

Pastoral Council Notes of
April 19, 2023

Present: Fr. Andy Switzer; Christine Wiegman-Green; Patrick Green; Kathryn McAteer; Shana' Harris; Gil Sateia; Becky Tokarcik; Bill Sagle

Not-present: Connie Bonner; Colin Hayden

Guests: David Matera; Bill Donahue

Time: 6:30

Opening Prayer: All read a prayer written by pastor, poet, and author Jan Richardson

David Matera presented a very detailed account of the work undertaken by the St. Agnes Emergency Response Committee. The plan being implemented stems from an effort called “Protecting Houses of Worship.” David explained that members of the St. Agnes ERC in many cases are or were medical or law enforcement professionals. The committee was formed in the wake of recent threats and hostile acts toward churches, however he pointed out that in most cases the need is for medical emergencies during a church activity. The committee has established a protocol to deal with emergencies. Greeters at the church will undergo or have undergone training to assist with possible emergencies. An evaluation of the church has been undertaken and the need for another exit has been identified. David presented information on how the committee is trying to secure grant money to pay for the proposed new exit that has been identified under a vulnerability assessment. He informed the council about a three-phase plan that the ERC is operating under.

1. Reviewing the plan from the Federal Emergency Management Agency that has been put in place in the Archdiocese of Baltimore.
2. Training & Grant applications
3. Physical security issues.

Fr. Andy told the council that the ERC is not trying to raise alarm, but to be prepared for emergencies.

Bill Donahue updated the council on spiritual and youth activities and other plans for entertainment and socialization. Among the activities highlighted are:

- a Spirituality in Nature Workshop – April 23 followed by Youth Mass outside (there is some sentiment that using the term “Intergenerational Mass” might be more appropriate)
- movie nights are expanding
- April 30th First Communion
- May 7 CFF Field Day with inter-generational faith sharing
- May 20th Car Show with crafts (Bill noted that the event exceeded expectations last year and might be even better this year)
- June will be the play, “Joseph and His Technicolor Dreamcoat” for which rehearsals are underway

Bill told the council of the need for all parish volunteers (including the Pastoral Council) of the need to have VIRTUS certification. This can be done online and he provided the necessary information to the council.

Fr. Andy told the council of Amie Ho-Leung's decision to withdraw from the Pastoral Council. Father had spoken with Amie to try to determine the cause of her departure and cited several issues. He pointed out Amie's immense contribution to the parish and enumerated her activities in recent months and years including her key position in starting the small groups. Father Andy acknowledged that the process of determining leadership of the council could have been handled better and that we have to learn from the process. He reminded us that discernment is difficult; but we must be fair and respectful going forward. We must focus on the gifts and abilities of everyone. The PC is the eyes and ears of the parish, because a pastoral vision is our job. We need also to speak out when we see discouragement.

Christine reminded the council that discernment is different and difficult and we did not understand the process very well. The process was awkward for each of us. She reiterated several of Father Andy's points and that in being the eyes and ears of the parish remember to bring what we have learned back to the council.

Patrick asked members of the council who had feelings about Amie's departure to tell the council how they felt. Several members of the council then expressed heartfelt regret and disappointment at the news of Amie's departure. All expressed the hope that Amie will continue to work in faith formation and contribute her enthusiasm and talent in other areas within the parish.

Much of the rest of the meeting was devoted to how to proceed as a council and how to streamline meetings to be more effective. The council will not take a Summer break but will continue to meet each month. Meetings will not be tailored to end at a certain time, but will last until all orders of business have been presented. Council members were reminded by Patrick that we must be accessible and not allow a wall to be built around us. Gil suggested that PC members wear a name tag at Mass to be visible to the parishioners and available to hear their ideas and issues.

The upcoming visit of Bishop John Stowe was discussed in particular the need to have a dinner for him and possibly some reception for those attending his presentation on the Eucharistic Revival and the synod. Kathryn stepped forward to address the coordination of food preparation for the bishop's visit.

Becky and Bill presented the report on small groups as taken from the surveys. (See attached.)

The next Pastoral Council meeting is May 17th at 6:30 PM.

St. Agnes Lenten Small Group 2023 Survey Summary Points

1. There were 49 parishioners who responded to the survey in the 7 groups. Most parishioners participated in all or most the small group sessions that they signed up for.
2. Most of the parishioners would like to continue participating in small group sessions in the future in either a biweekly or monthly fashion.
3. Some people noted that they did not like the Renew Lenten booklets. Others stated that they liked the book very much as it elicited good discussions.
4. The parishioners who answered the survey did not have a specific preference for use of media, including use of a video study aide, scripture/bible study aide, read/discuss theological or spiritual booklet.
- 5 and 6. Some groups met at the Parish Center and other groups met in a home environment. Some parishioners noted that they liked the convenience of the Parish Center while others noted that they enjoyed a home environment.
- 7, 8, 9. Most parishioners were very satisfied with their facilitators and preferred to stay with the same group and time for meetings.
10. Some parishioners wished to use resources of their own choosing while other parishioners thought that unity was more important (ie, using the same resource).
- 11 and 12. There were not many comments on pursuing future actions or activities. There were not many new ideas to propose. Some parishioners noted that they enjoyed the meetings and agreed that this was an integral part of church community life.