

Education Commission: minutes from the June 14, 2014 meeting:

Present: Peggy Casing, Janet Gerhard, Denis Naeger, Connor Payne, Suzie Phillips, Clem Valot, and Tom Wietchy.

Absent: Jennifer Neill

SOS IDEAS FROM GENERAL SESSION // EDUCATION COULD PROVIDE OR SUPPORT THE FOLLOING:

- Educational articles to dispel myths and convey the facts about homelessness
- Provide some educational opportunities while the guests are here
 - Get volunteers who can teach work skills, or help with job applications
 - Provide web access to help guests with homework, research, etc.
 - Provide materials for children, like bible storybooks, etc.
 - Provide pamphlets that are generically Christian, or Catholic specific.

No Agenda due to Joint Meeting

NEW MEMBER

We welcomed Clem Valot, a representative from the Evangelization Committee, as a new member of the Education Commission

FOLLOWUP ON STAFF BENEFITS

Tom commented on the May EC meeting minutes. The inclusion of a clarification regarding employees and health benefits was appreciated. It was said, educational institutions don't always have the best track records regarding employee benefits. Denis shared his concerns regarding the pay / benefits. The commission, as a whole, asked how we make sure that all are treated with dignity and justice. Clem asserted that we need can't just look at isolated incidents. We need to keep the big picture in mind.

SMYG

Janet wanted to clear up the possible misconception that EC is trying to get rid of St. Mary's Youth Group. The commission is not! What was being considered was an additional education program for high school aged youth.

REBUILT CONFERENCE

Denis suggested, in light of the participation of parish leadership in the "Rebuilt" conference, that we ask the difficult question, "Why?" and consider pruning programs in order to put our efforts into making disciples... winning over those who aren't currently attending. We exist to make disciples. Kids programs and other activities are to be centered around promoting that effort.

HOW TO ENCOURAGE TEEN AND YOUNG ADULT PARTICIPATION

Connor shared that young people like to feel that they are being helpful, and some type of service is a great way to connect with them. Usually they'll continue to participate even if they were "forced" to participate the first time. He said the group at Grand Valley had a better retention rate when they were able to see immediate results, rather than an ongoing, endless project, or one that doesn't seem to be of "value" ("like weeding school grounds when a maintenance crew would usually do it"). It was suggested that teens serving with adults is another powerful and effective tool for evangelization. The adults can serve as role models for the young adults/teens.

OTHER WAYS OF HELPING AT SOS / ESPECIALLY YOUTH

It was suggested that the youth “guests” at SOS might appreciate a way to serve that would give them a sense of “giving back” or “earning their spot here,” thus providing them with a purpose. Some suggestions were: Helping with the “After School Fuel” program for kids who have unreliable sources of food; A project with Children’s Village; SMOTH could provide school supplies, giving guests supplies first, then the guests pack ‘kits’ of supplies for another charity, or for SOS to keep on hand; SMOTH teens could help the guests, who are children, with their homework; Leader Dogs or Therapy Dogs could be brought in for the guests to interact with. (Janet will check on therapy dogs) Suzie thought Leader Dogs might be better...

FINAL COMMENTS – AS WE RAN OUT OF TIME!

Tom commented that, if evangelization is a goal, that it might be good for the tithing committee to keep the various campus ministry programs in mind. Connor said betting the young adults there in the first place is the biggest challenge.

NO REPORT FROM HFRS

ITEMS WE DIDN’T HAVE TIME FOR

Discussion of the “Communities of Salt and Light” document.

Children’s Formation News- The Middle School Program is switching to a three year rotation of topics. The goal is to better encourage 6th graders to attend. Parents will be encouraged to see the preparation as a “whole package” rather than waiting until 7th grade (when Confirmation prep begins).

Preschool News for May/June 2014

The preschool year ended with fond farewells and hugs for all. We will miss our four and five year old preschoolers who make their way now to kindergarten and new schools. A large number are attending Holy Family. We are pleased to have such good communication with Holy Family and it helps that the children met some of their new teachers when they visited our preschool recently.

Our present three year old classes are getting ready to move into the four year old program in September. The demands of the full time kindergarten curriculum has meant that we moved to more days for our four year old classes. Parents now can select from three half days, four half days or five half days at school. We are planning to increase our staff to eleven by adding two new part time teachers. We have added a new class of four year olds to our schedule and made room for our three year old children by making an afternoon class. All three preschool classrooms will be used all day most days of the week. Our classes are filling well with just one three year old class having a few spaces at the moment.

It is always an enjoyable task to welcome prospective families to the preschool. In the last few weeks I have conducted many tours of the school and the church. Parents are impressed by the facilities, our classrooms, curriculum and information given to parents in the form of our calendars and newsletters. One of the most impressive parts of our tour is when we stop to show how we can take the children to the church and the chapel during our school week. This encourages many families to join Saint Mary’s parish when they know that their child can visit and pray in the church just by walking down the hallway.

Please let me know if you have any questions about the preschool. --Carol Scott

Respectfully Submitted,
Peggy Casing