

St. Thomas the Apostle Church  
Parish Pastoral Council Meeting  
May 11, 2022  
6:30 PM  
Deacon Jose Room

Attendees:

Fr. Ray Powell                      Linda Best, Chair  
Jeff Kirk                              Dennis Preston  
Warren Hunt, Secretary

Absent:

Jim Gold                              Pete Kilmartin  
Eileen Connolly

Minutes

1. Opening Prayer

Fr. Ray opened the meeting with a prayer

2. Review and approval of April 20th Minutes

The minutes from the April 20, 2022 meeting were unanimously approved.

3. Status of Council information on website/bios needed

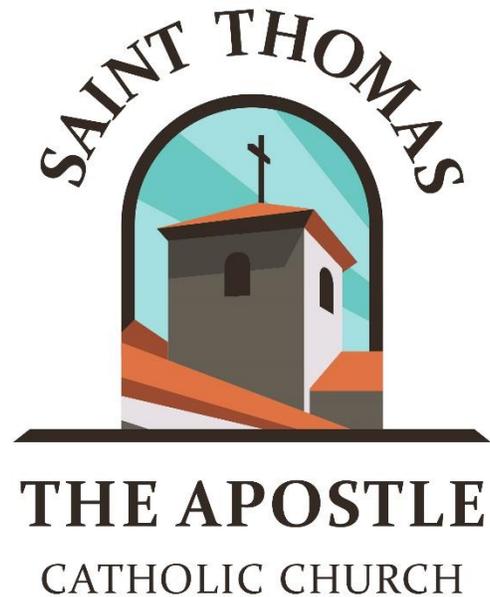
Linda Best reported that the photo of the PPC was posted on the parish website. Fr. Ray plans to also include the photo in a future Friday Flocknote and the parish bulletin. Linda stated that she would like to have a short bio for each PPC member also available on the website. She will develop a template and share it with the other members.

4. Takeaways from previous meeting (planning & mission)

Linda shared a number of “takeaways” from our previous meetings, summarized as follows:

- The PPC’s role is advisory to the Fr. Ray.
- There may be external events that cause the PPC to have to reprioritize its activities and respond. We need to be flexible.
- The parish is in a time of growth.
- The PPC is ready to work and values data.
- The Home Campaign provides a valuable input to the PPC’s work.

Regarding “mission and vision”, Linda has reviewed over 30 examples from different churches, and sees some common elements, such as being a welcoming community and also nourishing parishioners’ faith. She said that we are not ready to develop a mission and vision specifically for St. Thomas the



Apostle but that she will maintain a “word bank” of terms that might be included. Members should forward their thoughts to Linda on this.

5. Discussion of Council members' insights on Synod survey data including the summary page, data collection in general, and PPC Committees. Discussion will include cross references to the areas identified at our April 20th meeting as possibly benefiting from a survey or other data collection:
  - Volunteer recruitment needs
  - Hispanic/Anglo bridge
  - A general survey of what is working well, what is not working, and what is missing
  - Asking parish organizations about their needs
  - A “building” survey
  - Communications
  - Service areas and needs
  - A staff survey to assess their needs

To address this agenda item, Linda distributed and reviewed a hand out which summarized inputs from four of the members, which is included as an attachment. A very active and wide-ranging discussion on the topics as well as the handout followed.

On the Synod topic, Fr. Ray mentioned that the diocese had just submitted its input and the suggestion that we obtain and review a copy of that input made. The report will be posted on the diocesan website. Regarding the St. Thomas inputs, there was a question as to whether a response to the items discussed is the role of the PPC or perhaps more of a catechesis task.

There was discussion of the “Hispanic/Anglo bridge” and it was noted that there is still no representation of the Hispanic community and its Junta Pastoral on the PPC. The group sees that as a problem and encouraged further efforts to engage the Hispanic community.

In regard to data gathering, the thought process for this must be started along with a methodology for collection, which could include surveying or other tools. This will be an important role of a Data Development and Maintenance Committee discussed below.

Improved communications with the parish were discussed, and a specific action item proposed was to help organize another Parish Ministry Fair in the Fall. Also, the idea of periodic town hall meetings in which the PPC members and Fr. Ray would meet with parishioners was suggested.

The value and nature of forming committees to support the work of the PPC was addressed. Having committees would permit work to go on between PPC meetings and also allow engagement of other members of the parish community. A number of possible committees were mentioned in the attachment, and the group agreed that three should be established soon in order to begin what is the most important work. These committees along with initial volunteers for each are:

- Data Development and Maintenance: Warren Hunt
- Infrastructure/Building: Dennis Preston

- Communications: Warren Hunt

Jeff Kirk said he would fill in on whatever committee needed help. Linda said she would serve as the *ex officio* leader of all committees. The members who were absent from the meeting will be asked to select a committee or committees to volunteer for.

6. Create a loose plan for scheduling summer meetings

This topic was not discussed.

7. Other

- Active topics for future discussion
- Structure and function of PPC committees
- Dissemination of information, possibly via Flocknote

These topics were not discussed at the meeting.

8. Closing Prayer

Fr. Ray closed the meeting with a prayer.

Attachment:  
PPC, May 11, 2022

Summary Notes: Synod Data, Data Gathering, PPC Committees

**Synod**

**Qualitative Notes**

- People spoke up.
- A clamor for dialogue exists.
- Parishioners replied with deep emotion.
- Questions about church teachings exist; Possible underlying point may rest with the what of faith rather than the how.
- Issues about inclusion/exclusion.

**Data from the Synod**

- The 222 respondents who believe in the Real Presence of the Eucharist represent predominantly Anglo Mass attendees who attend Mass regularly. This data point differs in other surveys and polls on the same topic.
- Responses do not represent disaffiliated or disconnected Catholics.
- The number of people who are uncomfortable with church teaching is surprising. The one-page summary provided to the diocese summarizes these concerns well.
- From a PPC perspective, there's question as to what can be done, as the matter is one of catechesis and formation.
- Regarding areas of more direct connection to the PPC, the following questions and verbatim comments are relevant:
  - Q2: 88% of parishioners and newcomers feel welcome and involved. That's positive, but
  - Q20: Less than half (49%) agree that we have learned how to gather input and build consensus, and
  - Q23: only 36% agree that we are consulted in diocesan decisions
  - Comment 28/85: Lack of PPC communication. Interesting to see how few comments relate to parish communication based on answers to the questions above.

**Concern: How to encourage engagement and unity**

**Data gathering**

- Council members support the systematic gathering and use of data to inform PPC recommendations.
- Support exists for a "data repository" that is accessible to the PPC members. The latter point as well as the housing of data is a topic to discuss with Fr. Ray.
- Various data gathering methods must be considered. In addition to the ideas already mentioned at the April PPC meeting, the following make sense at least initially:
  - Parish Mass attendance
  - Patterns of participation in programs and activities—who attends, who does not attend, areas of interest, what's missing, patterns of growth
  - Parish registration and demographics, recognizing that many especially in the Hispanic community do not register

- All giving history by source (online, collection basket envelopes and loose, other (e.g., Donor Advised Funds, etc.); number of donors and average donation, percent of parish donating.)
- Local demographics. What do the communities that make up the surrounding area look like? What are the trends and projected growth? This provides us an idea of the source for prospective parish growth.
- Local church demographics as a long-term project along with analysis of church options, number of people in congregation, and best practices STA might adopt.
- Council members support the establishment of a Data Development and Maintenance Committee for overseeing the systematic collection, analysis, presentation, application, and maintenance of the data collected.
- As a point of information, the parish has a subscription to SurveyMonkey that has been used for Adult Faith Formation as well as the recent Communications Technology Survey and can also support PPC initiatives.

**Concern:** Flocknote is not widely used

### **PPC Committees**

- There is strong support for forming PPC Committees.
- The oversight areas used previously did not seem successful, as exemplified by an attempt to engage a PPC member who had stated responsibility for an area although no activity seemed to exist.
- Initial thoughts about committees
  - Data Development and Maintenance as discussed above, with the caveat that we do not rush.
  - Education and Evangelization, to include Religious Ed, Adult Faith Formation, and new efforts for evangelization (beyond the Light of the World Retreat).
  - Service, including the Knights and St. Vincent DePaul.
  - Infrastructure, including building and grounds, technology systems, and maybe safety and security.
  - Communications, including our communications tools (website, Flocknote, etc.) as well as messaging strategies.
- A formal connection with the Hispanic community is needed. The fact that one does not exist for the purposes of PPC propagates further the idea of two separate parishes.
- In line with recent PPC discussions, we assume that the Council will not be involved with areas that are the primary role of the pastor, including Liturgy and Sacraments.
- We also assume that the PPC will not be involved directly in financial matters since that is the role of the Finance Council.