Absent Members: Jeff Cardell, Ed Gallagher, Jim Kucia, Stephen Sheahan

The meeting was opened with a prayer by Father Fernando Molina Restrepo, our new Pastor. This is Father Fernando's first Pastoral Council Meeting.

We started off with a reflection from Father Fernando's weekly blog and his Mini Message: While our calling is to serve the Lord through one another, we have a choice in how we accomplish the task. Those that serve with gladness will be rewarded in the best way.

The council then had some thoughts and mentioned the following:

- Giving our time joyfully is so much better than just giving it.
- There are lots of options to serve which makes it easier to serve and give our time.
- Different type of fulfillment you get when you give your time with your whole heart.
- Our job as a council to let our parishioners give their gladness and time.
- Saying yes to little things and He will trust us with more and more.

Afterward, the council introduced themselves to the Pastor, briefly.

Pastor's Update and Introduction – Father Fernando Molina Restrepo

The Pastor thanks everyone for attending the meeting, both in person and online. He then tells the online members that this will be the last Zoom meeting, as he wants things to return to normal, post-COVID.

Pastoral advisory Council is a council to advise the pastor. Father Fernando Molina Restrepo needs are actions to help reignite the parish and those that are not attending to come back to church.

The most urgent, and first, task the Pastor wants to take on is to motivate and encourage people to come back to the church, in person. With that being said, the program "Home Coming" was mentioned and suggested to him during is Parishioner and Ministry meet and greets. This was a program that came about in the 70s, when Parishioners went door to door in the surrounding neighborhoods, welcoming and encouraging people to visit our Parish. He encourages the Pastoral Council to be part of this program, to which the council agreed.

It was suggested to start this program with the Newcomers, as "welcome" to the Parish. The concept would be first making a phone call and invite them to join us at Mass. The follow up would be visiting them at home and forming relationships with the families. The follow up is the most important part of this concept. Starting with the newcomers is an easy way to start this project because they are already invested in our church. This is a way to tell them that this the best place to stay.

Father Fernando believes we should go in phases for this project. The first phase would be those families that are inactive. We would have to ask them why they are not coming back to our church or to church in general. The second phase would be people that we may know that

are "catholic friendly", meaning those that are open to the Catholic Faith, but may not be Catholic or practicing Catholic. Those people would have to be identified by current parishioners. The last group would have to be a general group of people, such as those in the surrounding neighborhoods.

A brief discussion of getting back to our old ways occurred. A few council members agreed that we need to bring back after Mass activities (pancake breakfast, fiesta brunch, donuts and coffee, etc.) to be open and inviting for more visitors and newcomers to want to continue coming back to STA. We need to pick the activities that we know we have the resources and funds to accomplish.

Father Fernando then opens the floor for questions that council members may have.

The first was a discussion on the Newcomer Lunches. Mimi informs the Pastor of how the council has participated in these lunches and says that we would love to continue working on them. Father Fernando does not think we will have one of these in the very near future but agrees that they should be continued.

The council then moves on to discuss Parish wide activities such as the Parish Picnic, Ministries Festival, etc. Father Fernando agrees that there is a need for these and hopes to be able to plan an activity ahead of time for Spring of next year.

We need to do things for adults, children, and young adults. Father Fernando has noticed the large number of adults, but that there is an imbalance with young people.

Welcome our Manger of Youth Programs – Ashley Diaz

Ashley first introduces herself and gives us a little background about her experience. She has worked in multiple parishes and is working on her degree in Theology and Philosophy. She is very excited and has loved working at St. Thomas Aquinas over the last four months.

Here at STA, Ashley oversees all the youth programs, while also helping out with other programs, such as Vacation Bible School. The Faith Formation department has been supporting each other very well over the last few months.

Since she first started on March 28, Ashley has been very busy. She has been working with Elaine Phillips, Michele McHale-Pickard, and Andy Lichtenwalner from the Archdiocese of Atlanta, and they have been a huge support in guiding her since she started working at STA.

She hosted a summer program with 16 teenagers in May, which ended with the Eucharistic Congress, in which 36 teenagers from STA attended. STA was the biggest group at the Congress. She also has hosted a Teen Worship night with 76 teens in attendance. From there, teens volunteered to help remodel and paint furniture for the Teen Room, volunteered for VBS, and continued to attend Bible Study together.

She is now working on Y-Disciple and Confirmation for the fall, as well as Y-Alpha. She has noticed that the teens that came to the summer program, worship night, and volunteered at VBS want to maintain the relationships they have built with each other, so they are encouraged to attend more programs and events in the future. There is a need for more and a hunger that the teens have to serve, learn, and grow in community.

Action Items Updated from June:

- **Global Synod:** Stephen Sheahan was not able to attend this month's meeting, and therefore could not give an update. Mimi explained the Synod to Father Fernando. We hope to use the feedback from the Synod to move forward in the future.
- Inviting Ministries and Parishioners to the PC Meetings: It was decided that we will not be inviting Parishioners and ministry leaders to the Pastoral Council meetings just yet. We need to first go over the by-laws and logistics. Once we have those in place, we can invite people to attend. Father Fernando predicts that there will be some updates to the by-laws.
- Pastoral Council Corner and Picture in the Bulletin: This is tabled for now, until the
 above is done.

Commissions Update – All

Mimi explains the concept of our Commissions to Father Fernando; however, we have not updated these commissions since 2020. There have been some ministries that have become inactive since then, due to the pandemic.

Lia Armistead, Martha Zamorano, and Stephen Sheahan, worked on the Ministries Update Project to see which ministries are active, which are not, and if any changes have been made in the last two years. From there we will determine which ministries will go with each Pastoral Council member.

Some people have been checking on the ministries that they know are active or that they have a connection with:

- Alpha: Tentatively starting up in the Fall, meeting in person. Wild goose in the Spring.
- **Donuts:** Donations accepted to self-fund ministry. Doubt that that will be sustainable. Now there is debate about whether we charge or not for the donuts. Seek out sponsors to help cover the cost for different weeks. The sponsors could be different ministries each week. The times of the Masses could cause some problems for donuts, which may be why there has not been a great turn out.
- **Small Faith Communities:** Half of the groups meet in the summer, but they will get back to it in the fall. Retreat for leaders coming up. Recruiting in Jan.
- **Communications:** Need more pictures for the website.
- Knights of Columbus: Golf tournament in Nov., Brats and Bingo in Aug.
- Faith Formation: Nov. Confirmation, Volunteers needed, programs starting up in Aug.

Action Items - All

- Work on ministries and staff page for the bulletin Lia Armistead
- Send Ministry Update excel spreadsheet to council Lia Armistead
- Send out action items Lia Armistead
- Create a list of what will be needed for the Home Coming Project Jean Mense and Mimi Madrid
- Look over ministry list and see if there are specific ministries you would like on your commission **All**
- Send name tag information to Lia or Mimi All
- Reminder: There are no more Zoom meetings
- Reminder: The next meeting has been moved to August 23 at 6:30PM