

**The Church of Saint Mary
Pastoral Council Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, January 13, 2021**

Present: Father Steve, Rita Winters, Janet Schiltgen, Jerry Kostreba, Randy Kinney, Francie Peterson, Jodi Rehovsky, Mary Gorghuber, and Carol Gaffaney. Absent: Todd Wentworth.

The meeting began at 5:03 p.m. with prayer.

Discussion followed on the day and time scheduled for pastoral council meetings, as some members have conflicts on late Wednesday afternoons. The suggestion of the second Tuesday of the month at 6:00 p.m. seemed to work for members. Father Steve and Rita will survey everyone and an email will be sent on the day and time that is decided upon.

The agenda for January 13, 2021 and the minutes of the November 11, 2020 meeting were approved by consensus.

Committee Reports

- Cemetery – No report.
- JPIC – Rita said JPIC is considering an evening Zoom education session for either March 1-2 or March 8-9 on the racial wealth and income gap. More information will be forthcoming. In response to a question we received, Rita clarified that St. Mary's staff do not give out addresses or phone numbers of parishioners when a request is received. Francie reported on the Sanctity of Life committee. January is Pro-Life month and the focus is on praying for an end to abortion. The committee will facilitate a 9-day Respect for Life Novena to begin January 14th and end on the 22nd, the National Day of Prayer for Legal Protection of the Unborn. The prayers will be available on the parish website and will be emailed to people who are interested. It was also reported that Julie Desautels said the City of Alexandria is looking at starting up the City Inclusion Committee again; it had been disbanded a few years ago. If you are interested in being a part of the committee, please contact the police department.
- Stewardship – Jerry reported the parish office and school have a new entry system. The exterior doors are locked and all visitors wishing to enter will need to push a call button and identify themselves. The Stewardship committee elected the following officers for the year: Kathleen Nordling, Chairperson; Jerry Kostreba, Vice-Chair; and Aaron Korynta, Secretary. Their aim is to reflect on gratitude during the year. Jerry noted they hope to get together with the members of the Come to the Water Area Catholic Community again soon.
- Board of Education – Jerry gave a report on the effect of the Covid-19 virus as of today: Of the 221 students at St. Mary's School, there are currently no active cases, 5 are in quarantine and 4 are part of contact tracing. Of the 28 staff members, there are no active cases and 2 are part of contact tracing. It was also reported that a teacher at St. Mary's School has been diagnosed with cancer and will be gone from teaching for some time, while receiving treatment.
- Parish Life – No meetings are being held. A new chairperson is needed. Jodi suggested the following activity for people to stay connected: Father Mike Schmitz does a daily podcast on the bible, 20 minutes in length. To access, text 33777 Catholic Bible to get notifications of the podcasts.
- Finance – A finance committee meeting is planned for later this month.

Old Business

- Update on Diocese of St. Cloud Chapter 11 Reorganization – The lawsuit is settled. Most parishes in the diocese contributed to the victim settlement fund.

- Come to the Water Area Catholic Community Update – No meetings have been held with church representatives since early December.

New Business

- Bishop Kettler has stated there will be no in-person meetings in parishes for the next few months due to the Covid-19 pandemic. A recent executive order from the Governor has opened church attendance to 50% which would be about 600 for our parish. However, Father Steve said we need to consider the number we can safely seat in the pews, which will be closer to 325.
- Review of Advent and Christmas Liturgies and Attendance – The Christmas Eve mass sign-up was at the max number of 325 or very close for each of the 3 masses. Actual turnout was less with the 2:30 mass having 286, the 4:00 having 257, and the 5:30 having 244. The Christmas day masses, 8:00 and 10:00 a.m., had more people attend than had signed up, which was fine as the sign-up numbers were lower. It was decided to schedule more time between the services on Christmas Eve in the future. Views for other events were as follows: Caroling Video #1 - 271 views, Caroling Video #2 - 144 views, Lessons & Carols - 325 views, the Advent Penitential Service – 741 views, and Christmas Mass – 751 views. There was a low turnout for the in-person confessions. Father Steve said they are planning to do a virtual penitential service again during Lent. He noted they are waiting for direction from Bishop Kettler regarding Ash Wednesday. It was decided to have people sign-up to attend Holy Week, Easter Vigil and Easter Sunday services.

Liturgy Committee Report – Mary said the Liturgy committee meets later this evening and, among other items, will review the attendance numbers and liturgies for the Advent and Christmas services. Discussion was then held on the letter that Mary and Francie received regarding a family's recent experience with confession. Mary visited with the letter-writer regarding their concerns and asked for permission to forward it to Father Steve and Laurie Youngers, which she received. Mary asked how pastoral council members should handle concerns/complaints they receive. Father Steve said the concern should first be taken to the person who is responsible for the action in question, so that the person can explain how and why the action or decision was made, the information that was considered, and the people involved in the process. By talking with the person responsible for the decision, it is hoped that there is a better understanding of the process and decision. They could also let them know that suggestions for other methods/approaches and/or ideas of improvement are welcome. The group agreed that the person with a concern or complaint needs to know their concerns and feelings are valid and their concern or complaint has been "heard." It was noted that better prayer handouts and a hospitality presence would be an improvement that should be considered.

Sound and Camera System – Father Steve stated the company installing the new sound and camera system estimates it will take up to a month to install the equipment. They are hoping to do the installation in mid- to late February if they have received the equipment. During the installation of the equipment, funerals and adoration will be held in the Great Hall. Masses will continue to be held in the church; although we will need to figure out how to have working microphones.

The meeting adjourned at 6:18 p.m. with a closing prayer.

Carol Gaffaney
Recording Secretary