

St. Rita Parish Pastoral Council  
Tuesday, December 12, 2023  
Church Narthex

Members in attendance: Fr. Michael, Dave Eberle, Bill Greinke, Ellie Hammond, Bob Mitchell, Pat Rossman, Mark Schmitz, Anna Marie Smetana and Jean Weaver. Also in attendance were Trustees Dennis Collins and Sharon Gierahn.

Guests: Susan Willing, Human Concerns and Racheal Kroes, Religious Education

Not in attendance: Myra Fox

The opening prayer was led by Father Michael at 7:00 p.m.

**Approval of Minutes:** A motion was made by Dave Eberle to accept the November 14, 2023 minutes as read and it was seconded by Mark Schmitz.

**Human Concerns Annual Presentation:** Susan Willing had a written presentation that was distributed to the PPC to follow along with her as she discussed in further detail all that the HC Committee does throughout the year. There was a question-and-answer period after her presentation. It was mentioned that having a ministry outreach campaign to let the parish know what we do for the community and the parish might be one way of inspiring people to volunteer. Father suggested that the Human Concern Commission begin a collaboration process with other parishes to have a common meeting night once a quarter to share ideas and best practices. Father feels this is very important step to take.

**Religious Education Presentation:** Rachel Kroes verbally described the many avenues of this Commission. Rachel reported that from the Advent breakfast bake sale Religious Education raised \$765.75 and they were hoping to make \$300.00. With the proceeds from this event they will be able to purchase a new cooler to take with them on the mission trips and for use at events here at St. Rita.

Vacation Bible School started in June of 2023 had 2 sessions this year. One in the morning and one in the evening. We are the only catholic parish left doing the traditional 9:00a to 12:00p VBS and we had 50 kids come to that session which was amazing. We started a pre-school VBS and had 10 kids registered and the other 40 kids were all school age. There were only 5 registered for the evening class but it is expected to grow next year. People are already asking when VBS will happen in 2024 so Rachel will be having the launch for registration sometime in March. This past summer they tried to do some play groups but that didn't go over big as hoped due to the wild fires that were happening and the bad air quality produced from them in our area. A few did happen later on and the kids had fun. Rachel organized a mission trip Fond du Lac for the older Rel. Ed. Students and that went over really well and the kids were great. She is now organizing a mission trip to Knoxville, TN from Tuesday, June 18 to Friday, June 21. *Kringle Mingles* are back and they kicked-off with the Welcome Back mass in September which had a good showing of kids. The *Children's Liturgy of the Word* is back and has been averaging 8 or 9 kids attending. 7 children have signed up for the pre-school program during mass and that's the most they have had registered

at one time. They had Break on the Mountain in October and another one is planned for February. Those are well attended with about 12 kids. They had Advent kits that children could take home. 61 kids participated in this. Rachel reported that our numbers are high this year, that we will have one child that will go through RICA at Easter (fully initiated). She is very excited to have Karen back since Patti Worzalla has been hired. VBS did have to move its dates for 2024 as the festival has moved to the 3<sup>rd</sup> weekend in June.

**Safe Environment:** Rachel Kroes has been asked by Fr Michael to take on the job of Co-Ordinator of the Safe Environment process at St. Rita. Rachel explained that a few procedural changes will be happening. On the PPC we have Mary Claire Weisensel who is our Youth Representative and she is a minor. None of her personal information may be made public, such as her email address and cell phone number; and we cannot contact her using that information. We must use her parents' email address and phone numbers to communicate with Mary Claire via those medias. Moving forward, all volunteers must be safe environment certified. This is for the safety of any minor children we may come in contact with. There will be an announcement and a letter going out shortly. Bill asked how this came to our attention. Rachel responded that when it was realized that there are people who have access to financial information, keys to the buildings and thereby have opportunities to come in contact with minors, and have not gone through the Safe Environment certification, a call was made to the Archdioceses. The dioceses said we are liable if anything happened.

The certification process has three requirements:

1. Attend a Safe Environment Education session
2. Pass a criminal background check
3. Sign the Code of Ethical Standards

This process will include ALL volunteers. Rachel will be scheduling 3 training sessions from the middle of January to the middle of May to get all volunteers trained & certified. This means all volunteers at the festival must attend a training session or no children will be allowed to work at the festival. We apparently have not been compliant for many years. You only have to go through the training once but you must recertify every 5 years. The background check will be done through Catholic Mutual Insurance Group. (Father mentioned that no one but the insurance company would know the details of the background check. The parish would just be told that the person is unsuitable to volunteer.) A very long discussion ensued regarding the fish fry's during lent, the festival volunteers and so on. It was stated that if we get 20 people to do the training, we would be doing good and those that are not trained will have to be monitored when present. Bill mentioned that this process, along with a background check, would be a deterrent to a lot of people that otherwise would be willing to volunteer. Rachel said that the policy states that anyone working with a minor, or have a minor(s) in attendance at an event, must have the certification. She added that volunteers working events that are adult orientated do not have to go through the training. Bill suggested that instead of everyone being trained that perhaps we have a select few to go through the training and then have them be responsible for monitoring the event or situation when minors are involved in an activity. Further discussion included questioning the need for all volunteers to be so certified. It was pointed out that for us to have the "intention" of protecting all minors was likely the real need to be satisfied; and that, as such, not everyone needed to participate in the total certification. Father Michael stated that he doesn't agree and that he has made the decision that all volunteers should have the training.

**Rachel is trying to schedule the training sessions as follows:** Sunday, January 21 @ 12:00p, Wednesday, February 7 @ 12:00p and Tuesday, February 20 @ 5:30p. Rachel will be handling all of this. It was noted that at this time virtual training from the Archdiocese is not available.

Further specific detail and guidance will be provided as Rachel develops the process. Patti Worzalla is working with Father & Rachel in crafting a letter for the bulletin to notify all parishioners.

**Pastor's Report:** Fr. Michael updated us on the purchase of a truck. The parish of course, has paid for the truck but there is an anonymous member who will reimburse the parish for the cost the truck which was \$35k and it includes a plow. We can now save on the cost of plowing the parking lots and paved areas as we can do this in-house.

**Parish Safety & Security:** Anna Maria read Dave's report that the committee meet on December 2<sup>nd</sup> and the PSS policy was distributed with the request that at the next meeting please bring any suggestions or changes for the fine tuning of the policy. CPR & AED training was organized and conducted by Dan Schrank and Myra Fox for the usher team. Dave will be attending an upcoming training session with the Racine County group regarding parish safety.

**Planning Committee:** Jean Weaver reported on the question that was raised at the last meeting on how many surveys were sent via email versus snail mail. Surveys sent via email were 383 and 190 surveys were submitted digitally. Roughly speaking that is about a 50% return. Regarding snail mail 101 were sent out and 20 were returned so that is a 20% return. A letter to all parishioners was drafted and sent to them in the same manner, about a week ago. Jean confirmed with Father that it's alright that if people have any questions regarding volunteering to call Kathi at the church office. The report will also be put in the bulletin. Members of the Planning Committee will also speak at all Christmas masses.

At the past Planning meetings, they have been working on the strategic plan; focusing on the mission statement and Parish vision. With completion of the first survey, it was determined to just zero in on the strategic plan; leaving the mission/vision statement for later adjustment if needed. Regarding the strategic plan at this time, they have come up with 5 objectives:

- 1.) increase attendance at mass
- 2.) increase the number of families and young adults
- 3.) strengthen the sense of community
- 4.) strengthen collaboration between the parish and the school
- 5.) eliminate deficit budgeting.

They are working on setting tasks & goals regarding each of these objectives so they can be measured for achievement. Regarding the 2<sup>nd</sup> objective, Dan Schrank will be asked to have the ushers take a count of all minors attending any of the masses.

### **Liaison Reports:**

Stewardship: Ellie reported that the committee meet on November 17<sup>th</sup> but she was unable to attend and no report has been sent out as yet.

Human Concerns: No report as Susan made the presentation tonight.

Prayer and Worship: Anna Maria reported that they will be meeting in January.

Formation: No report as Rachel made the presentation tonight.

Finance Council: Bob reported that the PFC is aware that final recommendations for the future of Casia Hall will be delayed due to some difficulties in getting usable estimates on asbestos removal and other use investigations still underway. They were hoping to have a final report in January but now they are looking down the road 3 to 4 months longer. The report on the new truck has already been discussed. Bob reported that there was discussion about investing some monies for St. Rita and if the Archdiocese might become involved. Per Patty, the Archdiocese is only really concerned about any borrowing of money. The PFC is looking for short term investments such as CD's. It was also discussed that the computers of St. Rita need to have better internet security protection. Patty is looking into this and will report back at the next meeting.

**Building and Grounds:** Dave Eberle reported that they are looking at more closely now at the revamping of HVAC system. This would include a new control system that would eliminate the temperature swings in the building. The cost is estimated at \$4,500.00 but more research needs to be done on this. Also, they are looking at replacing the sign up on the blvd; but this has a very low priority. The church lighting will be looked at as most of us notice the lights do go on and off during mass. These are halogen lights which is old tech and they are looking at getting a quote from an electrical contractor on replacing these lights with LEDs which would be more efficient. Anna Maria suggested that we contact the IBW union as they do donate time to non-profit organizations. We would pay for the material and they donate the time. Dave said this is well worth the try. Religious Education suggested they could use the first floor hallway in Casia Hall for their classes to help save some money. Sharon brought up that we should at first see what Siena School would credit us for not using the school for these classes. Father mentioned that it's not worth moving the classes because what if the CHISC finds that it would not be viable to use. It's better off to stay where we are.

**Old/New Business:**

Father mentioned that one of the things that has been up for discussion among the priests of the Deanery and the Archdiocese is the future of parishes in Racine. There is a meeting this Saturday, December 16<sup>th</sup> at 10:00a at St. Lucy's. The parish leadership and Trustees are encouraged to attend. Michael Laird from the Archdioceses will be there. This meeting will update us on what has been discussed and what decisions have been made in the last few months.

Dennis will be meeting with Debbie Sandanto and Marilyn Butler from Stewardship to discuss Ministry Fairs. We did this about 15 years ago 2 ministries in the Narthex every weekend.

Bob mentioned that the Advent Breakfast was a success. A good feeling between school and parish is developing. Also, that there was a donation was made to the parish from the school as a result of the breakfast success.

**Upcoming PPC Dates:**

Tuesday, January 9, 2024  
Tuesday, February 13, 2024  
Tuesday, March 12, 2024

The closing prayer was led by Father Michael at 9:20 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Patricia Rossman  
Secretary  
St. Rita Parish - Parish Pastoral Council