

ST. EDWARD / ST. RICHARD TOWN HALL MEETING

St. Richard's Vogel Hall

Sunday, February 12, 2017

Called to order 12:45PM

Meeting began with opening prayer by Fr. Allen

Opening Remarks – Fr. Allen

- Purpose of meeting is to reflect on how the sharing of one pastor for both parishes is going
- Fr. Allen asked for understanding as his schedule is busy and may not be as easily available as he would like.
- Fr. Allen referenced an article in the Catholic Herald that is addressing the very issue we facing of sharing priests among multiple parishes.

Fr. Allen turned over the meeting to Laura Gellott, Pastoral Council Chairperson for St. Edwards.

Laura began by presenting the follow statistics to the members:

- Archdiocese of Milwaukee
 - 197 total parishes in the Archdiocese
 - 103 of them current share a Pastor
 - 312 priests in the Archdiocese today
 - Average age of priests is 67
 - 100 is the projected number of priests in the Archdiocese by year 2020
- Recent Mass attendance at St Richard and St. Edward
 - St. Edward currently has two weekend masses and St. Richard has three.
 - Overall weekend attendance numbers are very close at each parish
 - St. Richard seems to have a slight increase in attendance on Sundays when a Life Long Learning program is being held.

The presentation of statistics helps to put some of the issues, concerns and questions into perspective as we discussed the surveys completed by both parishes.

There were a total of 85 surveys returned. St. Richard Parish, printed on blue paper, returned 37 surveys and St. Edward Parish, printed on gold paper, returned 48 surveys. Each of the surveys were read/reviewed by both parishes Executive Pastoral Council Members and summarized to present to parishioners at this meeting.

Overall impression from the surveys:

- Responses from both parishes were very similar
- There was an openness by both parishes to change
- Both parishes primarily agree that it's the people who make the parish and they are committed to their parish because of the sense of community they feel there.
- There was a concern for Fr. Allen's workload and level of responsibility

Concerns that were noted as unique to St. Richard:

- Want to keep the strong Lifelong Learning program; concern that changes to Mass schedule would affect Lifelong Learning.
- Want to keep the music and choir program strong.

Concerns that were noted as unique to St. Edward:

- St. Richard neighborhood, is it safe?
- Losing another mass / already down to one on Sunday.

Question and responses to survey questions:

Question #1: How has sharing a pastor affected you?

- No real effect
- Feel that there is a lower morale in the parish
- More difficult to meet with Fr. Allen given that he is at each parish half the time

Question #2: Fr. Allen on alternate weekends/visiting priests – how has the affected you? What other arrangements might work?

- St. Richard does not have any consistency for visiting priests
- Visiting priests should make more of an effort to introduce themselves.
- There is an appreciation to having visiting priests. Different perspectives in homilies, etc.

Other arrangements:

- Revise the Mass schedule allowing Fr. Allen to be at both parishes each weekend. This was by far the most frequent suggestion.
- Adjust Holy Day schedules. It makes sense to have one liturgy and alternate parishes instead of trying to have one at each parish for each Holy Day.
- Unique suggestion for Saturday Mass:
 - Winter months (October to March) at St Edward: better/easier access from parking lot, better lit, etc.
 - Summer months (April to September) at St. Richard: it's air conditioned!!

Question #3: Ways in which the two parishes could better collaborate? Shared committees and ministries?

- Overwhelming support for shared ministries especially in the areas of human concerns and social justice.
- Opinions regarding a common Pastoral Council were divided as some see it a key to parish individuality.
- Better use of a deacon in the ministries they can perform (i.e. baptisms, funeral service, weddings when no Mass is requested, Communion services).
- Continue & increase collaboration on Lifelong Learning
- A more vigorous youth ministry
- Sharing and/or consolidation of staff
- A shared business manager, better coordination of purchasing etc., for economies of scale.
- More joint activities such as fundraisers, festivals, summer picnic and a wish for an "inside" event
- Many suggestions for better communication between the parishes
 - a common bulletin
 - more comment content
 - announcement of each other's events

Question 4 & 5: Additional suggestions / Other Questions:

- Make Mass more of a celebration
- Have a youth Mass

- More attention to attracting youth and young families
- A social justice focus to parish(es) to attract new members and create more enthusiasm

Open question and answers:

1. Ed Morelli asked to speak in regards to the safety of the St. Richard's neighborhood. As a police officer of more than 30 years he assured everyone that St. Richard's neighborhood is safe and have not had incidents on the parish property and that it is well patrolled by the Racine police. Rita Burges, DRE for St. Edwards, added that she lives in the area and has not encountered any issues in the neighborhood either. Ed did remind us that no matter where you go or what you are doing that we should be vigilant about our surroundings.
2. Is it possible to have a priest other than the Milwaukee Archdiocesan fill in when Fr. Allen is at the other parish?
3. We are already doing that when Fr. Greg and Fr. Alex fill in. We could see if one of the Jesuit priests from Marquette could assist, however that is a long commute.
4. How do the visiting priests get scheduled?
 - a. The archdiocese does not provide the substitute priest as some may think. All the substitute priests are contacted by Fr. Allen directly to check availability and schedule them to fill in.
 - b. Maybe we could have someone on staff do this to free up some of Fr. Allen's time.
5. Why doesn't St. Patrick's participate in the cluster and will they ever?
 - a. With the merger of St. Patrick and Cristo Rey, they have been working to meld these two parishes and accommodate the needs of everyone, so they are being given time to adjust and move forward.
 - b. Yes, they will be fully brought into the cluster. There are currently things that we are all working on together such as Easter Vigil lock in; Lenten mission; and youth ministry.
6. How does the school fit into the parish cluster?
 - a. The Catholic schools are a separate entity and will remain as such. The parish collaboration does not have an effect on the schools. Plans are currently underway for the development of a Racine Catholic Schools system, within the larger Archdiocese of Milwaukee Catholic School system. Much more information on this will be available in coming months.
7. Does St. Edward have a "Resurrection Choir", i.e. a funeral choir?
 - a. No, St. Edward does not have one. Suggestion that volunteers from St. Richard's funeral choir might come to St. Edward on occasion.
8. The Women of St. Edward do provide an honor guard at the funerals of women parishioners at St. Edward.
9. If parishes want to keep their separate identity, why would the consideration be made to join Pastoral or Finance Councils?
 - a. According to the archdiocese, it is permitted to have one Pastoral Council when a pastor serves at more than one parish.
 - b. Finance Councils, however, must remain separate.
10. Why consider changing Mass times now and again in 2019 when Fr. Allen retires, Mass changes results in a loss of parishioners.
 - a. There is no decision at the present time to change Mass schedules at either parish. However, we need to be open to the possibility that it may be necessary at some point.
 - b. Should the need arise, we would hope that between the two parishes the times would be staggered enough to accommodate the majority of parishioners from each parish.
 - c. We understand that we may lose people some due to a change in schedule and we will have to address that if and when that time comes.

11. A comment was made that if a Youth Mass is going to be considered, what about having a Mass in Latin for those who would appreciate this option.
12. Has a study every been done to learn why young adults do not find a need for organized religion in their lives?
 - a. We speculated that the archdiocese has done some sort of study.
 - b. In our own parishes there is a greater number of families at Mass on the weekends that Religious Education is held and an obvious drop when there is not.
 - c. There is also a direct relation to young people being confirmed. Once they have been confirmed they do not continue coming to Mass.
 - d. Our youth minister, Eloy Contreras, does the best he can with the adult resources that are available to him. The ACTS ministry, open to middle and high school students, meet at least once a month for a Bible Study or Prayer/Meditation. The ministry group is out in the community helping a variety of organizations that are in need.
13. There have been many good ideas, comments and suggestions raised to unite our parishes while still respecting the individuality of each. What do we do from her to start to implement them and what is the decision making process to get us into action?
 - a. It is on the shoulders of the Pastoral Councils to start the ball rolling on some of these things.
 - b. We encourage open communication between the parishes, its parishioners and council members. The more each other knows the more supportive each can be of the other.
 - c. We invite everyone to continue to speak to the Pastoral Council Members with your concerns, suggestions and/or comments.

Watch your bulletins for updates on the Town Hall Meeting and for information about this year's Parish Cluster Lenten Project.

Lenten Project for 2017: Houses for HOPES

- The executive director from the HOPES Center will be invited to each parish during Lent to talk about the work of the HOPES Center with the homeless population in Racine.
- Beginning at weekend Masses March 4th and 5th Lenten will be available for pick up at each parish. Proceeds collected in the banks will be donated to the HOPES Center.

Fr. Allen closed the meeting by thanking everyone for all the support and fellowship he has been shown by both parishes and for taking time to attend the Town Hall Meeting.

Closing Prayer: The Lord's Prayer

Meeting adjourned at 2:02PM

REMINDER COMMENT FROM ONE OF OUR PARISHIONERS:

Let's all remember that the buildings don't make parishes,
a community united in faith and goodwill does.