

Minutes
Saint Thomas More Pastoral Council
April 2, 2009

PRESENT:

Yvonne Hanson, Katie Otto, Peter Ries, Steve Thomas, Barbara Thomalla, OSM, Gretchen Tieder, and Steve Wilson.

Pastor: Fr Joseph Weiss, SJ.

Staff: Peggy Junkin, Renee Sherman

Finance Council: Tom Boehm, Jim Hartnett, Justin McCutcheon, and John Peterson

PRAYER:

We prayed the Sunday gospel and offered intentions. Meeting began at 7:00 p.m.

MINUTES

Pastoral Council members received the minutes of the March 5, 2009 meeting via email on March 14, 2009. Minutes were approved via email.

STAFFING UPDATE

Fr. Joe met with staff on April 1, 2009 and distributed a memorandum regarding staffing levels. In part, the memorandum states: "...current projections show that, without any staff changes, there will be a budget deficit of approximately \$175,000 for the remainder of this fiscal year. Without any changes, it is likely that the budget deficit will be even larger for the 2009-2010 fiscal year. As personnel expenses (salaries and benefits) represent the largest single expense in our budget, we will have no option but to make changes to our current staffing levels, including possible restructuring of some staff positions and reduction of staffing levels." Fr. Joe will read the memorandum to the parish at liturgies on April 4-5, 2009.

BUDGETING PROCESS

Jim Hartnett, acting chair of the Finance Council, reported a revenue projection for 2009-2010 that is 15-18% below the projections for the current year; and the current year is 15-18% below budget. About 25% of registered members returned stewardship commitment forms. Mass attendance is down about 15% since June, 2009 when the four weekend masses were reduced to three. Staff reduction alone will not close the projected deficit. The archdiocesan assessment is significantly higher since the merger of the two parishes and the school because the school income is included in calculating the assessment.

Pat Lofton, school principal and the School Advisory Council are planning to insist that all the school families return stewardship pledge forms and will call approximately 130 households who have not returned a pledge card. Further decisions will be made regarding eligibility for in-parish tuition based on pledges.

Utility expenses, after the installation of the new boiler in the school, were significantly above budget. The pipes could not be insulated after the installation due to onset of cold weather. Other causes of the utility expense are being investigated. The school may cover some of that cost.

Fr Joe commented that after this budgeting process is complete, the Finance Council, Pastoral Council and School Advisory Council need to meet to develop a new paradigm of funding both

the parish and school in one budget. Several council members commented in support of developing this new paradigm. The school is one ministry among many in our parish and receives a far greater portion of the parish budget. Fund raising events have been solely for the school, rather than for the combined parish and school. Teachers have received a much needed salary increase in 2009 and will get an increase in 2010, while parish staff have received no increase. The school is thriving, enrollment is increasing, and financial position is positive. For several years budget discussions have included need for repairs in the school and the church, while discussion of funding spiritual formation of the parish has been absent.

Saint Bernard's grade school is closing; Pat Lofton and a teacher will attend a school fair at Saint Bernard's as those families decide where to enroll their children in fall, 2009.

STEWARDSHIP AND PLANS TO INCREASE REVENUE

The Councils engaged in lengthy discussion about ways to increase revenue for this current fiscal year and for the long term. The Councils did not seek to come to consensus on any of the ideas. Suggestions included:

- Explain the current financial deficit and ask for increased giving at Sunday liturgies after Easter.
- Do not ask for increased giving at liturgies because most of those households are already giving and some have personally told Fr. Joe they need to reduce giving due the economic crisis occurring in the U.S. and the world.
- Make phone calls to approximately 175 families who returned a census form but did not return a stewardship form, and to approximately 600 families who did not return any form. (The Parish Data Base lists about 1130 households.)
- Ask for funds for specific needs by telling a story, e.g. the new boilers in the school.
- Present the good work of a specific ministry at liturgies each month and how our giving makes that ministry possible.
- Repeat our messages often and in many ways.
- Coordinate and space the fundraising efforts so that they do not overlap, as occurred this year with the school's annual appeal and the stewardship pledging.
- Begin efforts to increase membership.
- Make it easy for people to register as parishioners between masses; loose collections on Sunday are increased, perhaps from people who are looking for a school for their children.

We need to balance our budget on solid income rather than on isolated fundraising events which are labor intensive. Three sources of solid income are: anticipated Sunday giving, tuition, and rent payments for use of the West Campus.

We have given inconsistent messages about the parish finances. We need to talk more often about the good we do. We need to be clear about the tough cuts we have already made. We need to be clear about the financial loss we face.

The councils separated to their individual meetings. Renee met with the Finance Council.

CALENDAR

Peggy reported that the communications team is developing a calendar of parish events to send to parish members along with other mailings on a quarterly basis.

DATES TO REMEMBER

May 31, 2009 is Pentecost and installation of Pastoral and Finance Council members.

June 21, 2009 is feast of St Thomas More and Archbishop Nienstedt will preside at the 10:30 a.m. liturgy. It is also Father's Day. Council members suggested a pot-luck meal or pot-luck coffee and donuts, rather than a parish picnic.

CLEANING THE CHURCH

Gretchen reported that about thirty people turned out and completed a lot of cleaning tasks.

NOMINATIONS FOR NEW COUNCIL MEMBERS

Barbara reported that parishioners returned a handful of nomination forms. Council members nominated other parish members during the meeting. Gretchen, Gloria, and Barbara will call the nominees in the next two weeks. Information sessions for nominees are scheduled for April 18 and 19, 2009.

REGULAR PASTORAL COUNCIL MEETING

The next meeting is May 7, 2009, the first Thursday of the month. Dates for upcoming regular meetings are: June 4, July 9, August 6, and September 10. The July and September meetings are the second Thursday of the month due to holidays on July 4 and Labor Day.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 9:10 p.m. We prayed the Prayer to Saint Patrick.

Submitted by:

Barbara Thomalla, OSM