

**St. Thomas More Pastoral Council Meeting**

January 12, 2017; 7:00 pm (Approved)

1900 Call to Order

Members in Attendance: Riley Brunk, Pam Bourjaily, Beth Deninger, Joan Garrity, Charles Heine, Keith Less, Bill Mausser, Lou Ann Montgomery, Katelyn Murhammer, Cathy Nepola, Father Page, Larry Posey, Kim Schmitz,

Members Excused – Norma Ward

Members Absent – Ron Conner

Guest—Tom Persoon, Mary Neff

- A. Opening Prayer provided by Pam Bourjaily
- B. Review of December of December 1, 2016 Pastoral Council Meeting Minutes – approved without corrections. A question for clarity was discussed as to whether Tom should be considered a guest or a member of Pastoral Council? It was concluded that at present Tom is chair of the Stewardship Committee. As he is in an advisory capacity to the Parish, he should remain as a guest to this Council until such time the Council deems otherwise.
- C. Announcement.
  1. Council welcomed our New Religious Education Director: Mary Neff. Mary has been with the parish for three years and is excited to be assisting St Thomas More in her new role.
- D. Meeting Business
  1. Norma is ill this evening so tonight's meeting will be facilitated by Keith Less, vice chair for Pastoral Council.
  2. Less presented St Thomas More 2016-2017 Pastoral Council Meeting Calendar – MPR at 7:00pm and asked if there were any perceived conflicts with the calendar. None were identified so calendar accepted without revisions.
  3. Lenten workshop on Sunday, March 5, 2017 from 3-5 pm – please add to your 2017 calendars. This is open to everyone so please go back to your commissions and extend the offer to attend.
  4. Council please submit agenda items to Norma for February 9, 2017 meeting.

## **Old Business**

### **a. Wednesday Mass during Lent.**

**Discussion:** Father Page shared that not all the details have been worked out but it has been decided that during Lent that the Wednesday Mass would be offered in the evening rather than 9 AM thus allowing our Religious Education students to attend Mass. Mass will be held in the church basement rather than in the church itself to decrease the time between the end of Mass and the continuation of Religious Education for the students for the rest of the evening.

**Action:** Informational only

**(closed)**

### **b. Lenten Prep**

**Discussion:** Pam from the Worship and Spirituality Committee wanted to make sure Church/Family Life Committee was aware that during the Ash Wednesday service, there may be a need for chairs (maybe 50) for possible overflow of parishioners into the basement. They know that Church/Family Life is setting up for soup supper so they wanted them to be informed. Unfortunately, this is hard to predict as to whether we will need the overflow option.

**Action:** Beth Deninger and Kim Schmitz will take the information back to Church/Family Life as they prepare for Lenten activities.

**(closed)**

### **Lenten Vegan Parish Potluck.**

**Discussion:** Fr. Page asked the Council's insight into the offering of Vegan Potlucks during Lent on the off Fridays that the Knights of Columbus are not offering a fish fry. He thought this might be a unique community gathering during the Lenten season. The Vegan Potlucks would be offered on March 3<sup>rd</sup> and March 17<sup>th</sup> during Lent.

**Action:** Council endorsed the idea and look forward to seeing how it will be received for future alternatives for community gatherings. **(closed)**

**Post script:** Please note that the Bishop's made the decision to allow for meat on Friday, St. Patrick's Day in exchange for having a substitute meatless meal (with a Sunday exception) during the previous week. Pastoral Council decided after the fact to omit the vegan potlucks during this Lenten season.

### **c. Reports – provided by e-mail**

- a. Church/Family Life Commission
- b. Finance Council Meeting Minutes Highlights
- c. Regina Update

- d. Religious Education Report
- e. Social Justice/Action Meeting Minutes
- f. Worship and Spirituality DRAFT Meeting Minutes
- g. Youth Ministry Report

## **Old Business**

### **Workshop with Tom Persoon.**

**Discussion:** Tom shared that tonight's activity would focus on the three main areas discussed during our December meeting: Difficult access, Communication and Church as Family. Tom then grouped our suggestions into the following categories of Physical, Communication, Greeters and Assistance, and other;

#### Physical

- Unloading only zone
- Signs in circle
- Mark circle for Handicap only

#### Communication

- Information on Website
- Bulletin announcements
- Announcement at Mass
- Signage assistance available
- Survey Handicap

#### Greeters and Assistance

- Eucharistic ministers welcome parishioners at front door
- Assign Greeters outside to assist parishioners
- Proactively offer Communion in place

#### Other

- Wheelchairs availability
- Remove chairs from the end rows to accommodate wheelchairs

Utilizing a Lead Affinity Diagram, Tom asked the council to rate the above based on similarities, and asked our suggestions using an ease/difficult to implement scoring that would identify what we might be able to accomplish vs not accomplish in a timely manner.

**Discussion - Physical:** We would need improved signage/ concrete footings in north end loop. Appropriate handicap cutouts in the concrete for ease of wheelchair use already exist. It was reported that we have two wheelchairs for parishioner use, one in the side chapel and the other in a closet beside the gathering space. The use of a greeter/roamer in the outside parking lot could assist parishioners with the physical challenges as they enter and exit St.

Thomas More. A question arose as to whether the circle is for parking or emergency use only since there is a fire hydrant in its proximity. We questioned if we were in violation of Coralville fire codes by permitting parking in this area. This is the first time this question has been raised.

Another question that arose was if the north entrance side door had a handicap accessible door release for quick ease of entry. It was reported that this door does not have a quick access button. It was noted in discussion that when the church was designed, the north entrance was not intended for frequent handicap use which is why we also do not have a covered area over that door.

It was also questioned if valet service could be an option. Due to who would perform this function and liability concerns, Valet service is not a viable option.

**Discussion – Communication as it relates to Parking:** We need to communicate that access to parking is based on need. Handicap parking signage and the painting of the cement must be clearly identifiable. Use of the website, intermittent bulletin announcements and frequent announcements from the pulpit will be needed to change behavior.

**Communication:**

**Action for both conversations above:** Father will check on the signage options for the circle drive. Once identified we will need to implement a communication plan to break the habit of parking in the circle drive. He will also be discussing the issue with the Finance Council related to funding. **(open)**

**Discussion - Greeters and Assistance:** One of the first questions that arose – What is the difference between what the Eucharistic ministers do now and what a Greeter would be for our parishioners? Tom shared that he thought the role of the Greeter should be a ministry unto itself. Presently, a Eucharistic minister during Mass may be wearing two or more hats contributing at any given Mass. The Greeter's sole job/goal is to increase/improve upon the "Welcomeness of our Parish" to the community. This might be the opening of the door with a welcoming hello and smile as well as the aiding of parishioners when needed upon entering the church. Tom shared that the Greeter ministry might be an excellent first time experience for new members or families to participate. It would possibly require the person/family to perform this task only once or twice a month based on the group. He envisions the ministry to be made up of 8-10 members during the initial trial. This would be an entry level activity for first timers and training should be brief and minimal. It will have an end date with an opportunity for renewal, but it will have 'term limits'. The net difference would be that the Greeter's role is exterior and the Eucharistic minister's role is provided within the interior of the church. Father shared that from his conversations with new parishioners to St. Thomas More, many join based on "the friendliness of the folks and the overall welcome nature that we exhibit." To this end, we need to capitalize on the potential evolving opportunity.

**Action-** Tom will be developing the criteria for the Greeter ministry **(open)**

**Discussion – Other:** There was some uncertainty related as to what the suggestion meant but we concluded that it referred to the removal of chairs. This would be the removal of some of the soft chairs at the ends of the aisles permitting wheelchair berthing. Discussion included where in the parish the removal of chairs might best be done: in the front, back or at side aisles.

Discussion then expanded to what this support to handicap/special needs section would include. Father indicated that the new sound system that was allocated has been stalled because of vendor issues. Judy continues to pursue the need for a hearing-impaired sound system that offers our hearing impaired improved inclusion during Mass. This might need to include a need to reserve additional chair space within our gathering space that would offer the best acoustic sound based on the type and system upgrade for our special needs parishioners.

Tom offered to the council a different perspective of looking at these special needs parishioners. He proposed that we view these parishioners as “honored citizens” rather than handicap special needs individuals. He reflected this way of thinking was used in a parish in Los Angeles and found it unique in that it offers us a different way of viewing this special needs population. We would have an honored space whether it relates to wheelchair access, hearing impairment or parking. We would educate parishioners that within St. Thomas More we designate specific locations for our “honored citizens” based on their unique time, treasures and talents, not their inability to participate based on special needs accommodations.

**Action:** Ongoing discussion need to occur. Tom will talk with Judy and report back **(on-going)**

### **Stewardship**

**Discussion:** Tom offered his evolving perspective as to our Stewardship committee. Presently the committee is made up of himself, but he envisions it as being made up of at least 7-10 members. He wants us to make sure that we understand that as we build this commitment within St. Thomas More, stewardship should be a separate mission/offering from evangelization. Stewardship is the offering of our time and talents to the parish, whereas evangelization would be more the offering of treasures. These are totally different needs therefore we need to separate these offerings to obtain members that would best fulfill our overall needs within our growing parish.

**Action:** Since this is a new offering, Tom will begin to talk with prospective parish members who would lend their unique time and talents based on insight already

provided to our parish based on experience. Once the core is developed the offering of volunteers will be expanded once the committee is defined further.  
**(on-going)**

## **Organizational Structure**

**Discussion:** As we develop our understanding of stewardship and evangelization it was noted that we may have cross over duplications within our existing committees that will need to be defined in the future. This will require the utmost communication between committees so we do not miss opportunities and can align our offerings within the appropriated committee so that we can uniquely offer and meet the needs of parishioners. We need to fit the offering to the appropriate ministry within the structuring of St. Thomas More. Boundary and ownership might be in conflict, but open communication will be important if we are to succeed.

**Action:** Informational as we go forward. Last year Father and Norma met with each of the committees and plan on doing it again this July. It proved to be very successful in linking committees to parish vision and our council. When linked with what we hope to accomplish during our March 5<sup>th</sup> meeting Tom and Father are hopeful for a renewed parish vision that will build our community of the future. Therefore, we need to invite our parish, as we describe our possibilities, to build our ownership within our parish community, that express each of our commitments to time, talent and treasure.

**(closed)**

## **Recapping on tonight's activity:**

### **Positives:**

- Great dialogue
- Focused on the goal of accessibility
- Wonderful collaborative discussion
- Good ideas both for short and long term interventions
- Positive progressive change
- Identified challenges but framed them as a part of our STM growth

### **Delta:**

Difficult to read posted notes  
Lacked youth involvement and the direction that they see our Parish going? Are they involved in our process?

Tom concluded by saying we are building momentum for change and this process continues to be successful. As we build our community our success lies in getting parishioners vested in our Parish community. Vested success involves

Respectfully submitted by Bill Mausser

the offering of Stewardship's time and talent, as well as evangelization of our treasure.

E. Closing prayer provided by Pam Bourjaily