Pastoral Council Minutes
June 8, 2021

Absent Members: Sandra Long, Jorge Lopez, Aileen Nicolas, Lia Armistead, and Alex Miniel

The Pastoral Council meeting opened with a welcome from Mimi Madrid and an opening prayer from Monsignor. Members reflected on the question of the week:

Consider the four ways that Jesus is truly present at the banquet: in the Word, in the Eucharist, and within the assembly and the presider. Reflect on how privileged we are to participate in the Mass.

A short discussion featured members' thoughts about the privilege of being able to participate in the familiar liturgy in unfamiliar settings while vacationing or travelling. We wondered at the variety of ways Christ makes himself known to us during mass regardless of the setting – through an exchange between participants, a musical experience, or even a weather event at a recent service.

Guest Speaker John Doolen, Director of Operations

John Doolen provided a finance update in which he reviewed our financial status as of April, the budget for next year, and a range of our financial challenges and plans. His report is submitted in PowerPoint format as an appendix to these Minutes. Summary highlights include:

- We have been able to maintain our savings at a constant level in spite of the upheaval of the past year.
- The Federal PPP program (a second installment of which has been approved and will be realized in August or September) was instrumental in enabling us to stay close to budget as of the end of April. Another key factor was the success of the stewardship appeal that Ricardo led before he left.
- Our 21-22 Budget reflects a goal to break even.
- We are $9K over our goal for the AAA (Archbishop's Annual Appeal)
- Necessary repairs and expenditures continued in spite of the crisis including tree pruning and removal and the continuation of repairs to the flooring in the parish hall and gathering area.

Notwithstanding the positive results from the various factors, our situation remains challenging and we are proceeding cautiously with respect to plans for restaffing. Parishioners are returning to on-site worship in the Church slowly and we were below our offering goal in 6 of the last 7 weeks.

In the short discussion following John's presentation two questions were raised and answered:

Q. Given that all of the parishes within the Archdiocese are experiencing similar financial challenges, is the Archdiocese itself leading by example and sharing in the belt tightening and has this question been raised as part of the collaborative problem solving now underway?

A. Yes and yes

Q. Will the parish be considering adding weekend masses to increase attendance (and the offering total) by making it more convenient for parishioners to schedule attending mass in person?

A. No, because:
- it is not clear that the offering deficits are limited to in-person giving totals vs both that and the digital collection as well
- increasing the number of masses dilutes the experience of worship *as a community* which is important to the life of the parish, and
- the new mass times are sufficiently staggered with respect to the old mass times as to require only minor adjustments to individual scheduling preferences.

John also covered the plans for the celebration of our 50th anniversary as a parish which will be observed on June 4, 2022 in a special mass to be attended by the Archbishop. The parish has decided to hold three special collections in January, February, and March of 2022 to help defray the costs of the anniversary events. A committee will be formed soon to develop plans for the event.

Volunteer Recognition

Stephen reviewed a request that came from the Liturgy Committee for assistance in planning and funding a Volunteer Recognition event for the hundred plus volunteers in all of the Parish Ministries whose brave work and many extraordinary contributions since the pandemic began have enabled the parish to continue to provide services. In view of the financial condition of the parish, the discussion centered on low-cost ideas. The idea that found favor with the group was to dedicate the final concert of the summer series to our volunteers and to invite them as guests of honor. The event could be enhanced through the use of signs thanking them as well as buttons or ribbons the volunteers could wear to identify them as honorees.

More work needs to be done to fully develop this event and Mimi agreed to provide additional ideas. Stephen requested that anyone on the Council who could help with the planning reach out to him.

Commissions/Council Member Positions

Mimi reviewed the Councilmembers' Commission assignments and took as an action item the follow up required to ensure that all members have a Commission assignment, that all Commissions have a Council member assigned to them, and that all assignments are redocumented.

Pastor's Update

Padre professed himself to be extremely lucky with respect to the resources available to him from the work of the Council and he gave God and us his thanks.

Commission Reports

Faith Formation

Aileen reported (by note): FF will have our first bilingual teen bible study this Wednesday! We are really excited about bringing our teens together into one community. There's a lot of stuff in conversation about how to make teen ministry more inclusive.

Ideas for events: maybe the health ministry can organize a sort of 5k/10k/marathon? There's a lot of community work that goes into that, it could be good for us.

Liturgy

Stephen reported that the parish app will resume automatic scheduling of Eucharistic Ministers in July. In preparation of this event, a communication plan is being executed to remind all Eucharistic Ministers on the roster to ensure that their profiles are updated to reflect the services for which they're available to be scheduled.

Education

Mimi reported that Alpha will resume in the Fall with an on-site program. The virtual program that was recently concluded had 30 participants in both English and Spanish.

Small Faith Communities

Jim reported that some new joiners are coming in through the website and being assigned to existing groups. He also announced that a Small Faith Leaders retreat is tentatively scheduled for August and that Terry Zobel has volunteered to lead it.

Family Life

Rico asked whether and when it will be possible to resume scheduling on-site meetings. Mimi responded by relaying information she received from Martha indicating that, per the Archdiocese of Atlanta instructions, the St. Thomas Aquinas facilities are still closed for non-liturgical activities but we anticipate that this restriction may be lifted soon as conditions improve.

An Event Registration Form should be used to submit any request for space at STA for the next Sept 2021-July 2022 cycle. All requests will be considered tentative until we receive authorization to open our facilities to Lay Ministries and Groups.

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Communications

Terrance reported that he had provided feedback to Lia on the new website functionality that enables users to express interest in various ministries. He also indicated that a couple of requests have come in using this new website form.

Plans are also underway to publicize an August Blood Drive.

New Business

There were no new business items.

General Discussion

Diane Kucia asked about the status of the tents and reported her sense that many people will miss this feature of our adaptation to the crisis, a sentiment confirmed by other members. A brief discussion followed regarding the expense of the tents and the plans for a limited extension on a smaller scale outside the main door of the church. While the council took no action, this is noted in the Minutes as an item we may wish to take up again when circumstances require.

Agenda Items for next meeting/Action Items

Padre closed the meeting with a prayer.

Upcoming Dates to Note

There will be no Pastoral Council Meeting in July. The Council will next meet on Tuesday, August 10th, 2021.