

Summary

St. John the Evangelist Parish Council Minutes 3/16/10 Summary

The St. John the Evangelist Parish Council met on February 23, 2010, in attendance were Fr. Tom Powers, and members Mimi Eldridge, Pat Feige, Mary Gotgart, Mike Holownia, Susan Jablonski, Bob Kelliher, Julie Pernokas, Mike Racette, John Salvati, and Jim Stokes. The meeting was called to order at 7:30 PM.

“Parish Conference”

Fr. Tom led a discussion regarding the recently held (March 14, 2010) Parish conference that was focused upon the theme “Disciples on a New Road” taking its focus from Luke’s Road to Emmaus. A discussion ensued during which thoughts were offered and additional questions posed.

From this discussion, Fr. Powers asked Mike Racette to return to the PPG and ask them to distill their research of the past 18 months, including their sense of the parish conference and their discussions at the diocesan level differentiating between the short and longer term with the intention of scheduling a meeting with the Parish council and parish staff to then frame some specific action steps.

Holy Week Schedule

Fr. Powers returned to the question posed at our prior meeting, what thoughts do the planned events provoke?

Parish Photo Book

A decision was reached to develop a confidentiality agreement between the parish and the company, Jim volunteered to draft the agreement.

Energy Audit, Inventory and Parish Technology Update

Fr Tom reviewed St John’s experience over the last ten or so years meeting with varying degrees of success, utilizing four different youth ministers.

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Opening prayer and reflection was led by Fr Tom.

Following the reflection a motion to approve the minutes from the February meeting was offered and the minutes approved.

Parish Conference

Fr. Tom led a discussion regarding the recently held, March 14, 2010, Parish conference that was focused upon the theme "Disciples on a New Road" taking its focus from Luke's Road to Emmaus. The keynote address was delivered by Fr. David Couturier, the Archdiocesan Director of Pastoral Planning who emphasized that our challenges were not merely to resources but to discipleship as well.

A discussion ensued during which thoughts were offered and additional questions posed.

- Good group, no shortage of education
- How much can we change, what can we do today, within the coming 12 to 18 months
- What needs can be met; what could a plan look like; intergenerational participation is crucial
- Raising the level of awareness without raising the level of anxiety while making the working assumptions very clear; is it time to set these assumptions
- The presentation was short on specifics, while making the point of adhering to a top down and bottom up process, information flowing downward, decision making flowing upward; the certain lack of structure may allow us to be more flexible in our response;
- There is an unevenness in awareness amongst the parishes, some would be shocked at the daily duties of a pastor, as well as the challenges faced by a pastor in terms of the request/demand for services, which can present a challenge of how to be welcoming and not feel the emotions of being used
- Resonance of the statistic, "83% do not practice", how to draw people back to the faith, more research is needed here to more accurately understand the situation as well as the numbers, in this context the question was raised, how

- much would change if there was a deeper sense that the hierarchy was more open to alternative ideas
- Ways of getting to know others including teen programs and a focus toward the future are needed
 - While we may feel we are willing to change, how flexible will we really be; people will have to learn to work together
 - How difficult will an opening to the laity be in light of prior actions, an amount of trust has been dissipated, Newton a prime example and several Newton parishes are in our cluster
 - Governance structures will need to change as well the current training of deacons if they are to adapt to the forthcoming needs, current group has been more sacramentally trained
 - The council is the decision making body, the PPG is a resource to the parish
 - The primary responsibility of the Parish Council will be to work with other parish councils

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The discussion broadened a bit back to the discipleship issue and the question was posed, "what does it mean to be a member of a parish", something of a strategy seemed to be suggested that our focus be on what can be done in the short term at St. John's and perhaps within our cluster and allow this success to lead the diocese to attempt to mirror this success elsewhere, using it as a touchstone.

Holy Week Schedule

Fr. Powers returned to the question posed at our prior meeting, what thoughts do the planned events provoke?

Some discussion developed around the Holy Thursday celebration marked by the annual washing of the feet marking the event in the Gospel of John. This again centered on how to arrive at the best parish cross section of participants, noting that any creative suggestions were welcomed.

Parish Photo Book

Mimi and Pat announced the signing of the contract with Olan Mills. The photos have been set up for ten days during the last week of October to the second weekend of November. The time of day will be 10 to 5 on Saturday and 3 to 9:30 on weekdays.

To options for contacting parishioners were offered; first to provide a list to the company and allow them to make the contacts, second to designate members of the parish to make the contacts. No cost factor was involved in either choice.

The details of the procedures were discussed, particularly regarding how parishioners would react to either choice, key questions being how to register in general and to give or not to give a list. Regarding the list, only name and phone number would be included.

Priests from two parishes were interviewed regarding Olen Mills and reported that the turn key process had been used without problems. A decision was reached to develop a confidentiality agreement between the parish and the company, Jim volunteered to draft the agreement.

Energy Audit, Inventory and Parish Technology Update

The Finance Council has not met so that no update was available.

Eyes and Ears

Fr. Powers continued to pursue the question, “Have you had a significant conversation or comment or observations recently heard or felt regarding the parish.”

The conversation turned to the point raised during February’s Eyes and Ears concerning how to make the church an integral part of the teen community. In conversations with St. Paul’s, their experience affirmed the need to integrate such an effort with the religious ed. program. It was also noted that St. Paul’s is currently utilizing two young fathers and their current effort centers around music.

Fr Tom reviewed St John’s experience over the last ten or so years meeting with varying degrees of success, utilizing four different youth ministers. The greatest success occurred when it was woven into the religious ed. Program. When this did not occur the groups were smaller and generally unhealthy.

Several observations were made.

- Regarding the connection to religious ed. and the use of music as a youth “attractor”, a music component was being woven into this years confirmation ceremony
- whatever we wish to do, we need to be clear about what we are trying to achieve
 - is it social
 - is it faith
 - where should the focus be
 - Parents/Family

- how do we sustain it, as current participants age, what happens?
Starting and Sustaining are two distinct questions
- CYO basketball is still very active, while being somewhat in its own orbit, and very much interfaith
- issues of the level of kids activities today and the cyclical nature of parish demographics also should be incorporated into our understanding
- importance of creating a sense of belonging

Three points seemed to emerge: the first being a family focus; the second being the importance of a serious needs assessment; and the third being finding the right person.

Another observation focused on how youth ministers can be overwhelmed by the particular culture, which can be both aggressive and demanding, while being weak on follow through.

Fr. Tom summed up the discussion by saying that we need to develop a way to move this issue ahead, where do we go with it. Among the possibilities he mentioned were the religious ed. group, peer ministers, and the interfaith group.

All were reminded that the April meeting had been reschedule to April 27th to account for school vacation week.

Adjournment

With thanks to all the meeting adjourned at 9:00 PM