committee promptly produced a marketing plan with targeted populations and networks and corresponding strategies and projects for their engagement. Michael Keating agreed to chair.

III. The Status and Future of St. Vincent Park

This issue re-surfaced during the data collection phase of the Strategic Plan, where it was mentioned by 27% of respondents and ranked second as a major weakness (first was the nature of our "commuter parish"). Aware of how fractious an issue the condition of the park has been in the past, it was not addressed within the Strategic Plan itself but the formation of an Ad Hoc Committee to study the park's status and future options was recommended for the Fall 2014. This was done.

In February 2015, the Parish Council accepted the first recommendation of the Ad Hoc Committee which focused on regaining control of the space, enforcing park rules, coordinating better with local agencies providing services, and establishing a more supportive ministry to the people sleeping in the park overnight. This is similar to the strategy endorsed by the Parish Council in 2009-10 when the parish had last lost control of its private property. That strategy worked for several years until interest and volunteer efforts waned.

The Committee's second recommendation was to study the viability of building permanent supportive housing (PSH) in the park as another management option for the property. PSH is the missing piece in the range of services to the homeless that the city and non-profits serving homeless persons are trying to provide. People who need temporary shelter until they can gather resources have the Weinberg Center (now managed by Catholic Charities) among others. People experiencing chronic homelessness with little hope or resources and increasing vulnerability are served by the *Housing First Program* (and our own *Resource Exchange* works to furnish the apartments offered to these individuals). The people who fall through the cracks are the subset of this second group who are not able though disability or other conditions to live independently in an apartment of their own. The second recommendation for a management option for the park was to use it for the dual purpose of serving this specific population and providing an anchor building to oversee the remaining open park space.

The divisions observed in the community over the best use of the park at several parish meetings in January and February were also apparent at the March Council meeting. There were a few members convinced that the parish should ultimately build PSH; the majority thought it Council's responsibility to explore management options and therefore supported doing the study although they were not necessarily convinced building would be the best choice. Some opposed the study because they could never support building and were concerned that a study would inevitably lead to building. To allay these last concerns and make the study process as objective and transparent as possible, the Council decided that it would endorse a set of pre-determined criteria by which feasibility would be judged. At the April meeting, the

Council amended and added to the draft criteria submitted to them, raising the environmental energy standards required and specified that a full financial feasibility analysis be part of the criteria.

Before the study could be commissioned, it was determined that Baltimore City's proposed zoning changes (in development over the past few years) would be finalized and become effective as early as late summer, 2015. The park is currently zoned M1 (*light industrial*) but the city had proposed rezoning it to TOD-2 (*Lower Density Transit-Oriented Development up to 60' high*) to align it to the city plan to centralize housing around metro stations. Several years ago, Fr. Lawrence successfully petitioned to re-zone the park as *open space* in the new plan. **TransForm Baltimore** is still in draft pending approval by the City Council. When it is approved and implemented, it is the practice to forego any revision for a period of time. Further, if and when proposed zoning revisions would be permitted, they would only be considered if there were agreement and support from the affected constituents. In our case, this would require the full support of the pastor and the parish community: neither of which appears likely. This makes launching a feasibility study impracticable at this time.

Therefore the majority of the Ad Hoc Committee members proposed to the Council that the feasibility study be indefinitely postponed and that the Council commit itself to responsible oversight of the park by converting the responsibilities of the *Friends of St. Vincent Park* (formerly the Park Working Group) to measurable outcomes with quarterly reports to the Council. These proposals were accepted.

IV. THE IMPLEMENTATION OF OUR STRATEGIC PLAN

The 2013-2014 Parish Council undertook a Strategic Planning process to guide the community into the future and accepted the recommendations of the Ad Hoc Planning Committee thus adopting the Strategic Plan in April 2014. 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 community comment prior to the Parish Council action. The parish was involved on 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 was the primary objective of the Strategic Planning process. The plan was to be implemented in this 2014-2015 Council year. To that end, objectives with their associated implementation timelines, were approved by the Council in April 2014. Throughout the entire process, the Council has committed itself to **accountability** and **transparency**; and in that spirit a full accounting of the plan's status is here presented.

Administration

In setting objectives for administration, the Council was guided by the *Standards for Excellence in Parish Administration* produced by the **National Leadership Roundtable on Church Management**. More information on this organization can be found at

<http://theleadershiproundtable.org/TLR/default.asp>

For St. Vincent's, the immediate tactical tasks were first to *examine our budget process*, make it more intentional, align it with the Strategic Plan, and communicate our financial state in an understandable and transparent manner to the Council and the parish community. Then the plan required *current and accurate job descriptions of central staff* and, given resources and constraints, reconfiguring our current staff to best address the specific needs of the plan (including registry maintenance and parishioner engagement, program expansion, and evangelization, among others). Another goal was *centralizing parish communication* since there is no immediate effective way of getting important information out to the community. The timeline called for two of these things- finances and optimizing staffing- to be done as the first order of business: the budget so FY 15 could follow the new process; attention to staff so accurate and revised job descriptions could be in place and goal-setting performance reviews could take place in July at the beginning of the 2015 fiscal year. This would mean that an employee handbook also be in place at that time. The absence of written employee practices was noted as a deficiency by the Archdiocesan audit team and Fr. Lawrence had assured them it was being addressed.

Budget Status: For planning FY 15 and FY 16, Council requested committees to review their activities and submit projects they wish to maintain, abandon, or initiate. Fr. Lawrence consults Chris McCullough on their prioritization. The Council did provide a budget overview to parishioners in its September 2013 Town Meeting. However, the usual practice has been to post the annual budget on the website and publish it in the parish publication, *Together Sharing Christ*. It is not clear that this is an adequate reporting mechanism.

Fr. Lawrence reformatted the budget in the summer of 2014. Although the new format is a considerable improvement, the categorization favored by Fr. Lawrence that places staff and program costs within mission areas does not permit an easy understanding of what are commonly known as 'fixed costs' (those expenses such as salaries, insurance, service contracts) as opposed to 'discretionary funding' that might be available to fund needs or programs that may be identified later during the fiscal year. Constitutionally, the Council is to assist the pastor to "...consider, amend, approve and administer an annual Parish budget." This duty remains difficult to effectively discharge.

Central Staff: An employee handbook was accepted by Fr. Lawrence in October. The specifics of its implementation have not yet been determined. Most job descriptions have been updated to reflect current duties.

Evaluation of the Children's Program

Another tactical task was to conduct a formal evaluation of the Children's Religious Education Program. Ms. Pam Sanders, the former principal of St. Ambrose Catholic School, was asked to perform the evaluation of the Children's Education Program at St. Vincent. Ms. Sanders conducted a comprehensive evaluation in the summer and fall of 2014. In November 2014, with gratitude for her efforts, the Parish Council reviewed and discussed her program evaluation. In December, the Parish Council recommended to the pastor that:

1. The religious education program must be mission-driven and have specific program goals; therefore attention must be paid to clarifying the mission. Without such attention, program evaluation is

impossible. Any parish program that is resource-intensive (money and volunteer time) requires formal and systematic program evaluation, if it is to be transparent and accountable.

2. The parish should move toward Archdiocesan certification of all teachers in the Faith, Fun, and Fellowship Program. It is noted that certification is *pro-forma* for individuals with master's degrees in theology (currently half of our teachers) and only requires a letter from the pastor. Therefore, this certification should be obtained as soon as possible to demonstrate good faith compliance.

3. The parish needs a distinct and coordinated middle school program that recognizes the critical importance of this major transitional stage in our children's religious education. Ms. Sanders noted the outline for this that was proposed and accepted by the Parish Council in 2010. This proposal was never implemented.

The Council requested a report from the pastor at its April 2015 meeting on the incorporation of these recommendations in the planning and implementation of the program for the 2015-2016 academic year.

Status: The April report that was submitted to Council did not include a program mission or objectives. Although those teachers needing certification have expressed willingness to seek it next year, the letter requesting the certification of the masters' prepared teachers had not yet been written. A job description for a 0.20 FTE middle school coordinator was submitted by the pastoral associate.

The Council did not consider this report responsive to its request and asked the Family Life Committee to work with the minister of education for children to draft program mission and objectives; and requested that the pastoral associate follow through on the teacher certification.

According to policy, the Council directed the Family Life Committee to review the job description for the new position of Middle School/High School Youth Leader; this was accomplished at their April meeting and recruitment should be underway.

Growth through Evangelization

This was the primary purpose and the heart of the entire Strategic Planning process. The plan was 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 required us to undertake specific activities in order to optimize the efforts of an externally directed evangelization. We needed a true parish self-examination. We are a phenomenal community but we are not perfect. And feedback from newly registered parishioners about our welcoming and engagement practices belied our usual self-congratulatory posture. Further we needed to reinvigorate our committees: for most of them, it is the same members exchanging chairmanships every year. New blood brings new ideas. And we have a critical need for new ideas in responding to the new parishioners coming to St Vincent. The Council developed specific tasks to accomplish this.

Internal Focus

In order to establish an intentional, structured, efficient way to consistently engage **newcomers** who choose to visit our community, and to understand the interests and talents of **newly registered parishioners** in order to invite them to engage more deeply with the community, the Council conducted

information and idea gathering **focus groups** in August 2014 with those parishioners relatively new to the parish.

Status: This information was presented to Council and its mission committees. The O+E Committee will redesign the Gathering Space to more efficiently inform and engage. This task, coordinated with the Family Life Committee, is underway.

Engaging **currently registered parishioners** in lay leadership and active participation in community life to find innovative ways to promote faith formation as a lifelong process was also an important objective. The Council conducted **geographic cluster gatherings** in the Fall of 2014 for networking, peer support, and information and idea gathering

Status: This became a labor-intensive undertaking. The Council alone promoted participation in this effort through the bulletin, email tree, and website. Unfortunately, exposure to these can be variable. Many parishioners failed to respond to convener phone calls because they were unaware of the effort.

In all, 25 clusters of 8-15 adult parishioners were identified, conveners recruited, and materials produced. Four of the 25 groups never met despite convener attempts; 17 others met and submitted reports; and four others met but never submitted reports despite reminders. All the submitted reports were collated, major themes identified and the information shared with the Council's committees.

However, the objective of establishing networking and peer support was not fully achieved. It is difficult to reach these goals with one meeting which was a restriction that was accepted because there was push-back from parishioners who enjoy the *Dinners-for-Eight* (this program had been temporarily suspended for the cluster meetings).

The final internal focus would have been the development of a heightened sense of parishioner ownership and commitment to the Mission of the Community through participation in revitalized Committees. We have a critical need for new ideas in meeting the needs of the new populations now coming to St V, like the families with young children, the young adults, and retired empty-nesters moving back to the city.

Status: It was planned that after completing and digesting our survey, focus group, and cluster meeting data, we would have moved to a discipleship/time and talent stewardship campaign during Lent. Preliminary planning for this campaign included discussions and planning in the Liturgy and Education and Enrichment Committees to address discipleship and stewardship during Lent. Discipleship became the liturgical theme throughout the Lenten liturgies and the book chosen for the Lenten discussion was *Life on Mission: God's People Finding God's Heart for the World*.

By the end of 2014, Fr. Lawrence acknowledged that although he embraced the goal of the Strategic Plan, he did not support the specifics of the plan. Since administrative and pastoral support were needed to implement a stewardship campaign, it was abandoned.

External Focus

The final component was to have been external evangelization after we community members had evangelized ourselves. Specific ideas coming from the cluster groups plus ideas gleaned from the evangelization literature would have been converted into projects to be assumed by the newly invigorated committees. This strategy as noted was terminated.

During the year, Fr. Lawrence had initiated a parallel effort with the parish staff arising from his different vision for evangelization. He appointed Laureen Brunelli as Director of Evangelization in January and they both are now working with the new Outreach and Engagement Committee chaired by Michael Keating to implement Fr. Lawrence's vision. One earlier project, the banner on the Fallsway church exterior, had been offered to the cluster groups for discussion and has since been implemented; Fr. Lawrence has reflected on its message on the website.

V. SUMMARY

Change is difficult.

Estimates from the management literature indicate that nearly 60 percent of management and staff have difficulty executing the strategies previously agreed upon. Some challenges cited in the literature include resistance to managing change, failure to grasp the interests of the whole organization, maintaining existing functional silos, and disconnects between planning objectives and operational realities.

Although the entire parish was deeply engaged in self-examination through focus groups, written evaluations, surveys, cluster group sessions, town meetings, and the community affirmed the Strategic Plan based on that self-examination, all the challenges that were faced in its implementation could not be overcome. However, the community that entered the planning process is not the same one that emerged from it. Expectations have been raised. It will be incumbent on future councils to address where our community is and where it needs to move to fulfill its mission, survive, and thrive into the future.

Given this beautiful community who faithfully continues on the commitment to our mission, filling in and reaching out, this report ends in hope. There are so many generous souls here who support, nurture, and inspire us all. For that alone we must be deeply thankful.

It has been an honor to serve with the members of the 2014-2015 Council. I have also had the privilege of working with almost every committee of the Council for the past two years and I know firsthand the time, talent, and devotion they give to the life of our community; the parish owes these good people a tremendous debt.

Respectfully submitted to the Parish Council and the Parish,
Audrey Smith Rogers

June, 2015