

St. Vincent de Paul Parish

2020-2021 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
Joseph Organ, Minister of Music
Teresa Guion, Cantor
Nathan Brown, 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
Audrey Rogers, 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

The past year has been a time of great change for our community. Rapidly shifting COVID-19 protocols as well as shifts in our expectations of what community time and gatherings mean have filled much of our thoughts and discussions over the last year. Our staff and the council have offered time, thought, and effort to meet a wide range of needs and expectations. I am grateful to each person who has worked to keep our community functioning and whole. Thank you. I pray that God will continue to meet us as we continue to search for what it means to be St. Vincent de Paul parish in the year to come.

COVID-19 and St. Vincent de Paul

July 5, 2020 a group of St. Vincent Parishioners gathered at the parish for the first time since March 14, 2020, when precautions were originally put into effect within the Archdiocese. Much information was released regarding what was safe for parishioners and what was expected by the Archdiocese, state of Maryland, and City of Baltimore. Our St. Vincent staff spent much time reading through new requirements and working to make sure we could comply with safety protocols. Their diligence and care have been an example of how to love one another in these complicated times.

Liturgies have taken on a somewhat different flavor, but the work of the liturgy committee and the efforts of the lectors, liturgy planners, ministers, and musicians that have contributed to our continued services has been a blessing and provided a much needed foothold for our congregation during this time.

Expectations of both our congregation and others have also changed over the past year to rely on the availability of remote options for mass. This reliance is related to many factors including but not limited to reliability of vaccines, differing risk, and pre-existing illness. [Colleen McCahill](#) has taken on the work operating our St. Vincent's technologies to make sure individuals and families joining us from "home churches" are able to see and hear the community gathering in person. It is a job that, perhaps largely remains invisible by its very nature, but it requires effort and consistency. It is work that has been vital to our community.

While congregations have grown to rely on the availability of remote options for attendance, we are also aware of the loss that we feel when we are not physically present in the same

space. We hope that as things allow we will be thoughtful about whether and how to continue to incorporate technologies into our worship.

Prior to July of 2020, the parish leadership and volunteers took two rounds of attempting to reach out to every person in the parish directory by phone or email, plus additional community members who individuals had suggested would appreciate the parish's care during this time. By and large, these two attempts seemed to be a success and provided an additional layer of connection in a time filled with separation. In December 2021, we had what will likely be our final round of individual outreach efforts. As vaccines began to be distributed in early 2021 issues with parishioner isolation due to the need to minimize risk has felt like less of a concern.

Also started as a response to COVID-19 was a relief fund for parishioners. Fr. Ray invited parishioners to contribute their government COVID-19 relief funds into the common parish relief fund. Funds have been dispersed based on need and request. We are happy to say that several community members have been able to take advantage of this assistance in the past year.

COVID-19 has forever changed the way we see the world and our community. The final story of how it will change us and who we will be is yet to be written. We will need to tap into our compassion and creativity as we continue to become who we are.

Death of Father Lawrence

It would be impossible to talk about the importance of this past year without talking about the great loss felt by our community at the death of Father Lawrence.

Although he retired in 2017, there are few, if any, individuals in the congregation who did not feel his impact. He embodied love for the poor and love for our community. People were drawn to the community by his example of how to be a Christian in today's world. He was understanding, and he was bold, unafraid to stand beside those who are looked down on.

Many things have been said about his life and his service to our community, which spanned 43 years. It would be impossible to sum up what he meant to us in the writing of this report. It is important to say that he was a friend to many of us, and we loved him. He is and will continue to be greatly missed.

Response to Crisis

In many ways the past year has felt like an extended crisis. While this could sound dire, it is helpful to consider one of the less discussed meanings of the word

crisis (noun): a time when a difficult or important decision must be made;
a turning point

At almost every Parish Council Meeting over the last year we have, in some form or other discussed change, the change we are currently experiencing, the changes that are likely to come, and how we want to face those changes.

In Council Year 2019-2020, we discussed updating the Parish Council Constitution. We began writing potential changes and discussing them as a council. However, in February 2021, the council began to consider the possibility of writing an entirely new constitution. We are still attempting to decide what direction this work will take. We are considering updates to the current constitution, undertaking the writing of an entirely new constitution, or creating working documents that would govern our work together as a body for given periods of time and which we would update as the times called for it. We may do some combination of these things.

We have also discussed what our parish will do with the funds we have traditionally given to St. James and John school. In the past, our parish has contributed funds to the school every year, but the school has now closed, and we are currently trying to determine what to do with the funds we have historically contributed to them. We have decided one thing, that it does not make sense to direct our contribution until we are able to determine who we are as a community and what new service God might be calling us to.

We have begun to discuss how we will do this in the year ahead. We believe a process of listening is called for, and the council is currently working to determine how this process will be facilitated.

Finance

In spite of offertory decline during the pandemic, the parish's financial position remains solid. While the current year's budget does not reflect a surplus, as have recent previous years, restricted donations from prior years along with the reallocation of a portion of the money previously directed to James and John have meant that our parish is not operating at a deficit.

Our operating budget is composed substantially of salaries and benefits, program expenses, insurance, utilities and maintenance. This year work was done to update the sacristy. Our social activity income and expenses totaled roughly \$60,000 over the past fiscal year. Although this was a decline financially from last year, it did not impact the weekly operations of the services provided by our parish. COVID-19 restrictions were a barrier, but many of our social ministers served throughout 2020-2021. Nathan Brown, our Jesuit Volunteer was particularly helpful in working with the Monday Food Pantry and the Men's Clothing program.

In the coming year, we intend to pursue replacement of the lights which will require us to first make the workspace safer, installing railings prior to the initiation of the lighting work. This is expected to be an expense in excess of \$90,000, although we have already collected \$51,400 in restricted funds to assist with this.

Additional Items of Importance

In addition to the items called out above, it is worth mentioning some of the ways our parish has found to connect with one another during the past year. Coffee Klatch meets via Zoom each Sunday and has roughly 20 people who attend from week to week. They typically discuss the sermon in addition to catching up with one another on a personal level. The We Have a Dream Series has also been particularly successful in the past year, with good attendance and many parishioners expressing that it has been valuable for them.

Another thing to call out as unique this year was the Parish Council Elections. In normal years, having an election would have been just another thing we do. However, this year, parish council both decided we needed more members and we also were attempting to run elections in a pandemic. We were hoping for six additional members on the council, and six people were nominated and confirmed interest in serving by the end of the service on the final Sunday of nominations. Due to this, we did not have formal elections this year, but instead welcomed those six nominees directly onto the Council. They have been a valuable addition to our membership thus far, and I look forward to our work together in the year to come.

Finally, our parish, like many other parishes, has experienced the death of several members of our congregation and extended community this year. While death is a part of every year, it has carried with it unique struggles over the past year compounded with the other losses faced by our community during COVID-19. At the same time, we do have new faces at Mass who we have not seen for some time or who have been introduced to our community in the midst of this crisis. We are grateful for new people to share and practice faith with at the same time we miss those who will never return.

Final Words

It has been another exceptional and challenging year. I hope that as we continue into Council year 2021-2022, we have more time to listen to the congregation as a whole and to each other. I hope we are able to find our purpose and live more into the people who God has called us to be in these difficult times, and I hope that we are able to find the people who are looking for us.

Respectfully Submitted to the Council and the Parish,
Amber Hendricks