

Ad Hoc Committee Report
March 24, 2019
St Vincent de Paul Church Town Meeting Document Handout

Vision Statement

We, the People of God, are birthing a more transparent and collaborative Church.

Mission Statement

We show up to initiate and grow transformative, reciprocal, and engaged relationships among laity, religious, and clergy. We hope to create and sustain meaningful change in the power dynamics and the structure of the Church. We will work toward the restoration and healing necessary due to the sexual abuse of children by priests and its cover-up.

Original Response of Parish Council
Town Hall Meetings: September 2 and 6

The parishioners of St. Vincent de Paul's held two Town Hall Meetings at which we voiced our concerns and questions regarding the news of the Pennsylvania Attorney General's findings.

Approximately one hundred parishioners attended the meeting on Sunday September 2nd. Twelve parishioners were in attendance at the town hall meeting on Thursday September 6th.

The meetings began with a reading from scripture and a reflection. Attendants at the first town hall meeting were asked to break into small groups, then reconvened to "report out" on what was discussed in the small groups. As the second town hall had significantly fewer congregants in attendance, all responses were heard by the group as a whole. Both meetings ended in prayer.

Participants were given the following in order to help frame their thoughts and discussion:

Some questions for your reflection follow. Below, please feel free to respond to one or more of the prompts provided or to write down anything you would like to communicate to the Parish Staff and Parish Council at this moment:

- How have the recent revelations of sex abuse and its concealment affected you personally? Spiritually?
- What ongoing concerns and questions do you have to which the Parish of St. Vincent de Paul might be able to respond?
- How can the Parish best serve you at this time?
- What role, if any, would you like to see the Parish play in the ongoing dialogue that is currently unfolding in the Church and society about sexual abuse of children?

•

Parish Council Meeting: September 11, 2018

The Parish Council's regularly scheduled meeting for September, 2018 was devoted to processing the input gathered from the town hall meetings discussed above. After reviewing the written responses from the town hall meetings and organizing them into common themes, the Council resolved (1) to survey the parish as a means of identifying priorities among the goals and actions suggested at the town hall meetings, and (2) to create an ad hoc committee to advise on next steps.

Results of the survey

The highest voted goal according to respondents of the survey was revision of power dynamics in the Church (including those between the hierarchy and the rest of the Church; between ordained and non-ordained Catholics; and those based on gender, sexual orientation, race, class, ethnicity, marital status, and other identities), with 296¹ total votes and 77 votes rating this as our top priority. The second ranked goal was increased transparency within the Church, specifically pertaining to the issues of sex abuse by priests or religious and its past concealment with 207 votes and 26 votes for this as our top priority.

The most important action as rated by the community was to communicate our concerns to the hierarchy, including demands that dioceses provide greater transparency into reports of abuse (e.g., by advocating for a lay presence/input at the annual meeting of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops in November). This had 211 votes and 48 rating it as the most important action. The second most important action as voted by the community was to advocate that the issue be addressed through the courts: through criminal prosecution or civil litigation (including lobbying for investigation by the Maryland Attorney General). This had 134 total votes with 18 ranking it as most important. There has been considerable discussion within the committee about this as an investigation by the Maryland Attorney General was announced soon after this vote was taken. In addition within the first month of the formation of the Ad Hoc Committee, a letter was sent from the Archdiocese to "All Catholic Center Personnel, All Administrators at Archdiocesan Parishes and Archdiocesan Schools" voicing support of the Attorney General, and requesting that all documents related to abuse be preserved and forwarded to the Archdiocesan point person in coordinating with the Attorney General's office².

¹Numbers of votes included in this document do not reflect those participating in the survey who self-identified as visitors. More detailed results of the survey are posted on St. Vincent's website for anyone who is interested.

²This letter is posted on St. Vincent's website for anyone who is interested in reading it in its entirety.

Work of the Ad Hoc Committee

Actions taken thus far

The committee has worked on multiple ways of voicing our concerns to the hierarchy including:

- Writing letters to our auxiliary bishops, Archbishop, and Cardinal Dinardo, voicing our concerns both as we had interpreted them as well as including the voices of individual parishioners
- Encouraging individual parishioners to send personal letters to Cardinal DiNardo, letting him know their thoughts on what we hoped would come of the meeting which took place in November 2018 in Baltimore
- Writing a letter to Cardinal DiNardo on behalf of the parish, letting him know what we hoped would come out of the November 2018 meeting of the USCCB
- Writing a letter to the Nuncio outlining what we hoped to see come out of the meeting that Pope Francis called for in February
- Members of the Ad Hoc committee were present outside the meeting of the bishops in November and watched the live stream of the meeting
- Committee members have worked to review documents and testimonies from our bishops and the Pope as well as much other documentation regarding abuse in the church
- Publish all relevant documents on our website

Upcoming in our plans are to:

- Write a letter to Archbishop Lori about our support of the Archdiocesan Pastoral Council and our fervent hope that in the future its members will be elected instead of appointed (draft submitted for committee review)
- Continue to encourage parishioners to reach personally reach out to our leaders.
- Gerry Fialkowski to speak as part of Lenten Series on **March 27th**
- Letter in support of the **Ordination of Women** (draft submitted for committee review)
- Letter in support of **Optional Celibacy** (draft submitted for committee review)
- **Letter to the Attorney General** expressing support of investigation, our hope that the archdiocese is cooperating, and our interest in learning of any misconduct even if it is currently unable to be prosecuted through the legal system. (draft submitted for committee review)
- **Letter to the Archdiocese** stating that we understand that changes have been made, that we support them in their continued cooperation with the Attorney General's investigation, and that we are interested in learning of any discoveries of misconduct that such an investigation uncovers even if it is not prosecutable. (draft submitted for committee review)
- **Letter to the Archdiocese** focusing on the more spiritual aspects of the crisis and echoing Pope Francis's recent letter to the retreatants.
- **Letter to Archbishop Lori and other recipients of the the six packets we sent out several months ago, which have not received any response.** (draft submitted for committee review)
- **Letter to the Archdiocese condemning past actions and cover-up, supporting current steps forward, and calling for a reexamination of Canon Law.**
- **Letter to the Catholic Review**

Response and Additional Resources:

- We did receive a **response** to the Ad Hoc Committee from the Papal Nuncio.
- In order to find more information on these topics, we would encourage all interested parishioners to check out:
 - [Commonweal](#)
 - [National Catholic Reporter](#)

- [America Magazine](#)
- Ad Hoc Committee for Church Reform page on St. Vincent's Website
- [The Original Source Documents regarding the Sexual Abuse Crisis](#)
- Additional resources working for change on ecclesiastical structures
 - [Future Church](#)
 - [Call to Action](#) Ryan Sattler, Maryland, RyanSattler@comcast.net
 - [Voices of Faith](#)
 - [Corpus](#)