

Parish Council Minutes
January 8, 2009
Room #205 – 7:00 p.m.

Present: Bob Yondola, Jo Rohr, Jeff Trollinger, Cathy Forney, Katie Lowenhagen, Andy Ferguson, Dave Tindall, Richard Mayhew, Fr. Dan, Scott Sartini, Beth Zorn and Mike Ballato (late arrival)

Excused Absence: Paola Brooks

Guests: Deacon David Nemetz and Jim O'Connor

7:05 p.m. - As Mike Ballato had not yet arrived; Bob Yondola called the meeting to order and led us in prayer. The December Minutes were approved as read per Bob Yondola and seconded by Jeff Trollinger. There was brief discussion about placing Minutes on the website after approval. Minutes will be e-mailed to Parish Council and after approval may then be sent to website for posting, we need five members to return them as a quorum.

7:10 p.m. – Mike Ballato arrived and we continued. Fr. Dan mentioned he had spoken to Yvonne Montoya about possibly coming on Parish Council when there is a vacancy this coming June. She expressed an interest and this will be confirmed as the date gets closer.

FINANCE: Andy distributed a preliminary balance sheet for December and a summary of Advent collections, noting figures will be finalized after the Finance Council meeting next week. Our goal is to have at least \$100,000.00 available in bank checking account; we currently have \$144,828.78. Scrip owes us \$35,000 which they are aware of and this will be settled soon.

For the Advent collection, envelopes were marked with a designation of three choices where to allocate funds. The Guardian Angel fund brought in approximately \$22,000.00 in addition to what was already in that account. This fund has had more use lately with the economy downturn and we are grateful for the generosity of our parishioners allowing us to assist our own. An additional \$12,000.00 was donated for the operating fund which is a taxable account as opposed to Guardian Angel and Debt Reduction which are non-taxable donations. The latest mailing list had 2,465 families which is an increase in overall numbers, but a slight decrease in our growth rate.

Maintenance: The budgeted construction of the choir loft area is nearly completed with a loss of only six chairs in the process. Tom Kaczmarek and the choir are very pleased with this new construction. Also, there is now sound in the Commons and in the Day Chapel which can be turned off as necessary for meetings, etc. This was a nice addition at the Christmas Eve services where Andy felt we did an exceptional job handling the large crowds; 1,700 + at the 4:00 p.m. and 1,200 + at the 9:30 p.m. masses having the largest numbers in attendance. The second mass in the Parish Hall was well-received.

A video information system will be budgeted for next year along with a camera which is a relatively costly item. A new line was installed to fix the parking lot lights, as well as lights placed at the grotto which is now lit 24/7. It is a soft lighting and the church's immediate neighbors should not be inconvenienced by this change; we also have environmental lighting until 5:00 a.m. The Parish Hall roof leak is being looked into; the warranty on the roof itself has expired, but the roofing material is believed to be substandard which is being pursued by Andy.

Also for next year we are looking at putting in power assist handicapped doors in the front. This is a very expensive improvement, but one which was recommended when the handicap needs assessment was done last year. The video system and these doors are major capital improvement items.

Staffing: Fr. Dan noted Karen Hannon started work Monday, January 5, 2009 on a part-time, temporary basis for Human Concerns ministry. It is currently a six month position at which time based upon recommendations from Finance Council, applications will then be accepted for someone on a more permanent basis. This may or may not be Karen Hannon. Lani Vasquez also started part-time in the last month or so doing data entry and cleaning up the PDS computer system until the focus changes shortly to preparing for the church census. Initially, Lani was a volunteer in the Pastoral Care ministry who was recruited for this position; so far everyone is pleased with her knowledge and ability to seek out answers she does not have with PDS. Fr. Dan reiterated at some point in the future there will be a need for this position to be full-time in a parish as large as ours has become. Both Parish Council and Finance Council will be approached about this change at some point down the road. Additionally, with this staff addition, the Pastoral Care card ministry can better manage what information is available and hopefully better serve our parishioners. It was noted that Faith Formation does a very good job of updating their registered parishioners and keeping the PDS system current.

PASTORAL CARE UPDATE: Mike Ballato introduced David Nemetz and Jim O'Connor to the Council, though both are well-known to us. Jim assembled a very comprehensive packet of materials which was e-mailed to the Council earlier in the week as well as a few hard copies available tonight for review. David began historically with what Fr. Dan asked of him when he was hired to this new position two years ago, December of 2006. This has been an ongoing learning process where St. Michael is now doing a much better job of serving its own. There are a total of eleven ministries under the Pastoral Care umbrella; the newest one added this week involves making rosaries. Also very recently added is the JAM (Job Assistance Ministry) which has really taken off in light of the current economy. Other parishes have expressed interest in what we are doing and how we do it; monthly lunches planned and we will see where it leads. The two goals on Fr. Dan's part were: that the church is present to everyone and that everyone who is Catholic within our boundaries and wanted to receive communion was able to do so. Being present is fundamental to Fr. Dan and his ministry here; he is passionate about this being successful. In previous years we had seven funerals; for 2008 there were twenty-three, the word is clearly out there that we will respond to the need if informed. Hopefully, we have walked with a family and when the person ultimately dies, we are not caught unaware.

The Homebound Ministry, headed by Tim and Helen Nelligan now has twenty volunteers who rotate among those in need of communion. The people are hand-picked and advised not to make a visit unless they have at least fifteen minutes to spend with the person in need. This has been very successful and rewarding for all involved. Additionally, the Meals Ministry was begun because parishioner, Pat Omberg, felt a need to provide meals to families following a death, illness or other special circumstances. CRHP sisters/brothers also figure into this process as they often work with the Meals Ministry in sharing the responsibility for meal coverage.

Funeral Process: Fr. Dan has learned and passed on to David that it is more efficient to go to the funeral home with the family for the initial visit. Often they have not been through this painful ordeal before and assistance in the planning is very much appreciated. The three parts to funeral planning include the vigil, the mass/liturgy of the word service and the graveside service.

Someone from the Pastoral Care team is present at all three parts, not necessarily the same person. Having someone from church walk with them is vital. Parishioners with a Pastoral Care need can reach someone 24/7; David's cell, an emergency cell and directly to the rectory. As soon as we learn of a death, music ministry is immediately notified so they can begin planning as well with piano and cantor present. With many members of the team available, this saves Fr. Dan for other activities which cannot be done by anyone else, i.e. reconciliation or anointing. As stated the numbers are up significantly. The Bereavement Ministry, headed by Mary Beth Poma, is also a very busy one, although sporadically. May go weeks or so without a funeral with family requesting reception following here at church and we have had two in a week. This ministry has a couple of very qualified teams of volunteers so no one is tapped too often. The set up here at church is really beautiful complete with white tablecloths, families are so appreciative of the time to visit on so-called neutral territory. The bereavement meal following a mass or can occasionally be catered to spare the volunteers in a time crunch. This is a special time of healing for the families who really need to be with each other. With the card ministry we can stay connected to families and hopefully if they need other assistance will feel comfortable in getting back in touch with us or will tell others in the parish who may be in need.

Since 1992 the weakest part of the funeral process is the follow-up, something that is constantly being worked on and improved upon. Beginning in February of 2009 we will have an additional deacon, Frank Baskind, assisting us on a volunteer basis. He has excellent credentials and qualifications as does his wife, Pat, a psychotherapist who is also very interested in helping us with support groups, etc. This will be a very welcome addition to Pastoral Care as well as supplementing deaconate needs. Bereavement is offered at other churches and we are careful not to duplicate a program done very well elsewhere, but rather refer our parishioners where they will receive the maximum benefit. Criticism of the idea of attending offerings elsewhere is that while you are with people sharing your journey, they are not parishioners and those you see on a regular basis in this very stressful time of your life.

Information intake is a big challenge for office staff especially in Pastoral Care. Both Chris Burns and Veronica Lowenhagen are very busy with other responsibilities and it was decided that Karen Bowens will handle all prayer list, sick/dead list requests. As well she will work on better record keeping with additional information which will ultimately help us better serve the parishioners. For St. Michael extended family members, we are requesting contact information so when it is listed in the Defender we will know better who we are serving and how we can improve upon what we do.

David noted that Jim O'Connor joining the Pastoral Care staff last year has freed him to do more direct work with parishioners with the added bonus of better organization throughout that ministry. The ministry coordinators meet quarterly to make certain everyone is on the same page. There are guidelines for some of the ministries spelled out upfront so volunteers clearly understand their expectations going in. Better communication is now in place and we strive daily to improve upon this as we keep Pastoral Care up and running with everything that comes our way with one and one-half staff people.

An example of going outside for the best possible programming is Comfort Zone Camp in Hanover who works with children who have recently lost a member of their immediate family. This is the gold standard which other organizations aspire to; if it isn't broke, don't fix it. The Card Ministry is another example of what a little interest and eagerness can provide; it started slow with a modest budget and big ideas. L'Arche, newly formed organization here at St.

Michael Catholic Church for parents of children with disabilities has been turned over to the Human Concerns ministry. This organization assists families in finding group homes for their adult children. This is still in the early planning stages and is a perfect example of a ministry which straddles the line of Human Concerns vs. Pastoral Care. Another example is the new JAM (Jobs Assistance) ministry which has bubbled up with very little prep time.

Jim stated that the Meals Ministry now has seventy-nine volunteers who can be called upon when the need arises. It takes many man hours telephoning people and hoping to hear back from them in a timely manner. We found a web-based volunteer system which has greatly streamlined this process with little input of man hours. A message is posted requesting help and volunteers can complete what they will bring and when online which then automatically decreases amount of food needed by that specific amount. Pastoral Care is the first ministry in the church to use nlist, if it continues to be successful; it possibly could be used in other areas, i.e. CARITAS. This gets close to fulfilling Fr. Dan's vision of what a well-run Pastoral Care ministry can do and allows us to continue to dream for the parish.

The West End Assembly of God Church was noted as a model of what a church can do with resources, staffing, etc. Dave Tindall asked Pastoral Care had looked at other non-Catholic churches in the area to see what they offer. Jim responded they have talked about specific ministries not gotten an overall picture. Fr. Dan said if we offer quality service, people will respond with the necessary financial assistance. He'd like to see us grow organically and if we hit barriers believes people will be there to help us out. He also noted he is very pleased with the progress thus far which David has made and hopes that Human Concerns will develop as nicely.

Jo Rohr asked what the process is specifically for a request for help to a family in crisis dealing with a family member with mental illness. Simply referring them to the county is not a viable option; the family at least needs to make personal contact with someone. David explained in the intake process for Pastoral Care that he meets with nearly everyone who calls the office and makes referral after that initial meeting in these very challenging situations. The follow-up piece is critical in all of Pastoral Care, one which we are striving to do better.

Jim O'Connor noted that volunteers visiting the homebound have been instructed to be alert for anything that may seem a bit off at the visit, simple handyman repair or other assistance we can offer. During 2008 more than three hundred visits were made to our homebound parishioners.

The Befriender ministry was asked about and clarified that this is a ministry St. Michael had at one time, but in spite of good training it was not properly utilized and eventually disbanded. Other parishes have this ministry successfully in place and again no need to reinvent the wheel. Fr. Dan reiterated this is all about learning how to improve what we do, not blame each other.

Fr. Dan spoke about the ministry of presence to parishioners and how this fits into the mission statement and vision for the church which he would like to have re-written to speak more clearly to who St. Michael's is today. Andy wants to get Fr. Dan, David Scott and himself together to talk about this and share resources. Mike Ballato thanked David and Jim for their presentation and asked what Parish Council can do to assist. The question was asked is there a cap to what Pastoral Care can do, are we limited to staffing?

David suggested it may be beneficial to Parish Council to bring in other church ministries to make presentations on a rotational type basis. As time was drawing to a close, Mike briefly

brought up the Needs Assessment Committee and the Census Steering Committee and expectations of having these committees meet in the next week or two. The target date for the Census is late April or early May and perhaps as many as three hundred volunteers need to be recruited. Fr. Dan would like to have one or two people from Parish Council on the Needs Assessment Committee, hopefully, along with Bonnie Campbell and Andy acting as a liaison. This project will take nine months or perhaps one year to complete so it is important to get started on it quickly.

The Census Steering Committee will be composed of Scott Sartini, Lani Vasquez, Mike Ballato, Beth Zorn and Fr. Dan and hopefully will set up a time in the next week or two. A report will be made back to Council at the February meeting. Beth is very interested in participation on this committee and believes it will increase our presence to each other with properly constructed questions. It is reiterated that the fact finding portion of the Census will be completed ahead of time; the visit itself will be more of a ministry, asking how can St. Michael better serve its' parishioners. A byproduct of the census could hopefully generate a local community directory in neighborhoods generating a feeling of connectedness.

Fr. Dan asked if there was a stewardship component, not a financial component. A good example of this is "We Walk By Faith", i.e. what are we doing right and what are challenges we still face? This will hopefully give us more information for ministries than just facts and statistics. The mission statement will be discussed at the February Parish Council meeting when we have more time to go into detail. The vision is a short phase and the mission statement is the longer piece. Fr. Dan suggested possibly making a formal commitment and having members of Parish Council sign it.

Round Table:

Jeff mentioned the recycling seems to be increasing, he and Will take it back to Goochland for disposal as Henrico dump charges for this service. It was pointed out that the Henrico Fire Department accepts recycling materials at no cost so this will be looked into. Beth mentioned she had negative feedback that the Saturday baptisms lacked a personal touch. It was stated that due to the large numbers of young people in the parish our ability to only accept so many babies per baptism weekend is limited. This was not belabored as it was not dissatisfaction, but rather an observation. Cathy Forney mentioned if people are ill they should refrain from taking anyone's hand during the Lord's Prayer and Father Dan heartily agreed. Dave Tindall pointed out that the class going on Confirmation retreat next weekend is the first group to have been baptized here at St. Michael which makes them a very special group.

The meeting closed with prayer at 9:10 p.m. and the next meeting is scheduled for Thursday, February 12, 2009.

Respectfully submitted,

Karen Bowens
Administrative Assistant to Fr. Dan Brady