

# St. Vincent de Paul Parish

## 2019-2020 Annual Report

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### Parish Staff

**Rev. Ray Chase, Pastor**  
**Colleen McCahill, Pastoral Associate**  
**Bridgid Casson, Administrative Assistant**  
**Barbara Hodnett, Director of Records and Sacred Vessels**  
**Anne Gibson, Minister of Education to Children**  
**Anthony Barajas, Maintenance**  
**Joseph Organ, Minister of Music**  
**Teresa Guion, Cantor**  
**Brian Martindale, Outreach Coordinator/Jesuit Volunteer**

### Parish Council

**Amber Hendricks, 9:30 Representative/ Council President**  
**Peggy Shouse, 9:30 Representative / Council Vice President**  
**Anne Freeburger, Corporator/ Council Secretary**  
**Graham Yearly, Corporator**  
**Ned Banks, 9:30 Representative**  
**Aisha Payton, 11:45 Representative**  
**Craig Horton, 7:15 Representative**  
**Al Reichelt, Liturgy Committee Co-Chair**  
**Gerry Fialkowski, Liturgy Committee Co-Chair**  
**John Moore, Education and Enrichment Committee Chair**  
**Dennis McMullin, Facilities Committee Chair**  
**Mark Palmer, Finance Committee Chair**  
**Peggy Meyer, Social Action Committee Chair**  
**Jim Casey, Committee on Church Reform Chair**



## Overview

Our Parish Constitution stipulates that the Parish Council President is responsible for submitting an annual report to the Council each year and to the Parish thereafter.

Writing this year's report in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, life before March 2020 seems a long way from our present situation. However, there were challenges faced and valuable reflections to be had both before and after first hearing of COVID-19.

## Reflecting on our Sacred Purpose

We began the Parish Council year of 2019-2020 reflecting on our Sacred Purpose. On September 7, 2019 roughly 30 parishioners met in the undercroft to spend a half-day reflecting on not just how we do what we do, but also why we as St. Vincent's make the decision to be church to one another. Julie St. Croix from the Office of Pastoral Planning of the Archdiocese of Baltimore led the group.

Small groups were formed and spent the day discussing questions to shepherd us through a process of what makes us as a community unique and what special gift we have to bring to each other and to the world. Many of the attendees commented on how valuable the experience was, and although that day long meeting did not produce a Sacred Purpose statement, the group agreed that it would be worthwhile to keep the process going.

A group of attendees reconvened on November 9, 2020 in order to continue the conversation with Pastoral Associate, Colleen McCahill facilitating. At the end of our time together, the group settled on the Sacred Purpose Statement:

Our sacred purpose is to embrace, love and serve so that all may be as God desires.

The Council agreed that the experience was so valuable we wished to find some way to include the rest of the community in considering our sacred purpose and possibly accepting the above statement or coming up with a revised Sacred Purpose that would include the parish more fully in it's creation.

Although strategies for extending the experience and the statement out to the broader St. Vincent's community have been discussed, a final plan for doing so has not been agreed upon as of this writing, and it is possible we will re-visit this in the coming year. The workshop also bore fruit in ways that might not be immediately apparent such as inspiring our December meeting as a time for listening to where we have seen God and where God is moving us as a community and also the Parish Council's discussions of our founding documents in light of our Sacred Purpose as a wider community and as individual committees.

### Relationship with the Park

On September 19, 2019, Fr. Ray Chase, Pastor; Colleen McCahill, Pastoral Associate; Amber Hendricks, Parish Council President; and Peggy Shouse, Parish Council Vice President met by phone and decided unanimously to close the park adjoining the church property.

One individual who had attracted a following of others who followed his lead became increasingly aggressive toward parish staff and disrespectful of our property and boundaries concerning refraining from the use and sale of substances on our property. The decision to close was made in an attempt to interrupt the toxic culture that had begun to form and negatively impact our community.

An Ad Hoc Committee formed and presented a proposal to the Council for an Interim plan to reopen the park in January 2020. The proposal included more limited hours for public use in order to increase structure and also enable the parish to gauge what consequences reopening might have. Also identified as being of importance by the committee was trying to have more formal expectations for those who make donations of food and other items at the park, with the ideal state being a relationship between donors and the parish. The committee also felt that in reopening the parish should reassess our ability and willingness to form relationships with the individuals who most frequent the park.

A Town Hall was held to inform the parish as a whole of the plan and allow the community to ask questions. However, progress was halted in March prior to reopening due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Internal discussions including seeking input from the Archdiocese regarding the reopening in light of the COVID-19 restrictions around gatherings remain in progress at the time of this writing.

### Revisions of Constitution

In the past year the Council has also considered revisions to the parish constitution. Presented to the council as a whole was language regarding the formation of an executive committee in order to make decisions urgently when timely input was required from the Council regarding a matter, such as the closing of the park, or urgent financial decisions so that parish staff would not be forced to make decisions in isolation but had a structure for reaching out for input.

The council also reviewed language regarding extending voting beyond the elected representatives to the pastor, pastoral associate, and the committee chairs. This was not intended to replace the council's normal means of determining matters by consensus, but rather was meant to be a new structure that would be used only when consensus could not be reached in the time-frame required to reach a decision.

The council has also discussed the possibility of updating language regarding elected representatives. However, these conversations remain incomplete.

Once all language is discussed and agreed upon by the council, the next steps would be to extend all revisions of language to the parish as a whole. Two-thirds vote of the council and majority approval from the parish membership is required to finalize proposed revisions.

## Finance

In spite of the uncertainties posed by the pandemic, the Parish finances remain in a strong position. Offertory has declined during the pandemic. However, there has also been a reduction in expenditures. We received funds through the Payroll Protection Program as well as donations from parishioners who were concerned about the parish's well-being in light of the inability to receive an in person collection each week during the first two months of the pandemic. Unlike many other parishes in these difficult times we actually showed a surplus for the year ended June 30, 2020.

Our operating budget is composed substantially of salaries and benefits, program expenses, insurance, utilities and maintenance. This year, we were able to accomplish needed work on the trees and grounds in the park. We also replaced windows and frames in the rectory building that were sorely in need of repair. We identified termites that were present in the undercroft, and have taken steps to address this issue. It is worth mentioning that the money donated by parishioners to the Archbishop's Annual Appeal decreased since 2018. The money we receive back from the appeal each year is donated to St. James and Johns school along with a contribution by the Parish, which was retained this year.

Parish social outreach activities continued at a high level this year. Total contributions to these, including the poor box, emergency services and The Resource Exchange (TRE), totaled \$100,000. Beyond the substantial volunteer time toward the program of placing families in furnished homes, TRE invested over \$40,000 in furnishings, household goods, moving and storage costs. Our other direct outreach to the needy totaled \$38,000. Additionally, the Parish contributed toward the various archdiocesan and national collections.

## COVID-19 Response

Although the global pandemic began to impact the parish only in March of 2020, it is difficult not to see the rest of the year as colored by the impact it has had and continues to have on our parish community. The months of April, May, and June were primarily devoted to discussion of

how the pandemic had impacted our community and making plans for the staged reopening of the parish facilities.

In April, the council and parish volunteers who responded to requests through the parish committees for assistance attempted to reach out to each person or family in the parish directory to check in on how individuals and families were doing in light of the intentional isolation required and upheaval to daily life and support. Al Reichelt took responsibility for organizing splitting up the directory among volunteers as well as compiling the reports of the calls. Phone calls seemed to be well-received, and a second round of calls took place in the current parish year.

In the midst of quarantine, parishioners also began writing weekly scripture reflections, which have served as a good way for the community to connect with one another spiritually. These reflections continue and have been a valuable contribution to our life together during this time.

Although the building has again reopened for Sunday mass, meeting as a community continues to look different than it has in the past with continuation of live-streaming services, a reduced capacity in terms of the number of people the facility is able to accommodate, the need to refrain from congregational singing, and of course the physical distance that members of the community continue to need to maintain in order to foster a safe environment. It is sure that as the current year progresses the council will continue to discuss ways to foster our community while remaining in compliance with public health protocols and taking care of the most vulnerable among us in the way Christ intends.

## Miscellanea

December 2019 the parish council took time out to reflect and discuss what it means to be the Body of Christ using the scripture for discernment. It is my hope that we will begin taking regular time out for discernment each year that can help inform the work of the council and the work of the parish as a whole.

Our parish renewed discussion of anti-racism work and ways to be an anti-racist community. Prior to the black lives matter demonstrations, following the death of George Floyd the education committee held a series of Racial Justice book discussions. That work has continued. The parish was also the site of an Interfaith Prayer Service against racism in the weeks after George Floyd's death.

## Final Words

It has been an exceptionally eventful and unpredictable year. In the year to come, I pray that we remain open to the Spirit to stir us to unexpected and nourishing work as we seek to continue being Christ's body across the Greater Baltimore region.

Respectfully Submitted to the Council and the Parish,  
Amber Hendricks