

## **St. Clare Parish Council Meeting: June 19, 2014.**

*Present: Father Michael (ex officio); John Roche (ex officio); Bob Rucker; Charlie Homa; Tom Karasienski; Bruce Fraley; Carmen Velazquez; Linda and Vic Sabino; Keith Johnson; Julie LeBrun; Hilda Castro; Nancy Crewe. Guests: Diane Zekind and Larry Sabo.*

The meeting was called to order at 6:34 p.m.

**I. Opening Prayer:** Bruce Fraley

**II. Father Michael welcomed new Parish Council members** Linda and Vic Sabo and Nancy Crewe. He thanked those completing their term on Parish Council (Julie LeBrun, Elaine Bobsin [in absentia], and Charlie Homa). Outgoing Parish Council President Charlie Homa turned over the meeting to Bob Rucker, the new President.

**III. Review and Approve May Minutes.** Charlie moved that the May minutes be approved. Bruce seconded. The minutes were approved.

**IV. Finance Council Report**—Larry Sabo and Diane Zekind reported on behalf of the Finance Council. The Finance Council has met a lot, and the financial situation at our parish is not good. The trend of decreasing offertory continues; offertory for this fiscal year is about \$10,000 less than it was 3 years ago at this time. To make matters worse, the money we get from the diocese has been reduced by \$10,000 for the upcoming fiscal year. Costs passed on by the diocese (insurance, etc.) have increased considerably. Basically, we'll be short about \$30,000 just to make ends meet.

The Finance Council went through the budget and cut expenditures as much as possible, but some necessary expenses/bills went up considerably. The budget the Finance Council has created is pretty lean. Offertory has to be increased by about \$15,000 for the upcoming fiscal year, because the bare-bones budget has an increase of that amount (on account of higher costs for insurance, utilities, etc.). The church will need to do a lot of fund-raising. We need to ask those families that have supported us in the past to support us again, and ask some others. The Finance Council has discussed possible fund-raisers. The Hispanic community has suggested a consignment sale; we could probably do those a couple of times a year (but we don't want to conflict with activities of the women's guild). Father Michael is going to approach the Knights of Columbus about St. Clare parishioners working bingo for them in exchange for a cut of the proceeds (Knights of Columbus sponsor bingo nights in Richmond). We want to do fundraising that will impinge as little as possible on people's time. Are grants available? We have to think out of the box in terms of how to turn the financial situation around. We're not in dire shape yet, but if we want to support committees and outreach we will have to have money for it. Ideas about reducing expenses are also welcome (such as not paying for the Crossroads publication for all parishioners). The only new expense has been the music director position...and a token amount for the bereavement committee, but nothing else.

Fr. Michael suggested “twinning” with another parish...find one that is better off financially and have them help our parish...McKee, for example, receives help from other parishes. The parish we would pair with would have to be a church outside our diocese. Another idea is to have a building maintenance campaign; have people pledge to it. Also, someone could talk at a mass, asking what parishioners could give right now. Julie wondered what percent of our parishioners are tithing. Larry said that only about 40 families use the envelopes (which allows tithing to be tracked); otherwise, we don’t know. Linda asked how many families are in our church; Father Michael replied that there are about 200. Linda then asked how many families used auto-debit for tithing; Father Michael responded that he was the only person in the parish who did this. Linda noted that encouraging people to use auto-debit for tithing might be a good way to increase tithing. Father Michael stated that the sign-up for auto-debit is on the parish blog; we just need to publicize it. Larry summed up the situation by stating that the offertory needs to increase about 10% and fundraising needs to engender \$20,000 just to break even.

Bruce said that on the Liturgy Committee retreat, people commented that we need visuals, pie charts, bar charts, etc. in the bulletin to illustrate the true financial situation, and itemize how much we’re spending for electricity, insurance, etc. Sometimes people are reluctant to give if they don’t know what the money is going for.

Father Michael mentioned that he had reduced the cost of his phone plan by \$30 a month, and he does not charge the church for meals or gas mileage, to try to save money for the parish. He thinks people will respond if we tell them what we need and why we need it. If we can find someone who is good at writing grants, there are grants out there, too.

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At this point in the meeting, Father Michael gave a gift to Julie and one to Charlie to thank them for their service on the Parish Council.

There was a break for refreshments.

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#### **V. Schedule for Council Members to Host at Mass:**

- a. June 22: Tom
- b. June 29: Bob
- c. July 6: Carmen
- d. July 13: TBA
- e. July 20: Tom
- f. July 27: Keith
- g. August 3: Nancy
- h. August 10: Bob
- i. August 17: Vic
- j. August 24: Tom
- k. August 31: Bob

l. September 7: Linda  
m. September 14: Bob

**VI. New Business**—John Roche reported that Father Michael had asked him to oversee the CCD program. One thing he had heard from the teachers was that the program we are using is very old and the curriculum is heavy, more suited for a weekly/daily school environment than for a CCD program. Also, there are families that want to catechize at home, and the book may be available only in English. After much looking, John and Nancy settled on a new CCD text, a book entitled *Finding God*. The cost per copy is \$17, same as the cost of the old book. The teacher receives a book free. Every classroom gets a free artwork easel to engage the students. Students also take home a booklet called *Prayers for Catholic Families* and a little book with prayers, etc. for the children themselves; a bilingual edition of the book is also available for \$17.

Another concern was that the CCD program kept the same books for a long time, reusing them over and over. John and the CCD teachers think the children should own their books, and take them home, so they want to charge the families for the books and let the children keep them. However, for a family with more than one child, \$17 per book may be expensive. The Parish Council decided to set a cost of \$10 per book for one child (the church would underwrite the difference); \$18 total for two children; \$25 total for three or more children. There will also be a hardship provision in case a family cannot afford the determined amount; in this case the church would absorb the cost.

## **VII. Old Business.**

**A.** At our last meeting, Bruce said he would look into the cost of getting an electronic bulletin board for the narthex. He got a couple of estimates: one costs \$300 per month (you rent the software); another, depending on the size of the screen you choose, costs \$5200-\$7500 altogether. Given the financial state of the parish, Bruce's recommendation is to not pursue this further.

Bob stated that he had looked into electronic bulletin boards, too. He found a free software program online, XIBO, that you can program on your computer and save it to a memory stick, then plug it into the TV screen. So the only cost would be purchasing the TV. Using the software is evidently complicated, though.

The Parish Council agreed that the electronic bulletin board idea should be postponed at least until the parish's financial situation is improved.

**B.** Bruce reported that he had talked with the Liturgy Committee about the need for more hosts at mass; they were very agreeable to the idea of expanding the host role to lectors or anyone who wanted to do it; they said they didn't think it was necessary for Saturday night to have hosts; it was mentioned that the parish at large should be involved, too.

**C.** Father Michael remarked that we have decent hospitality in our parish, but there's more that we can do. The more friendly you are in welcoming others, the more people will give financially, as well. It seems that we greet visitors, but we don't follow up with them. We could, for example, give newcomers a handout of what's going on in the parish. He asked Vic and Linda about their experience when they first attended St. Clare.

Linda answered that everyone was very friendly, but it would have been nice to have a hospitality committee let them know what's going on in the parish, how to get involved, and so on.

Bruce suggested that maybe we could form a committee on how to get people more involved in church groups and activities. During the Liturgy Committee retreat on June 7, it was decided that there should be a sign-up weekend that identifies what the church's ministries are, explains what each one does, and provides a contact person for each. In line with the Liturgy Committee's wishes, Bruce moved that there be a ministry sign-up weekend on 9-6/9-7 this fall (the weekend after Labor Day weekend), and that the parish continue to have a sign-up weekend the weekend after Labor Day every year. Keith seconded the motion and it was approved.

Carmen indicated that the Hispanic community should be included in the sign-up day as well, and noted that if all pertinent information could be available in Spanish, that would help. She said that she and Hilda could do the translations.

Linda volunteered to be present at all the masses on the fall sign-up days, as the Parish Council representative.

**D.** Bruce commented that the Spring Clean-Up was great, but we want to have one in the fall, too, on Saturday, Oct. 25. Bruce moved that we have an all-parish clean-up on Saturday, Oct. 25, 2014. John said that the CCD rooms should be added to the list of rooms/etc. that should be cleaned. Keith seconded the motion. The motion was approved.

**E.** In regard to the all-parish picnic at Camp AJ, the Parish Council had determined at our last meeting that there would be one mass (for all three parishes) at 11:45 a.m. Bruce mentioned a concern that was brought up in the Liturgy Committee meeting, that people traveling might come to mass in Berea at 9:00 and find no one here; they wanted the Parish Council to reconsider possibly having one mass at St. Clare on that Sunday. Father Michael responded that once a year, for the sake of building community among all three parishes, having one mass at 11:45 at Camp AJ is a great thing, and we just have to be sure we publicize it in the bulletin, on the web, etc. so everyone will be aware.

**F.** Bruce stated that he has served on the Liturgy Committee for the past year, but he thinks someone else needs to do it now. He requested a volunteer from the Parish Council to be the liaison between the Parish Council and the Liturgy Committee. The Liturgy Committee meets the second Thursday of each month. It's critical that these two groups communicate.

Bob asked for a volunteer to attend Liturgy Committee meetings on the second Thursday of each month (Liturgy Committee's first meeting of the new fiscal year is in August).

John asked about the possibility of a Liturgy Committee member coming to the Parish Council meetings instead?

When no one volunteered, Father Michael said he would do it if absolutely no one else would, but he thought someone else should do it. He was interested in checking to see if someone from the Liturgy Committee was willing to come to the Parish Council meetings.

Bruce asked everyone to think about it and if anyone is willing to do it, s/he should email Father Michael.

**G.** Bruce noted that during the Liturgy Committee retreat, one thing that was brought up was a review of the role of the host at mass, and Father Michael mentioned that there needs to be training for people taking on this role. It was decided to have a training after mass on Sunday, June 29, with John doing the training.

Bob noted that the Parish Council can review the role of the host at our next meeting.

Bruce added that the Liturgy Committee would like to have the host do catechetical instruction. For instance, why do we do the sprinkling rite during Easter? The host could explain this.

John mentioned that in the Spanish mass, there is a paragraph right before the mass that talks about the liturgical day—it's very brief and talks about a liturgical note or event that may go unnoticed by the people. There's a website that has this information; John said he could translate it for use at the 9:00 Sunday mass. It would only be for specific liturgical days, though.

Bob wanted it put in the minutes that John is responsible for this.

**H.** Bob stated that he and Father Michael had talked and decided that the July 4 picnic would not take place this year. Since July 4 falls on a Friday, many people will be traveling, and no one has come forward to take responsibility for the event.

### **VIII. Pastor's Report**

**a.** Vacation—From July 14-25, Father Michael will be away on vacation (Fr. George Von Kaenel will preside).

**b.** We need a volunteer family to house Sr. Angela (SSSF) for her Mission talk on the weekend of July 12-13.

**c.** On August 2-3, we will have masses for the Election of a new Bishop. This will override the normal Sunday readings.

**d.** On August 9-10, we will celebrate masses for St. Clare's feast day. This will override the normal Sunday readings.

- e. At our next meeting, the by-laws will be distributed to the new Parish Council members.
- f. Re announcing why we do what we do at mass: Father Michael will institute a liturgy section in the bulletin to explain various things like why we do the sprinkling, why we have a procession, etc. and eventually he will have his own section in the bulletin (pastor notes). Vic suggested the name Open Mic/Mike for this, which everyone liked.
- g. There are no Parish Council meetings in July or August.
- h. Father Michael again extended a welcome to the new Parish Council members. He noted that Parish Council members serve a three-year term. Father Michael said that he tries to take what we say and do in the Parish Council and implement it.

**IX. Closing prayer:** Tom

Our next meeting will be on Sept. 18, 2014 at 6:30 p.m. in Friendship Hall. Opening prayer: Nancy Crewe. Minutes: Carol de Rosset. Closing prayer: Bob Rucker.

The meeting ended at 8:25 p.m.

*Minutes respectfully submitted by Carol de Rosset.*