

**Parish Council Meeting Minutes**  
**December 12, 2023**

**In Attendance:** (in person) Lindsay Dierkes, Kevin O'Reilly, Kate Volpe, Fr. Ray Chase, Denny McMullin, Rita McMullin, John Gontrum, Barbara Bowles, Leah Mank, Jim Casey, Geri Sicola, Graham Yearley

(virtual) Mary Hennigan, Mark Palmer, Jill Huppert, Catherine Mundy, Anne Freeburger, Ray Heil, Audrey Rogers

Absent: Colleen McCahill, Anne Maura English

Meeting began with prayer from Kate V.

November minutes were approved.

**Parishioner Feedback**

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None at this time

**Pastor and Pastoral Associate**

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**Fr. Ray:**

Members of the ArchBalt finance office will meet on Friday morning for the audit report (from the November audit). They will have some items but nothing of great significance other than the lack of a corporators' meeting.

Re: Chapter 11: There is an upcoming "bar date." Once decided upon, The archdiocese, including parishes, will be pressured to publicize that bar date on websites and across social media. We will be publishing a notice once a month in our bulletin/newsletter until the filing deadline. The Archbishop will also need to announce it at least twice and the information needs to be disseminated per regulations. The next steps of the process will be shared; we just need to do due diligence with this for now.

Mark P. asked whether St. V's has a financial claim against the Archdiocese that should be registered during this time. No, no financial claims from our parish. Fr. Ray assured that our IPLF is safe and will not be considered an asset in the proceedings. Kevin O'R. asked for clarification about any claims against St. Vincent's Parish; there is one former priest/pastor for which we could be liable.

Our retainers have been reviewed by former lawyers in the parish and they look solid. We'll know more about the fee in the new year.

There's been a delay with the Stations of the Cross plaster hangings. They will come back mid-January.

Both contracts have been signed for the bell tower louvers and with Fick for the roof re-surfacing. Work on the tower will probably be sometime in March; the roof will not be initiated

until the louvers are completed—at the end of April or May. Time on premises will be relatively brief. Each project is less than a month's time.

Fr. Ray concluded that he will get the dashboard from “Seek the City” to us quickly.

## **Committees**

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**Finance:** The Christian Brothers investment has begun.

**E&E:** John M. can no longer attend parish council meetings, but Rita, as representative for the committee, is not sure when/to whom notes should be going out. The group does not have a leader currently, but they are going to discuss. Rita's new address needs to be added to the parish council email group. Rita recapped a recent event (part of E&E's “Wait, wait, DO tell me” series meant to share the *why* of the lived faith experience of the people with whom we go to church) that allowed TRE to convey who they are and what they do; it was well-attended by an enthusiastic group.

**Peace and Justice:** In a follow-up to the request to PC at the last meeting to partner with the Global Peace Foundation, Mary H. looked up the Global Peace Foundation that Peggy Meyer introduced to us at the last meeting. Their fiscal responsibility is in question and it was difficult to determine who their donors were. It is also unclear why they want to partner with us. Right now, Mary opined that taking it on would be neither worthwhile nor healthy until we know more. Geri added that she has never heard of them in her line of work, nor were they rated well on “Charity Navigator.” John G. motioned to table the issue, which was seconded. Mary H. suggested that decisions about partnerships for the parish should be reflective of directions we take in the new strategic plan going forward.

## **Strategic Plan**

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Council is ready to move forward recruiting a Project Manager for the Strategic Plan and then a consultant for designing and facilitating the process. A revised draft of the Scope of Work is available. Geri suggested we put it out to the parish and see if any bites come that way. She also asked that we cheerlead for it and encourage people to offer their gifts. Fr. Ray suggested that members of the committee write something inspirational about the process and approach it from the personal, reflective, spiritual side (not just the technical side). It could then be disseminated to encourage recruiting. Geri framed Fr. Ray's question (How do I find this valuable?) as a reminder to the parish that we are doing the SP process as the 3rd step of our Synodal and Visioning processes last year. We want to encourage folks to take on this role of PM. A few sentences or a small paragraph from PC members, put into a booklet, like the Advent reflections booklet, along with the scope of work for the PM and the consultant, could inspire people. Mary liked the idea IF we can also encourage people to become engaged in the parish through this process in terms of its future directions as well, by having PC members state why we are committed to the Parish. The plan is to have this out in January—a

new year kick off. Geri will solicit input from the PC members; Mary agreed to give us the wording that she had proposed during the meeting. **The next steps were not decided.**

## **Constitution**

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Council reviewed feedback from the listening sessions:

15% of the parish participated, and considering the circumstances of the topic, time of year, and short turnaround, the group accepted that as a good number. It is important to note that the 15% includes the participation of Council members.

The Council worked through the various questions, comments, and suggestions that came up in the listening sessions, as well as new questions/suggestions that arose from PC members.

1. Objection to the connotation of “king”; the constitution group added the interpretation as “servant-leader”

2. Regarding the 5 Foundational Committees (Liturgy, Finance, E&E, Social Action and Facilities) Suggestion from a variety of sources: Church Reform should be included. Originally it was called the “Ad Hoc Committee on the AG’s report on Sex Abuse in the Archdiocese”. Then, the committee began to take on other issues that faced the institutional church even before the synodal process. Geri’s opinion is that church reform is there to stay and it would be good if the parish had a committee engaging with this council to face the upcoming changes in the church. Ray H. seconded this and that in thinking about the larger church and its dramatic changes to come, we need to be informed. Catherine M. wondered if a committee for the functioning of the parish is more foundational than one that focuses on the institutional church. Kevin O’R. asked whether the chartered Church Reform committee would like to be considered foundational; Jim C. stated yes, they do. Geri said the council should be in tune to what church reform is doing and saying. Audrey commented that we consider changing the name to the “Committee on Synodality” so that “reform” doesn’t sound so confrontational. **This is to be put on the agenda for further discussion.** Ray said having this kind of committee helps the church implement what they decided to be 60 years ago with Vatican II. Mary H. offered that we need to be more aware of the elements of the parish and its committees and build up enthusiasm to their functions and why they are invaluable to the parish. She suggested an education of the parish: there are currently no central coordinating efforts across all ministries to inform newcomers (or current members) about these opportunities; there is nothing tangible that a newcomer (or current member) can use to find out about the different ministries. **This is also a future agenda item.**

Denny added that the people we need to reach aren’t getting the information. How do we get people interested? A committee fair, throw a party, etc? **Part of preview agenda item**

Fr. Ray added that if it is to be foundational, there needs to be a redefining of the committee and that all committees should be defined by council and provide a service to the council on behalf of the community. Geri suggested that after the SP process, all committees update their charters and make sure each provides a service—**another future agenda item.**

Kevin asked if anyone is strenuously opposed to the idea of making Church Reform foundational, or just has misgivings. Ray offered that we need a final definition of the committee

before we vote. John G. offered that it's a structural mistake to make it a fundamental committee; it is too amorphous about what it does. It seems more ad hoc as its duties will change, rather than the other committees whose duties are clear and directly correlated to the working of the parish.

Geri responded that we are encouraged as lay members of the church to think of what the church is and how it should be run for ourselves, and to be responsible for the future of the church.

Council decided that, pending a new name and definition, this committee will be a fundamental/foundational one

Corporators Questions: This came up a number of times. There was confusion about what they are, who they are, and what their purpose is, etc. By law, we need to have it. **Agenda item: In the future, at a fair, or in a newsletter, we can introduce our corporators and what they do to address any misunderstanding about their role.**

Issue of *approval of the appointment of the Pastor*. This came up a number of times and needs to be clarified. It is clear that under the current rules and regs of Canon Law, the laity cannot "approve" the appointment of the pastor. It was suggested that terminology change to, for example, "affirm" as opposed to "approve" to reflect that the Council has some responsibility and accountability to the community if, for example, there is some egregious behavior of the person being appointed in the past, or in the present if already the Pastor. PC retains responsibility and accountability to do something. Fr. Ray stated that is the role of the corporators. Jim C. says the objection was that it wasn't democratic enough and needs to be more transparent. Mary H. said the pastor should be affirmed, which is jointly in partnership with the corporators. The Pastoral Associate is a staff position and is treated differently—so how does council get involved with them and the approval/selection of the corporators? Corporators are appointed by the pastor in consultation with the ArchBalt. There are two lay corporators. It was noted that St. Vincent's is a corporation in and of itself, a separate body from the ArchBalt. However, the Archbishop is President, another Bishop is VP, the Pastor is treasurer, and then there are the two lay corporators. This is the group that governs. But there is a tension between who governs—the corporation or the council. **The issue of terminology was not resolved and Council needs to decide what we want in the Constitution.**

On another topic, Mary H. suggested that Jim C. raised a good point about confidentiality—what are the subject matters that Council deals with (e.g. paying for bell tower) vs. the corporation (e.g. staffing issues). There are roles that require confidentiality—financial or staffing—and that should go before the corporation. However, those issues usually come before the council anyway.

**Because of time, this discussion was tabled until the next meeting.**

#### **Other Issues:**

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Security issue re: man who destroyed property at recent Saturday evening Mass. A temporary peace order has been secured—he cannot be on our property. Fr. Ray will be going back to

court for an extended peace order of 6 months. The incident has prompted an examination of our prevention and response techniques for these kinds of situations. The following ideas were compiled with the assistance of Andy Flood, the Security and Safety Expert for ArchBalt.

What is our present need and what are the best practices?

We need to develop protocols for handling specific practices.

We need to educate and update the parish.

We should assure a safety committee.

We could consider improving our technology.

(We are now considered part of the police's Central district.)

Members made additional suggestions. Mark P. wondered if there are conditions that have worsened to have allowed more of this to happen, to which Fr. Ray responded definitely, in the increasing numbers of homeless men and women with mental health issues.

Fr. Ray asked for thoughts, concerns, questions via email before his meeting with Mr. Flood to ultimately make decisions. **This will be revisited in January.**

Rita asked (on behalf of her daughter's effort in Pennsylvania) that we sign a letter requesting immediate ceasefire in Israel and Palestine.

Meeting closed with the "Our Father".

## **APPENDIX**

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### **Minutes for Peace and Justice Sub-committee Meeting November 27, 2023**

A video meeting using Zoom began at 7:02pm. Attending: Barbara Bowles, Mary Catherine Bunting, Chuck Frascati, Peggy Meyer, Dennis Moore, Bob Reuter, and Jack Schmidt. Dennis facilitated and Peggy opened with the acknowledgement of the previous ownership of St. Vincent's property by the Piscataway Tribe and followed that with a prayer by Pope Francis from Fratelli Tutti.

Next meeting: January 22, 2024, 7:00pm by Zoom. Bob will facilitate.

We Have a Dream: A World Without Racism: Peggy said that the group met on November 15 and opened with one of the popular Jesus commercials ("Jesus Gets Us"). There was a good discussion about some of the other Jesus commercials as well as about the previous talk (October 18) entitled Confronting the Dangers of Christian Nationalism: A Presentation with Theologian Alex Mikulich. Jeri Delambo and Gerry Fialkowski led some of the discussions.

Peggy and Mary Catherine attended a very touching play about Billie Holiday at Center Stage where Native Art was exhibited. Mary Catherine also pointed out that the Museum of Art is presenting an exhibition on Native Arts.

Peggy and Mary Catherine toured the first two properties of South Baltimore Community Land Trust (SBCLT) that are further along in development. They were very impressed with the quality of construction especially with environmental aspects and energy efficiency. For example, they installed triple-pane windows. Bob asked about accessibility and Peggy responded that she didn't know but thought the row homes were at ground level. Bob pointed out that an inexpensive but worthwhile consideration is the installation of backup material behind walls where grab bars are likely to be needed in the future. Contact Bob for further excellent information about building adaptations for persons with disabilities.

ALIVE: ALIVE is looking for a person to represent them at other committee meetings. Katie Little was doing it, but we are not sure if she will continue as the representative. Dennis tabled the discussion to a future meeting.

Immigration: No report since Jules Valencia-Banks was not here to lead the discussion on immigration issues. At a previous meeting, Maureen Daly suggested that we send a letter to the proper agency asking for increased funding to hire staff to deal with the large backup of immigrant applications. She was going to discuss this with Jules. Maureen was not at the meeting to report on her discussions with Jules.

Inclusionary Housing Bills: A number of parishioners attended rallies at the city council hearings on November 14 and November 20 in reference to urging the city council to pass the Inclusionary Housing Bill (22-0195) and the High-Performance Inclusionary Housing Tax Credit

(23-0369). At the second reading on November 20, the city council passed these bills. A third reading is scheduled for December 4. Committee members and others are encouraged to attend.

Peace Prayer Walk: Peggy attended the prayer walk on October 3 held at the Basilica with a light meal served at 5:30pm in Borders Hall at the Catholic Center (not handicapped accessible), 320 Cathedral Street. The soup and bread were provided by the nuns who live at the Basilica.

Beyond the Boundaries (BtB): The steering committee has hired Connor to act as a consultant in coordinating and organizing the activities of the inclusionary housing coalition (21 community organizations). Peggy thanked Chuck and Mary Catherine for their long and devoted service to the BtB organization.

Global Peace Foundation (GPF): They are a worldwide organization that works to build peace. In Baltimore they looked at the racial divide and is seeking to have St. Vincent's be a stakeholder. They would like to see Baltimore be the model city for such mediation work. Peggy took this issue to the parish council, but the council tabled the discussion pending more information about GPF. While Peggy feels being a stakeholder would be good for the parish (working with University of Baltimore, Coppin State University, United Appeal, the Baltimore Police Department, etc.), she said subsequently a few council members were concerned about GPF's charity rating and wanted to see what happened with Seek the City before taking on another commitment.

San Juan de Limay: The political situation there is such that President Ortega is favorable to Limay but has sentenced the local bishop to 26 years in prison, has evicted all religious orders, and closed Catholic Universities. After meeting with Barbara Larcom and others from the Nicaragua Alliance, Mary Catherine admitted that not all things were bad there. As in other things, Mary Catherine said that there are two sides to every story. Apparently, Ortega has emphasized quality education and other services to the benefit of the people. There has been less poverty. He acted negatively toward the bishop (who was given the opportunity to leave but refused), the religious orders, and the Universities because of their constant disparaging of his regime and teaching anti-government policies. On the other hand, Bob mentioned that he thought Ortega was similar to Robert Mugabe.

Pax Christi: Chuck said that Pax Christi honored Father Joe Nangle as its 2023 Teacher of Peace on September 29. On November 4, Chuck and Chuck Michaels attended the Peacemaker of the Year Award and dinner which honored Susan Gunn, a long-time peace advocate who, Chuck said, gave an excellent speech. The turnout at the dinner was very good. Chuck stated that national Pax Christi is now working on the Gaza-Israeli issue. In fact, tomorrow night at 7:30pm, there is an open meeting on Zoom with other peace advocates to discuss the issues and to try to find a way to call for a ceasefire. Chuck is going to forward to the committee an email with information and the Zoom link.

Bob and Peggy expressed disappointment in the fact that the Gaza-Israeli issue was having a divisive effect in the US with students from both sides threatening each other on college campuses.

New All Saints Church: Peggy said that tomorrow night at 5:00pm, there is a National Black Catholic History Month Mass at All Saints Church honoring black history and the six candidates for sainthood.

Black Lives Matter: Peggy attended the rally on November 19 and saw the Sattlers who were in town for Thanksgiving with their family. The next rally is scheduled for December 17 from 1:30 to 2:30pm at Honeygo Run Park in Perry Hall. Bob mentioned that he gets a lot of inquiries seeking our magnet "racism defiles the image of God, black lives matter" and that people even took pictures of the magnet. He was wondering if there were any more left or could more be made. Peggy suggested that Bob make that suggestion to Colleen.

Racial Justice Circle: Peggy attended two meetings (October 24 and last week) of the "Honest Conversations on Race" at St. Ignatius Parish. Last week's meeting was in person, and she said they had a very good speaker. She met Linda Hellmann there who is now attending our "We Have a Dream." Mary Catherine said the next meeting of the Racial Justice Circle is December

Transportation Issues: Bob said that there have been more than 700 letters to the Governor supporting the original red line proposal. He said that the Baltimore Transit Equity Coalition purchased billboard space advocating support at the West Baltimore Marc Station. The billboard will be there through the end of January. Bob said that the meetings sponsored by the Maryland Transportation Administration are finished. Bob attended and spoke at the one in Greektown where about 70 people were present. The mantra is "do it right, not fast or cheap."

Maryland Catholic Labor Network: Mary Catherine said that the organization is trying to organize a retreat with priests and labor. The group was very happy that the nurses at St. Agnes Hospital voted for union representation. She said the group was very happy with President Biden being on the UAW line with the strikers. The group also supported the action at the Starbucks near Hopkins. Bob said the problem with actions against Starbucks is that the unions are trying to organize on a store-by-store basis which is very difficult.

United Way: Bob asked if we could get a number for St. Vincent's church from United Way so that people could donate to the church through them. However, Bob recalled hearing that another church considered doing that, but the Archdiocese was not favorable to it since the Archdiocese was already listed with the United Way.

Dignity of Labor: Peggy said that Maureen Daly did an excellent job organizing and speaking at this prayer service on September 30 at St. Vincent's church. It was sponsored by the United Covenant Union (UCU). UCU serves homeless or formerly homeless individuals, marginal workers, cash laborers and the clergy that work with them. Peggy and Deacon Ed Stoops (from Breaking Bread with the Hungry) also gave excellent talks.



International Day of Non-violence: On October 2, there was an International Day of Non-violence. No one on the committee attended any gathering. Peggy also said there was a day of fasting on October 27 called by Pope Francis.

Environmental Issues: Peggy said that the green team had a table at this year's craft fair which was Pat Frascati's idea. There were three items for sale: plants brought by Mary Catherine, tree ornaments made by Kathy Younkin, and dryer balls made by Jill Huppert with help from Eloise, Felicity and PingAn.

South African Higher Education Fund (SAHEF): The program has now been closed. Sylvia Eastman has notified the committee that the last students under this program have graduated. The committee has supported this program monetarily for many years and has helped quite a few students receive a college education. Thanks to Sylvia for many years of hard work in this program!

Joint Training Facility for Police and Firefighters at Coppin State University campus: No report.  
The New City Springs School and the Board of Estimates: Joe Cronyn, Peggy, Chuck, Kathy, students, and others attended the meeting of the Board of Estimates at city hall on November 1 where the land transfer for the new City Springs school was approved. It replaces the MOU from 2016 and the Baltimore school system will take on the Lombard Middle School demolition and build the new school, long delayed. Design will take about 12 months.

Women's Education Alliance: Mary Catherine, Geri, Gerry and Peggy attended the annual fund raiser for this group. Peggy said that it is a wonderful group that helps provide the means for quality education especially for black students. They support St. Francis of Assisi, Mother Mary Lange, Archbishop Borders, St. Mark and Cardinal Sheehan schools along with high school scholarships at 11 high schools.

Closing Prayer: Chuck led us in prayer to ask God's help in the Gaza-Israeli situation.

The meeting ended at 8:07pm.

Respectfully submitted,  
Jack Schmidt