

## ***Record of Minutes for St. Vincent de Paul Parish Commissions***

Name of Commission: **Community Outreach**

Name of Committee: **Catholic & LGBTQ+ Talk**

Date: **Saturday, June 10, 2023**

Commission Members: **Robin and Paula Adair, Ulius Benson, Father Norm Douglas, Selena Holmes, Hank Inman, Jerry Kelly, Jeffrey Lindholm, Patty McClusky, Rita Rochford, Kathie and Dave Schoenfelt, Jim Zwisler, Andy Davis**

Committee Members Present: **various members of the parish and local community**

Proceedings:

- **Meeting called to order by Father Norm**                      **Time: 10:00 am**

**The meeting began with introductions, prayer and ground rules.**

Jim Zwisler served as the facilitator as we continued the Idea Circle process by beginning the following:

- Step Three - deliberation of Action Ideas by discussing pros, cons and trade-offs
- Step Four - common ground for Action Ideas by deciding which actions to implement and in what order.

Participants were reminded of the following prompt:

**What is your #1 Action Idea as to how St. Vincent DePaul Parish can strengthen its engagement and outreach to its surrounding community on issues related to LGBTQ+ diversity, equity, and inclusion.**

Jim shared the outcomes of the May 13 meeting which included the #1 Action Ideas that were proposed and the common themes:

### **Common Themes of Action Ideas**

- **Dialogues/Conversations/Education**
- **Activities (e.g., dinners, fairs, community involvement) and Services (e.g., support for LGBTQ+ service providers located within parish boundaries)**

## Grouping #1: Dialogues/Conversations/Education

1. Actions Speak Louder Than Words: lead and not judge; educate and communicate; acceptance with respect; patience and time; history has its eyes on us.
2. Don't force the issues but approach all people with kindness, patience and understanding. Don't give up on developing this model for the greater community.
  - a. Assume good will
  - b. Recognize the value of each person's opinion, especially in a community like St. V.
  - c. Listen, and listen some more
  - d. Persuasion is **not** an exercise where bludgeoning **or** demeaning one another are useful tools.
  - e. Attitudes do **not** change overnight; they evolve
  - f. Speak with the idea that you are planting "seeds of thought"
  - g. Caveat: MLK: "Letter from Birmingham Jail".
3. As the church reaches out to the larger community – find a constructive way to help those within the church express their concerns as change can be hard and frightening.
4. Start with yourself: Why am I here? Where am I? If we were to ask others to join – know why you (I) are here. Keep it simple.
5. Move to increase knowledge and tolerance. Know people as people – not issues. Move out of comfort zone. Support others in their journey. Jesus is the answer.

## Grouping #2: Activities and Services

6. Begin offering an additional service for LGBTQ+ folks, with family, friends, and all others who would like to come.
7. Begin an initiative to educate a wider group of people (i.e., the parish community) about **both** a) the experience of the LGBTQ+ community in the world **and** b) authentic church teaching on sexuality and accompaniment (i.e., not a polarized discussion on church teaching).
8. To be public in our parish's affirmation regarding the LGBTQ+ community / how is our welcome published?
  - a. Putting the parish's stance in the bulletin
  - b. Questionnaire regarding: parish's stance
  - c. Word of mouth – having info you have learned to share
  - d. Be a role model.
9. Sponsor a four-part interactive series to be publicized to parish and to wide community with topics such as:

- a. Listening and sharing stories to better understand LGBTQ+ experiences
  - b. Catholic Christian understanding of approach to people of diverse sexualities
  - c. Understanding of commission formation
  - d. Ways to reach all people.
10. Outreach, Communicate & Educate – increase opportunities for communication and education on LGBTQ+ issues, and implement outreach so that the wider community knows this parish is open to all.
  11. Get a table at Akron Pride and publicize that participation to parish/community ahead of time.
  12. Advertise group's existence and welcoming nature to parish, especially younger parishioners and/or families.
  13. Invite a member of the LGBTQ+ community to speak at a church function and/or someone from the parish to talk about family member of the LGBTQ+ community.
  14. I like the idea of having a table at the Pride event. Maybe get t-shirts and walk in the Pride walk.
  15. Make it so an internet search for an "LGBTQ+" or similar idea would come up with St. Vincent. Have something on the church website saying we are LGBTQ+ friendly.
  16. Be willing to stand at the front of our church at Sunday Mass and tell my feelings on LGBTQ+ - and ask other members, if they have similar feelings to join us in a show of support.

Using the numbered list of Action Ideas above, Jim facilitated **Step Two** of the process involving the **collapsing and combining** of the common themes of Action Ideas. The results of this activity were:

➤ **Dialogues/Conversations/Education**

1, 2 a b c d f g, 3, 4, 5, 7 a b, 8 b c d, 9 a b c d, 10, 11, 13, 14, 15, 16

➤ **Activities**

1, 2 a c d e, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 a b, 8 a b c d, 9 a b c d, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16

➤ **Services**

1, 2e, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8 c d, 9 a b c d, 10, 11, 12, 14

Next, Jim introduced **Step Three** of the process involving the **deliberation of the Action Ideas**. This included discussion of the pros, cons, and trade-offs.

### **Dialogues/Conversations/Education**

#### ***Pros***

- better understanding
- we become more empathetic
- open hearts
- proceed with respect
- responding to Synod
- healing hurts
- more unified
- living our parish's mission
- the importance of our efforts
- embrace being uncomfortable

#### ***Cons***

- talking with no action
- push back
- fear is out there
- alienation – leaving parish/church
- intangible/unmanageable results
- overcome us vs. them attitudes
- what would Jesus do?
- our own hang ups
- time

#### **Trade-offs**

Respect parents' flow of information to their children

**The pros, cons and trade-offs for the common themes Activities and Services will be determined at the July 8 meeting to complete Step Three. We will then begin Step Four which will determine the common ground for action: questions and consideration to help the group decide which action(s) they would like to implement and in what order (prioritization).**

Father Norm also provided the following hand-outs:

- Walter Brueggemann: How to read the Bible on homosexuality
- James Martin, S.J.: **Outreach** An LGBTQ Catholic Resource

Date and location for next meeting: Saturday, July 8 from 10 – 11:30 am in the Scullen Room

Submitted by: Jim Zwisler (Community Outreach Liaison)