

Education Commission: minutes from the September 20, 2014 meeting:

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

Absent: Jennifer Neill

MEETING DATES AND TIMES

An email was sent. Let Janet know if you didn't get it.

SEEKING NEW MEMBERS

We should consider inviting new members. The upcoming ministry fair is also a possibility. We will coordinate our efforts via email.

CHAIR AND VICECHAIR

Tom will contact Janet to let her know if he is able to commit.

DISCUSSION OF UPCOMING PROGRAMS

FEAST AND FLICK

Denis is contributing his time and talent. He considers it an evangelizing opportunity.

CHRIST LIFE

The main content will be conveyed at Parish Council today. St. Mary's will be the first (currently only) parish in the vicariate that will conduct this program. Scheduling will be an issue because of our busy building. Evangelization will start recruiting volunteers for the program, ASAP.

DISCUSSION OF "REBUILT"

Suzie's report on the conference follows this report.

PERCEPTIONS OF THE FAITHFUL SURVEY

The statistics are interesting, (available on the SMOTH website) yet don't seem to be a cross-section of our parish demographic.

DEPARTMENTAL REPORTS

REPORT FROM HFRS WILL BE EMAILED – as of this date, nothing has been received.

RE-

Peggy plans to schedule a "Protecting God's Children" workshop for the parish. In light of the evangelization efforts for the parish, Sherry Link is planning to offer preschool and a nursery for Sunday Masses, as well as an expansion of Children's Liturgy of the Word. The official proposal is being presented to finance today.

Tom reported that Kim Boismier is taking over the leadership of AGAPE. Mary Giroux is at St. Cyril and Methodius. She offers a young adult program on the 1st and 3rd week of each month.

Denis reports that the marriage enrichment team feels that they need to help marriages in crisis. They will be encouraging participation in Retrouvaille for struggling marriages and Bethany for those who are divorced. They are also starting a divorce support group here in the parish.

PRESCHOOL REPORT

Carol reports- "We had a busy summer at preschool with our summer classes. Our three year old preschoolers came to experience what four year old preschool would be like and

our four year old children came to our Stepping up to Kindergarten classes to prepare them for their kindergarten schools. The classes had a good number of children and everyone enjoyed their summer school!

We added another four year old class and another three year old class this year to the preschool. Now we have four, four year old classes and four three year old classes. We have expanded the number of days that the children attend and the hours.

This was in response to the development of all day kindergarten which is now available to the children when they are five. Our four year old classes can attend school five mornings, four afternoons and five afternoons as well as three mornings each week.

Our three year old classes can attend, three mornings, two mornings or three afternoons.

Throughout the summer, many parents came to see the preschool and we have filled all eight classes. We have appointed two new teachers bringing the number of staff to twelve. We continue to have a wait list or have turned away children as we are now up to capacity. It is encouraging to see that parents value a catholic education.

The maintenance staff made a big impact on our rooms when they painted them bright colors for us. We have had many favorable comments. We are always grateful for the attention and help they provide to preschool.

Our parents continue to be supportive. We have produced a new parent handbook and we are working on our staff handbook. Our Orientation and Meet the Teacher sessions were well attended.

Thank you for your interest in the preschool and please let me know if you have any questions.”

Carol Scott

Preschool Director

Items requiring action:

1. Tom to contact Janet regarding Ed Comm leadership.
2. Peggy to set up PGC
3. Jennifer to send a HFRS report.
3. All, to send emails regarding the ministry fair, and then, following up.

Respectfully Submitted,
Peggy Casing

Suzie's notes from "Rebuilt:"

Rebuilding a Catholic Parish – Practical ways to awaken the faithful, reach the lost and make church matter.

With Father Michael White and Chris Wesley,
Church of the Nativity, Timonium, Maryland
AOD-sponsored Conference; June 12, 2014 at St. Paul Albanian Catholic Church

I. Make Church Matter

www.amazingparish.org (7 key characteristics of an amazing parish)
www.churchnativity.tv

Knowing “why” you do what you do matters –

So why does the church exist?

Why do we do what we do? Is it to provide programs and services?

The more they provided, the more was demanded... The “Consumer mentality”

You know you have a “consumer” when nothing is different after than before

This mentality risks staff burn-out

Why are we doing things & programs?

When we lose our “why,” we lose our WAY.

In Parish ministry, the “why” is what Jesus said:

“Go therefore and make disciples of all nations... baptizing... I am with you always.”

For a Parish, your mission field is your ZIP CODE.

Your parish MISSION is to bring EVERYONE within the parish boundaries into DISCIPLESHIP.

Disciples are students – thirsting, growing, loving God and others

Disciples make other disciples

This is where to put your parish resources – showing people Christ.

Loving people means serving them

Be “fishers of men” but practice self-care also... avoid burnout

Make sure your mission is UNDERSTOOD, CLEAR, and COMPLETE.

So ask, “Do our programs create disciples or consumers?”

We have to humble ourselves and learn from others

Look at growing, healthy churches – even if not Catholic – what are they doing?

Jesus calls us to SUCCEED.

Went to Saddleback Church in California, and others –

Campus felt different;

There was a nursery with Sunday school

Nothing fancy about the church building – the fundamental difference was the PEOPLE

The people were FRIENDLY, and HAPPY to see them

LEARNED THREE MAJOR THINGS:

1. CHANGE THE PARISH FOCUS FROM CHURCH PEOPLE TO THE UNCHURCHED
 - a. Make the environment what we would want it to be if we wandered in
 - b. Make it specific – name your target: “Tim Timonium”
 - c. What do the demographics of your zip code tell you about the typical man?

- i. Concentrate on the man, because if he comes, his wife will happily come, and his kids will come also
- ii. He could be a former Catholic, stressful life, in debt, marriage difficulties, wants on Tim-time on Sundays
- d. Is our church welcoming to Tim? Or are we boring, bad, irrelevant?
- e. If Tim gives you a chance, it will be on the weekend – that is your opportunity to make an impact

2. INVEST YOUR ENERGY ON THE WEEKEND EXPERIENCE RATHER THAN EVENTS DURING THE WEEK.

- a. Unchurched people do not see the inherent value of the Eucharist – we have to help them see it through our efforts
- b. The weekend experience should take people on an emotional, intellectual and spiritual journey to the higher things of God
- c. There are three elements to the WEEKEND EXPERIENCE:
 - i. Music – God is present when we sing. Bad music is a big problem. Get it right.
 - ii. Message – Preaching
 - iii. Ministers
 - 1. They create the energy of the church
 - 2. People who join cite the welcome and energy of the volunteers
 - 3. They have parking help, greeters, hosts (ushers), information ministers, café ministers
 - 4. Children’s programs available at all masses – kids grouped by ages
 - 5. Create a great environment for kids and they will bring their parents back
 - 6. “Do something for my kids, you do something for me.”
 - 7. If you are part of the church, it is your job to get people there.... Everyone needs to VOLUNTEER.

3. MOVE CHURCH PEOPLE TO MATURITY AND ACTION IN THE PARISH

- a. How to get people into ministry:
 - i. Make it accessible
 - ii. Make it clear
 - iii. Set them up for success – give them tasks they can do
- b. Use small groups – they provide intimacy in a large church, and they provide pastoral care to the members
 - i. “Where the big church becomes small”
- c. Focus your energies and key volunteer time on the weekend
- d. Look at your programs – Do they detract from the weekend experience?

II. Moving Members from Consumers to Contributors

People don’t like to change – change is hard.

How to create change – Ask 4 questions:

- 1. Why do we exist? To make disciples.

- a. To serve – but WHOM do we serve
 - b. Kids will bring parents (look to Disneyland as an example for this)
 - c. Teens – Focus is not necessarily on Tim’s teenagers, but teenagers at risk of becoming Timonium Tims
 - d. Teenagers: They are busy, pressured, over-booked, have a big heart, thirsty for Christ - Set them up for success
 - e. So “Why do we exist?” Based on your mission, who are you targeting?
 - f. Where are you now?
2. How does the parish view your ministry?
- a. Your parish has an opinion of what you do, but it might not be the right one
 - b. What is the position that the parish has with your ministry
 - c. Knowing how people view church and your ministry will help you
3. Who are the people serving in your ministry?
- a. Who is competent/ who is loyal/ who has potential?
 - b. Get the right people “on the bus” in order to start moving where you need to go
 - c. Treat volunteers like leaders – invest in them
 - d. Share with them why you are passionate
 - i. Share the vision and mission for the group and for the church
 - ii. Take them to learning opportunities
 - iii. Give them books and resources
 - iv. Invest in them personally
 - v. Get to know them personally
 - vi. Get the wrong people “off the bus” – having the wrong people there will tear the team apart
4. What deserves to die and what deserves to stay?
- a. Does it have anything to do with Jesus?
 - b. Programs can become sacred cows
 - c. Expect pushback to canceling a program
 - d. Trust God
 - e. To discern about a program:
 - i. Look at the FRUIT, and look at the LABOR: Is the FRUIT greater?
 - ii. Compare the fruit to the vision of the church: Do they match?
 - iii. Revisit these questions every 6 – 12 months
 - iv. Use 2 groups to evaluate programs:
 1. Other men and women in your field/role from other parishes (and then LISTEN to their feedback!)
 2. Your new volunteers: They are fresh and not jaded – they provide a fresh perspective
 - v. Do a SWOT analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats)

Study Trends: Changes outside demand we step outside our comfort zone. Subscribe to websites and magazines to stay on top of trends. Studying TRENDS will force you to ask the right questions.

Ask: “Can I keep on doing this?” Church work can be exhausting.

- Persevere – Be persistent. Get up after you are knocked down,
- But recognize you have limits and some things are beyond your control

You will experience failure –

- People walk away (people you thought were with you)
- Events will be a failure
- You will make mistakes
- You will hit roadblocks.
- Failure Builds Character – “Fail Forward.”
- A failure can be an investment in the person who tried
- Ask within the parish: “what can I do for you?”
- Create a culture of gratitude and enthusiasm & Staff unity
- Have to intentionally work on discipleship – Trust God.

Brainstorming about “Richard Rochester and his wife, Rochelle”

- a. Has other activities on the weekend: has a cottage; kids are in sports; there are things to do around the house
- b. Has to do these things on Sunday because he works on Saturday
- c. Disillusioned with church (divorced, remarried, LGBT)
- d. His friends don’t go
- e. Don’t think they need church
- f. Pray at home or find God in nature
- g. Don’t feel welcome; and there is no invitation
- h. Advertise: “Come see what we are about”
- i. Some components of the parish don’t meet expectations so doesn’t want to join
- j. No orientation for new families
- k. No child care at mass
- l. Has expenses; workaholic; exhausted on Sunday
- m. Church doesn’t offer rest and refueling
- n. What does he go through on a week-to-week basis?
- o. Big mortgage; career track; strong opinions about things
- p. Wife works or volunteers also; she is tired, too
- q. They complain about how busy they are
- r. They are involved in the community

III. Introducing Positive Change to Your Parish

It is easy to lose our sense of direction, purpose, and place

Look back to the Apostles (Acts of the Apostles), St. Luke – need fruitful efforts

Purpose: (1) Introducing people to Christ, and (2) Helping them to grow in discipleship

Currently being fueled by the “New Evangelization” – a building project

What are the details of the building project:

- o Location: Your parish (neighborhood)

- KNOW your parish, not just your congregation – Stay focused on those that are NOT THERE.
- What are the people like: What are their thoughts about God?
- Majority do not go to church – even if they are culturally Catholic
- Must humbly learn why they left
- Must know Tim and LOVE him
 - Have a heart for all of his problems
 - Must have a hunger to introduce him to his Savior, whom he so desperately needs
 - He isn't just going to hell; he is living there now
- Jesus took his disciples to Caesarea Philippi– a kind of ancient Las Vegas on steroids
 - There he asks: Who do people say that I am, and Who do you say that I am?
 - Then he makes the big announcement: You are Peter, and upon this rock, I will build my CHURCH, and not even the gates of hell will prevail against it
 - CHURCH is an interesting word: Jesus used the Greek “Ekklesia” – a gathering of people in a neighborhood, usually for some specific purpose that changes the neighborhood for the better
 - Jesus did not use a word that means a building
 - CHURCH is a “town hall”; a growing movement
 - Means we need to move and we need to grow, with neighborhood-changing implications
- But eventually, “church people” get in the way – they want to control and maintain the church building – not deal with the “Ekklesia/neighborhood” because it is too messy
- Building an Ekklesia is (1) not easy, and (2) no one is going to thank you at first
- Ask these questions of your church leadership-
 - Are we making a measureable difference in our neighborhood, or are we simply serving our members?
 - Are we mobilized for mission or simply insisting on business as usual?
 - Are we here to preserve our broken systems or are we boldly willing to go where God is blessing?
 - Are we simply meeting or are we moving?

IV. Discussion and Q&A

- We have lots of people doing good things but not disciples; doing it in our spare time
- We don't market what we have
- Do people in the parish know where the money is going?
- “Mercy is giving people what they don't deserve”
- What do we want to be known for?
- What is our main thrust? It has to be something about faith.
- We don't “close the deal”. We perform acts of charity but don't talk about our faith.

Organization of their Church of the Nativity's kids programs:

- 6 mo to 3 yrs: Kid Zone, kids are there for the whole mass
- 4 – 6 yrs: All Stars , kids are there for the whole mass; kids learn about Jesus and God
- Elementary School: Time Travelers – Liturgy of the Word; then rejoin parents
- Small groups of kids (Religious ed?) at 9:00 while parents are asked to meet and be involved in some ministry at the same time - Then the family goes to mass.

What can be measured to gauge success?

It is difficult. Try: attendance, new members, number of people in ministry

Have to look at long-term trends – year to year

Look at the number of people who SING

Look at the number of teenagers serving in inter-generational programs with adults

How does a program like ChristLife or Alpha fit in? It is all good stuff. They used the small group curriculum that they developed themselves. But anything is good.

What to do when the Pastor says “no.”

Must honor his authority. He is the leader; don't talk about him behind his back. Pray.

Ask how you can help/ how you can make his job easier.

What if the staff doesn't know Jesus? Holy Hour or devotion together. Staff has to be practicing what they preach. Culture in the parish cannot permit the staff to neglect their own personal relationship with God.

Vantage Point program is re-named RCIA. RCIA doesn't have a great connotation.

Mega-churches: Are people joining them because they are entertained? Yes, initially – they are more engaging, and inspiring. Do they start out as a consumer exchange? Yes, but it changes from Evangelization to Discipleship.

Challenge the older generation to invest in the younger generation. Lead a small group. Mentor confirmation students. Get teenagers involved alongside adults. Address the next generation in the homilies.

Small Groups – have content based on the weekend homily. Distribute DVD of Father's homily to the group. Have a launch date. Have a staff member who trains leaders and invites people. Or you can use volunteers to run the program if they are trained and supported.

If people leave to go to another parish, what do you do? Say “ok – see you in heaven.” There are different styles and that is ok. But take a look: Is there truth there? Do we need to change? Don't let the wishes of a single individual change your strategy. Revisit the parish VISION and MISSION periodically.

How do you get “Tim” to come initially?

- He comes at least once or twice per year.
- Christmas and Easter: Make it good and engaging. Invite him back the next week.
- Kids programs help; if kids like it they will bring their parents.
- Parish members should INVEST (get to know them, befriend them) and INVITE their friends and neighbors.