

## Parish Council Meeting Minutes 11/9/2021

**In attendance via Zoom:** Amber Hendricks, Graham Yearley, Fr. Ray Chase, Albert Reichelt, Peggy Meyer, Geri Sicola, Peggy Shouse, Mark Palmer, Ned Banks, Anne Freeburger, Colleen McCahill, Gerry Fialkowski, Joan Fulton, Lindsay Dierkes, Audrey Rogers, Jim Casey

Amber opened the meeting with a reading of the parish mission and purpose statements, a quote on discernment from John O'Donahue, and prayer.

### **I. Updates from Staff and Committees**

**Pastor:** Fr. Ray had nothing to share aside from the entire staff's focus on the synodal process.

**Pastoral Associate:** Colleen shared that the search for a new music director is taking longer than anticipated. Additionally, our cantor, Teresa Guion, has resigned to take a job with the archdiocese. For the foreseeable future, volunteer cantors from the congregation will be filling in. Lindsay Dierkes added that the music director search committee has spent the past two weeks seeking candidates from new channels, such as contacting other parishes who have recently interviewed or hired a music director. So far, invitations to these candidates have not resulted in new applications.

**Education & Enrichment:** No report.

**Facilities:** Denny McMullin had no news to report. He was not present for the last committee meeting and was told by Charlie that Tony Lasseter, our facilities superintendent, will be calling future committee meetings. Fr. Ray and Colleen said that they believe this is a misunderstanding. The committee chair will still call the meetings, however, Tony will represent staff, rather than Colleen or Fr. Ray being present.

**Social Action:** Peggy Meyer reported that Peggy Cronyn asked the Social Action committee to report on the ministry to Afghan refugees. Fr. Ray said that he would prefer to be responsible for communicating with Peggy Cronyn and reporting to council. Peggy also asked if there was money in the parish budget to contribute to the Afghan refugee assistance. There is not money at present, but this does not preclude individual donations from parishioners.

"We have a dream" will meet next week.

**Liturgy:** Audrey noted that the final Year of the Eucharist discussion is scheduled for Wednesday, 11/10. The liturgy committee is in the process of planning for Advent and Christmas, and they await decisions from staff about how many Masses will be held on Christmas eve and the venue for the reconciliation service.

**Church Reform:** No report, aside from items already on the agenda.

**Finance:** Mark Palmer noted the recommendation of the committee to resume regular collections at weekend Masses. The balance of the emergency services bank account is lower than usual. Peggy Meyer and Peggy Shouse interjected that emergency services just received a donation of \$7,000, the craft fair (this coming Sunday) raises \$3,000 or more, and a large donation is usually made at the beginning of December. Colleen wished to clarify that the emergency services spending is in the amount planned for by the budget, but revenues are lower than expected.

Geri Sicola asked if we have a written policy regarding spending above what is planned for by the budget. No such policy exists, although the creation of such a policy was discussed roughly a year ago.

Mark also wished to discuss our cost of living adjustments. The current budget increases staff salaries by 2% at the start of each fiscal year. Many employers have increased their cost of living adjustments to 4-5%, due to inflation in that past six months. While the archdiocese does not regulate parish staff salaries, aside from diocesan priests, Fr. Ray thought it would be informative to inquire if the archdiocese is considering a change to their recommended pay scales and cost of living increases. The council approved a 2.5% increase for any staff who already received the 2% adjustment in July 2021. Adjustment of Tony Lasseter's salary, who is still in the six month probationary period, was referred back to the finance committee.

## **II. Synodal Process & Hiring a Consultant**

- Amber summarized the work of the council subcommittee and committee on church reform in the past month. After discussion of if these projects should be merged or kept independent, the committee on church reform felt that, while the goals are not identical, it is unrealistic to complete two listening or dialogue processes back to back. If budget allows and a consultant can be hired in time to help with the synodal process, then a consultant should be hired. The scope of work was then finalized by the council subcommittee, with Jim Casey, and sent to Global Learning Partners (GLP), Tina Graf, and Leadership Roundtable. Only GLP had the time to take on a project of our scope right now. However, Leadership Roundtable did suggest that we may be able to achieve our goals with only a facilitator.
- GLP was interviewed by a group consisting of representatives from the council subcommittee, the committee on church reform, Colleen, and Fr. Ray.

- GLP submitted a proposal in three stages, for a total cost of \$26,915. Council is asked at this meeting to approve the hiring of GLP for the first stage, at a cost of \$11,995. The assumption is that GLP will also carry out the second and third stages, if the parish is satisfied with their work on stage one.
- Audrey Rogers made two comments. She thinks it might be more accurate to say that we're hiring a project director or manager, rather than consultant. In her mind, a consultant implies a short-term commitment and less analytical work. Also, this matter causes her to reflect on the time management grid from *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*. This project would fall into the category of "important, not urgent". Perhaps by spending the time to reflect, reorganize, and envision the future, our parish can spend less time rushing to address urgent matters because those matters are less likely to arise with proper planning.
- Rita McMullin questioned the large expenditure, given the talent we have in our parish that might be applied to this project. In answer to this question, Peggy Shouse noted the amount of time involved is too much to ask from a parishioner. Geri Sicola noted that if parishioners ask as facilitators, then they cannot participate themselves.
- Council approved the hiring of GLP.

### **III. Update on Friday Night Dinners & Security**

- Several avenues are being pursued to address security concerns. The archdiocesan office of risk management is approaching security companies with whom they have a prior relationship in hopes of finding a company who can waive the four hour minimum hiring period. Ellen Draper, from Our Lady of the Fields, is also researching security options.
- Written materials will be provided from the police liaison on reacting to aggressive behavior. The police can also do a training with volunteers.

The meeting was adjourned with the Lord's Prayer.

The committee last met on September 18 and will meet again on Saturday, November 13 to evaluate the Community Focus of the Year of the Eucharist, finalize Advent and Christmas services, and plan the Eucharist activities in subsequent times. The upcoming events that are planned are these:

Year of the Eucharist: Scripture Focus 1/23-2/27

- a. January 23- Print focus statement in the newsletter
- b. January 26- Zoom Presentation: Primer on Luke
- c. February 2- Zoom Presentation- Dr. Tracy Radosevic, Biblical Storyteller

Year of the Eucharist: Our Common Priesthood 5/8-6/19

The Archdiocesan focus is on the Eucharist and the Celebrant (or Priest). However, Fr. Ray wants our focus to be on our common priesthood which opens up an array of opportunities for committee input. A planning team will be recruited at November 13 meeting.

New Business: Our committee's charter was written in 2007 and edited only slightly in subsequent years. But our pastor has changed, and our congregation has evolved as well. Given the work before the parish in its revisioning project and participating in the synodal process, liturgy will not survey parishioners directly but rely on the information we need (membership trends and current demographic data, parishioner perceptions about strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats [SWOT analyses], etc.) to be gathered to inform future committee deliberations and discernment in updating our committee charter. It seems that weekend Mass is the sole point of contact for many of the people currently attending St V which makes our liturgies a critical focus. Are we serving the spiritual needs of each constituency in the parish? The data collected in 2014 indicated a high correlation between relying on St V as the primary source for nurturing one's spiritual journey and engagement in ministry and service.

Our next meeting is November 13 from 1-3 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Audrey

A video meeting using Zoom began at 7:00 PM. Attending: Barbara Bowles, Mary Catherine Bunting, Maureen Daly, Chuck Frascati, Peggy Meyer, Dennis Moore, and Jack Schmidt. Maureen facilitated and opened with a Kaddish prayer.

**Next meeting:** December 13, 2021, 7:00 PM, Chuck will facilitate.

Maureen is concerned with several aspects of this committee. First, she suggested doing more outreach for new members especially younger ones. The members said that we have tried. For example, a possible ministry fair was stopped by Covid. Maureen suggested a write-up about the committee's project for the e-newsletter. The committee believes that each member needs to be aware of face-to-face opportunities to tell others about our committee.

Second, she questioned if we are doing enough advocacy for justice issues. She pointed out that most of parishioners' energies go to the Green Team for environmental activities or to the "We Have a Dream" team for issues involving racism. Are these committees part of Peace and Justice? Maureen suggested that the committee should explore our goals and our relationship with other committees.

**Racism and Racial Justice Issues:** On August 19, Dennis, Kevin Daly, and Peter Daly presented a Zoom meeting about their trip to several important places in African American history. It was excellent and well attended.

**Peggy's and Skipp's "We Have a Dream" Initiative:** There were meetings on August 18 and September 15. The August meeting continued the discussion of implicit bias while the September meeting centered on presentations by Joe Cronyn and Joe McNeely regarding our racial equity initiatives and future goals for the "We Have a Dream" parish committee. The next scheduled meeting is October 20 at 7:00 PM.

**Immigration:**

- Giuliana was not present to lead our discussion on immigration.
- We discussed the administration's terrible "unchristian" decision to send Haitians back to their country especially considering the many misfortunes they have recently experienced (an earthquake, a hurricane, an assassination, gang kidnappings etc.). **Let's make sure we all give that feedback to the administration.**
- As far as the parish helping Afghans coming to the US, Peggy said she would find out more at tomorrow's parish council meeting.

**SURJ (Showing Up for Racial Justice):** Nothing to report.

**Black Lives Matter Interfaith Coalition (BLMIC):** Mary Catherine attended the last rally which was held at St. Matthew's church on a Sunday to accommodate Jewish congregations. The next rally is October 17 from 1:30 to 2:30 at 4100 Edmondson Avenue. The date for November has not yet been set.

**Historic Panels Commemorating St. Vincent's Cemetery:** Maureen suggested that the parish place historic panels at St. Vincent's cemetery similar to those commemorating Frederick Douglass in Fells Point. Ray Bahr and Chuck had helped on those and would help on the ones for the cemetery.

**Beyond the Boundaries (BtB):**

- Maureen, Mary Catherine, and Chuck are members of BtB. They are aware of several good candidates to replace Mary Bradford as program director. There is some thought to splitting the job between two directors and have Chuck Michaels serve as one of the directors.
- Peggy and Odette Ramos attended the August 11 Baltimore Renters United (BRU) rally at city hall to advocate for rental assistance and to stop evictions. Jews United for Justice and CASA Baltimore were also present.
- BtB expects to continue to work closely with BRU and Renters United of Maryland (RUM).

**Maryland Catholic Labor Network**

- This is the local affiliate of the national Catholic Labor Network. It is funded by the Catholic Campaign for Human Development (CCHD). Maureen is on the Steering Committee.
- We should support the Merriweather Lakehouse Hotel Workers. This hotel was formerly the Sheraton Hotel in Columbia. The workers were laid off through no fault of their own at the start of the pandemic. The hotel plans to open under its new name and refuses to recall workers who have served the hotel for decades. The workers have not received any recompense even though the hotel received money from the Paycheck Protection Program, a program which was backed by the Small Business Administration and provided loans to help businesses keep their workforce employed during the Covid crisis. Maureen said that there was an effort being made to influence organizations (such as Loyola University) that may use the Merriweather Hotel for conferences or similar events to use other locations. Many of us have signed on to their petitions.
- Maureen said that she also had a luncheon with Unite Here, the union representing hotel and restaurant employees.

**Pax Christi:** Chuck reported that the annual Peacemaker of the Year Award Ceremony will be held on November 7 at 7:00 PM by Zoom. Kim Lamberty Dmin, the new Executive Director of the Quixote Center and a long-time peace advocate, is the recipient of the award. She also worked for 10 years in Haiti. She will give a presentation on "Racism, Colonialism, and Haiti." To register, go to <https://paxchristimdcb.org>.

**BridgeMD:**

- Peggy and Maureen attended a luncheon given by the Catholic Campaign for Human Development (CCHD) on August 12 at St. Francis of Assisi Church. BridgeMD received a \$65,000 grant.
- Maureen reported that BridgeMD is now concentrating on 4 areas:
  - Housing (Maureen is on the housing committee and BridgeMD will work closely with BRU and RUM to put together an action list),
  - Transportation (Samuel Jordan, president of the Baltimore Transit Equity Coalition (BTEC) is head of this topic. BTEC sponsored a recent Transportation Equity Study. Efforts are being made to get 10,000 signatures by May 2022 to get certain recommendations on the ballot. Maureen may seek signatures after mass on Sundays.)
  - criminal justice (efforts are being made to pass legislation in the next General Assembly which would mandate that minors must have an adult present when being questioned),
  - and education.

**Other CCHD Awards:** Peggy reported that the South Baltimore Community Land Trust and the Charm City Community Land Trust each received \$35,000 from CCHD.

**Sojourner Place at Oliver (1310 N. Central Avenue):** Peggy stated that Health Care for the Homeless and the Episcopal Housing Corporation held a groundbreaking ceremony on September 9 for Sojourner Place at Oliver. Once completed, it will offer 70 affordable units.

**Limay:** Maureen has been in contact with Limay. Covid is raging and many of our contacts have died because of the virus. Nicaragua has finally received vaccines. We continue to have a relationship with Limay but there will not be any travel to Limay by parishioners.

**Housing Homeless Individuals:** Not much is known about the 500 homeless residents that have been housed in hotel rooms. Peggy thought they were continuing to be housed but worried that the homeless population might increase due to upcoming evictions. Maureen hoped that the increase in evictions might not happen since legislation was passed to provide legal representation to tenants in eviction court.

**Aubree:** has been doing a wonderful job in all of the ministries: doorbell ministry, Monday's food program, Tuesday's men's program, Thursday's TRE moves, Friday's Breaking Bread with the Hungry and tutoring at City Springs.

**City Springs:** Peggy reported that there are 6 parishioners (Joe Cronyn, Kathy Younkin, Sue Woodman, Aubree, and Chuck and Peggy from the committee) tutoring at City Springs.

**Uplifting Story:** Peggy shared an uplifting story from Ray Bahr's Facebook page. A professor gave each one in his class a balloon and told them to inflate them, write his or her name on it and throw them in the hall. The professor then mixed the balloons. The students were then instructed to find their own balloons within 5 minutes. Not one student found his or her own

balloon. Then the students were told to pick up the first balloon he or she came across and give it to the named student. Within five minutes, every student had his or her own balloon. The moral of the story: each balloon is like happiness. We will never find it if everyone is looking for their own but if we care about others' happiness, we will find our own also.

**St. Charles Borromeo:** Ruthanne Otto contacted Peggy to ask her if we wanted the clothing donations that St. Charles Borromeo has been doing each year at Christmas. The church provides undershirts, boxer shorts, gloves, and hats. Peggy answered "absolutely."

**Questions from Parish Council:** Peggy said that the parish council wanted the committees to answer these two questions.

- **Question 1: How does the power of the Eucharist underpin and sustain the work of the committee?** Mary Catherine said that the Eucharist sustains us which sustains our work. She cited St. Catherine of Siena who said she could not live without the Eucharist. The Eucharist gives life to our spirit and that is what we need when we give life to our different works. Dennis stated that the Eucharist is closely connected with the community that shares it. Since we are part of the community, the eucharist gives us what we need and allows us to then give back to the community.
- **Question 2: How does the Eucharist guide prioritization of work, decision-making, practices, outcomes sought, evaluation and success?** Admittedly, most of us don't think of the Eucharist in the elements contained in the question. Mary Catherine remarked how often Jesus said, "Peace be to you." Peace is one of the themes of our committee and through the Eucharist, Jesus reminds us of the need to center our work on his peace and justice.
- Peggy said that the Parish Council in raising these questions was hoping to get each committee to become more intentional in connecting its committee work with the Eucharist.
- Maureen viewed these questions negatively and thought of them as an extension of the bishops' efforts to deny President Biden communion as well as to define the reception of communion in terms of perceived "regular" Catholics to the exclusion of divorced/separated partners, LGBTQ and transgender Catholics, Catholics who wish to keep abortion legal, etc. Maureen agrees with the pope in that the bishops are "weaponizing" the Eucharist and believes that the bishops emphasis on the Real Presence is meant to show that Catholics are the only true Christians to the exclusion of other denominations and that the bishops believe that a "smaller, purer" Catholic



church would be the best. Maureen talked passionately about these issues for several minutes.

- After listening to Maureen, Barbara said that she could agree with most of what Maureen said. Peggy stated that we also need to keep in mind that not all bishops are a problem and pointed to Bishop Lewandowski as an exemplary bishop.

#### **Social Action Committee Minutes (submitted by Peggy Meyer)**

- The most recent meeting was held on September 14 and the next meeting is planned for November 8 at 3:00 PM.
- **Parish Council Request:** Parish Council asked each committee to reflect on how our committee ties to the Eucharist. There was concern that church leadership wanted information that would lead to priests refusing Communion to political leaders, LGBTQ+ etc. and to distract us. There were others who felt our identity at St. V's ties us to Word, Sacrament and Service and by our direct services to the poor are representing Christ. The Eucharist reminds us of and is a symbol that we are to be in communion with others. It is a physical reminder of our Christian spirituality and strengthens us. It reminds us we are Christ to others.
- **Breaking Bread with the Hungry:** Peggy M discussed the incident on Friday night that concerned some of the volunteers and guests and prompted our research for security. We checked with several non-profits and some security agencies and have one assessing us this Friday. There have been fights throughout the years and we had paid a volunteer to handle "crowd control" but he was there when the recent incident occurred but was ineffective. In the interim we will minimize our number of volunteers and use only the breezeway to serve one person at a time.
- **City Springs:** Chuck reporting that there are 6 from St. V's tutoring and that it was very positive. Peggy M mentioned that she was concerned about all the food thrown away from the school provided lunches. Peggy C said she had heard the same thing about the county. Since Kathy is tutoring on Tuesdays and Joe C does pick-ups on Tuesdays, we moved our next meeting to a Monday.
- **Food Program:** Aubree is handling the food program with help and training from Hurler and Paul helped her. OLF provides bags for those who come without a residence and therefore not eligible for the food pantry.

- **Green Team:** Peggy M. will forward the email from Civic Works about the Ricky Myers day of service set for 10/2 9 - noon. She also mentioned the new composting drop off sites for food scrap Fridays and that the Fallsway Market includes composting drop off. Ray discussed the letter he drafted for the Green Team to ask the Archbishop for his leadership to develop and implement an action plan as D.C. did to address the critical climate issue. The team decided last night to also send an electronic version and follow-up in a few weeks.
- **Men's Program:** Marcia reported that Aubree has done a great job here too helping either Gayl and Sue W or Jack and Mary.
- **TRE:** Peggy C reported we have a lot of furniture and not a long waiting list. Kelsey is trying to get more clients. Peggy will check with Marion House and St VdP Society to perhaps help some of their clients since they also have Case Managers. We would then pay the moving expenses. She will check on vouchers and when payment will stop for hotels for those without a home. Asylee women are resettling a lot of Afghan women but not many in Baltimore.
- **SURJ:** Peggy M participated in a national SURJ zap which is a zoom where people all over the country take the time on the zoom to call legislators or send emails about hot issues. They provide a long list of issues and who needs contact either by phone or email. Issues included HR 40, stopping Line 3 pipeline through indigenous land or Free Cesar, a father held in ICE detention for 20 months before being deported with 5 children, U.S. citizens. It was a good way to reach a lot of people fast.
- **Old Business:** Ray mentioned that Mother Mary Lange school opened with more than 400 students and the archdiocese has endowments to help defray costs. Skipp is on the board.
- **New Business:** Maureen said she is working with a new organization, The United Covenant Union. They organize people in food pantry lines and help arrange for work etc. It is community organizing through food pantries began by Matthew Monk. More to come.

The meeting ended at 8:41 PM with the praying of the Peace Prayer of St. Francis.

Respectfully submitted,  
Jack Schmidt

# **St. Vincent de Paul Parish Baltimore**

## **Committee on Church Reform**

### Summary of Decisions Made at the October 21, 2021 Meeting

We began our meeting with the Synod Prayer.

Our discussion started by addressing whether the efforts of the parish subcommittee reaching out to our parishioners and this committee also reaching out to our parishioners should be combined into one project.

There was agreement that both projects were important. A group of committee members felt that doing both projects consecutively was asking too much of the parish. Others felt it could be done. Some opined that the two projects would be conflated by the parishioners regardless.

There was discussion of whether we should allow our process to be influenced by deadlines imposed by others outside the parish and unreasonable deadlines at that.

Without resolving the above questions, the discussion moved to whether a consultant proposed for the parish council subcommittee project should also be used to advise this committee on the first phase of the synodal process.

Some comments:

- A professional can be really helpful in setting up a successful listening phase of the synodal process
- We have experienced people on this committee, but an outside professional would be a great help
- A doctor wouldn't treat a family member. It helps to have some distance when giving advice
- The Synod is about us listening to each other. An outside voice isn't in the spirit of the synod.
- The questions that need to be addressed have already been chosen by the Vatican and the Archdiocese.
- The synodal process can't wait for a consultant to be chosen
- Since the money is available, it would be a waste not to use the services of a consultant.
- Other parishes won't have the advantage of a consultant.

The committee modeled a synodal process. There were disagreements, but we were listening to one another and dialoguing.

We considered other points like the best way to reach out disaffected and marginalized people, the aging of our congregation, the need to attract new

members and younger members, and the lack of faith in the Synod expressed by some parishioners. We will address those important issues after we decide how we will proceed. This summary concerns the issues of how we will proceed with the parish synod and/or the subcommittee exploration of the current and future St. Vincent de Paul community.

There was a consensus that both projects are important and both should continue.

A proposal was made that the synodal process proceed without a consultant in November and December and that the subcommittee process should proceed with a consultant. The work of finding and selecting a consultant would start immediately and the interaction with the parish by the subcommittee and the consultant would occur after the New Year. Consensus was not reached.

A proposal was made that attempts would be made to immediately hire a consultant. If a consultant was selected and was able to start right away, the consultant would assist with the parish synodal process. However, the search for a consultant should not hold up the synodal process. If no consultant was available before November 1, the synodal process would proceed without a consultant. Either way, a consultant would be hired for the subcommittee project which would begin, if possible, in January 2022.

Consensus was reached on this last proposal.

I believe I've accurately stated the decisions and the decision making process from this meeting. All comments and criticisms are welcome. As I said above, other topics were discussed, but this summary considers only the adoption of the process we will use. There was considerable praise of Colleen McCahill's paper which contained a more detailed plan for conducting the first phase of the parish synod. My sense was that most people felt Colleen's paper was a good jumping off point but committee members should be permitted to suggest additions and revisions. Colleen's paper itself drew heavily from recommendations made by others.