

## St. Mark's Parish Council Meeting Minutes

December 6, 2005

### Attendees:

<b>Msgr. William Carton</b>	<b>non-voting</b>
<b>Deacon Dennis Saake</b>	<b>non-voting</b>
<b>Mr. Frank Prettyman</b>	<b>non-voting</b>
<b>Nelda Ragan</b>	<b>non-voting</b>
<b>Karen Pappas</b>	
<b>Peter Abitanto</b>	
<b>Tom Hayes</b>	
<b>Melissa Rafter</b>	

### Highlights:

**Msgr introduced Melissa Rafter as a new member of our Parish Council. Kathleen Merlo who had attended our October meeting and was considering joining is unable to participate due to her other Tuesday evening conflicts.**

**Karen asked that we hold a formal election of officers for 2006 for our Parish Council in January, since our current officers were only selected on an "acting" basis back in April. After some discussion this was agreed.**

**Karen reported on the Workshop Meeting she attended on Vibrant Parish Pastoral Councils sponsored by the Diocese of Trenton on October 21. Bishop Smith had attended and stressed the importance of "The Seven Essential Elements of Parish Life" in guiding our activities, which we are already sensitive to. During this part of our discussions, Nelda suggested that we periodically check on the various meetings, seminars, workshops, etc. that our Diocese sponsors, and that our Council should consider sending representatives to those of most interest. Nelda will check on what is scheduled and will report on this at our next meeting. Thereafter, Nelda will continue this as a regular agenda item.**

**Karen read an email from Gary on the meeting held on Nov. 19 with Msgr and Dennis to discuss the formation of a Liturgical Committee. It was agreed that a small group of the right people to plan out our Liturgy details would be desirable, but a leader for this activity is still needed. Msgr will be looking for someone with Liturgical experience to take responsibility for this.**

**Msgr reported that Dr. Frank Sharp has been selected as a new member of our Parish council and is expected to join us at our January meeting. There are two remaining open seats on our Council. Msgr has someone in mind for one of these and the other is reserved for a representative from the Hispanic Ministry. Dennis will speak with Carlos about identifying someone from the Hispanic Ministry.**

Dennis reported that our new Parish Directory is looking good and is nearing completion and should be available in January. It was also reported that our Parish Calendar is now online on our web site and will be kept current thanks to Georgeann.

We then proceeded to review and prioritize all of the various suggestions made at our Special Parish Council Meeting on October 25. Three priority levels were established:

- Priority 1 – highly important / will be on the list for discussion in January
- Priority 2 – important and should be considered / may already be underway
- Priority 3 – lower priority

The following questions and associated suggestions were edited from our October 25 meeting minutes and these suggestions are now prioritized as indicated below:

## **1. How can St. Mark's Parish foster Adult Catechesis?**

### **Priority 1:**

**Parents thru their children / Program for parents of CCD children**

**Relationship building**

**Need good communications**

**Connection with people naturally**

**Comfortable**

**Church Groups need to have dynamic speakers**

**Better avenues to reach out to people – ask**

**Offer discussion groups for young adults**

**Identify most important subjects of interest / more focused Homilies**

### **Priority 2:**

**Continue to offer RCIA & Bible study**

**Have Workshops for specifics, such as family planning** (already doing this)

**Library – Sunday's availability** (working on this)

**Page in the Bulletin on Adult Education** (working on this)

### **Priority 3:**

**Have guest speakers / Parish renewals** (trying this / mission scheduled in Feb)

**Parents signature required on assignments**

## **2. How can St. Mark's Parish foster better attendance at Mass?**

### **Priority 1:**

**Publish who is saying the mass and who is the Homilist**

**St. Mark's should have a better, more friendly, up-to-date modern, highly visible and well placed LARGE sign outside of the church that will get the attention of more people and is capable of advertising some of our religious and social events.**

**Publicity / Advertising social events**

**Contact all and survey the inactive / mailings to inactive members**

(There will be a flyer in the Christmas bulletin targeting the inactive.)

**Could be reached through Catechesis**

### **Priority 2:**

**Children's' Ministry**

**Check with other Parishes with good attendance for ideas**

**Guest Homilists / Co-Celebrants**

**More greeters welcoming at Mass / Ministry members**

**"CCD parents" - Role Model type – work with kids during Homilies**

**Priority 3:**

**(Parking issue)** (Can't fix)

**3. How can St. Mark's Parish foster increased Parish participation in various ministries?**

**Priority 1:**

**Ask directly: one-to-one, personal contact**

**Provide training**

**Socialize more / Irish night, Italian night, etc.**

**Informal personal invitations from Ministry members**

**Stress "Privilege" of serving / being invited to serve**

**Priority 2:**

**Ushers should try to be even more welcoming**

**Have representatives from Ministries speak at Mass**

**Priority 3:**

**Ministries need displays at socials** (Msgr wants to keep the socials to just that.)

**Sell from the pulpit by involved individuals** (can't do this)

**4. How can St. Mark's Parish foster more youth involvement?**

**Priority 1:**

**Update Web site and keep it current**

**"Word of mouth"**

**Children's' choir as a teaching tool**

**Priority 2:**

**Check with St. Catherine's & others on what they do** (underway)

(Msgr will speak with St. Michael's in Union / best CYO in the state.)

**Priority 3:**

**Bowling league** (we already have this)

**Basketball games** (we already have this)

**5. What one thing do you think would make the biggest difference in the spiritual life of our Parish?**

**Priority 1:**

**Church as a family**

**Spiritual thought**

**Parts of Mass explained**

**Priority 2:**

**Kid flexible**

**Priority 3:**

**More modern**

**Welcoming** (Doing that)

**6. What one thing do you think is the greatest need in our Parish?**

**Priority 1:**

- Young blood**
- More participation**
- Homilies should be limited, short**
- Mentoring our youth**

**Priority 2:**

- Hold hands at the Our Father**

**7. What is the greatest stumbling block to moving our Parish forward?**

**Priority 1:**

- Peoples' time**
- People feel that their feelings / input are not important**
- Lack of responsiveness of the general church**

**8. If you could give all the people in our Parish an injection of some spiritual gift, what would it be and why?**

**Priority 1:**

- Faith knowledge**
- Participation**

**9. What part of our mission statement is most challenging to you and why?** (These answers are not things we can prioritize.)

**Group 1:**

- Hard to talk to people not here**
- How to do it**

**10. What kind of follow-up is needed?**

**Priority 1:**

- More dialogue between clergy and laypeople**
- More outreach**

**Priority 2:**

- More social events on a regular basis**
- Volunteer party**

**Priority 3:**

- Carnation Ball** (Too large an undertaking for us now)

One attendee (Deacon Dennis had invited), Meagan Toohey, who is new and not yet a member of any Ministries, had prepared some interesting comments in advance on “reaching young adults” and these are included below:

**All of Meagan's suggestions are being give Priority 1:**

### **Reaching young adults in our community**

1. Provide lectures or social activities during times when young people are available, i.e., evenings and weekends. Include refreshments for all activities. For starters young people want spiritual nourishment, a place to ask questions and discuss spiritual issues, learn how to make good decisions and respond to the challenges of this world as mature Catholic adults, and a way to meet other Catholic/Christian young people.
2. Events should be advertised in all local media to attract young people from the local area not just St. Marks parish! Press Releases can be sent to the St. Marks weekly bulletin, all local church bulletins, e-mail lists of the local Catholic Youth clubs, i.e. YACHT, Catholic singles web sites, Diocese of Trenton web site, the Monitor, Catholic Radio and TV stations, etc.
3. Events must be publicized with 1 ½ to 2 months lead time, provide a way for people to register via e-mail, ads must state a web site address for more info, e-mail contact to write for more information. The time must be specific and people must be informed when the event begins and ends. Everyone has busy schedules and do not wish to come to events where they don't know when it will end.
4. Find more ways to connect both our English and Spanish speaking communities. Ideas: exchange cultural dishes, hold a musical or dance performance both groups can appreciate, Flamenco, Tango, etc.

#### **Ideas for events**

After 5 pm Mass on Saturday, 6 pm Pizza and Beer in church basement followed by a lecture. Topics should be relevant to issues in young people's lives and they must be short and practical. There are many examples from the series, Theology on Tap. Ideas for topics were taken from, [http://www.archdiocese-no.org/theology\\_on\\_tap.htm](http://www.archdiocese-no.org/theology_on_tap.htm) and [www.yam.org/yam/cgi/programs/tot](http://www.yam.org/yam/cgi/programs/tot)

**“When You Come to a Fork in the Road, Take It!”** The journey for us in our 20's and 30's abounds in “forks in the road.” There are more than a few times when the choices that we make during these years will affect us for the rest of our lives. Come join us for some practical and effective ways to choose the road that will lead to genuine fulfillment.

**“Men! Women! Can't Live With/Without Them: The Quest for Relationships”**- The journey for us in our 20's and 30's overflows with a quest to be in relationship. It is often a time to search for a life partner. Come join us as we discuss the Catholic context of what finding that partner means.

**“Rags to Riches: Finding Spirituality in a Material World”** - The journey for us in our 20's and 30's is a search for true and intentional living. When the rest of the world puts pressures on us to achieve and be “successful”, we must remain true to who we really are and are called to be, in service to others. Come join us for simple ways that reveal the importance of developing a spiritual side in the midst of living in a material world.

**“Is That Your Final Answer? Practical Ways to Make Monumental Decisions”** - The journey for us in our 20's and 30's brings us to a point of major life decisions. These are the years where decisions are made that have huge influences on our future. Come join us as we learn to discern.

**Money** - Financial Stewardship: Managing Money - and much, much, more!

**Relationships** - Mars and Venus Collide: Understanding - the Opposite Sex

**Politics** - American Freedom: Confronting Relativism

**Prayer** – begin to pray, learn meditation techniques - how to get started and explore your relationship with God

Prepared by: Meagan Toohey, 10/25/05, [mysteriouslibrarian@yahoo.com](mailto:mysteriouslibrarian@yahoo.com)

**It was agreed that Megan should be invited to the February meeting to discuss her ideas with the Council and Deacon Dennis will reach out to her.**

**There will be no Parish Council meeting in December. Our next meeting will be on January 31, 2006 at 7:30 PM.**

**Action Items from December 6, 2005 Meeting:**

- 1. Get all suggestions, inputs, agenda items to Karen for our meetings by the 10<sup>th</sup> of each month to allow sufficient time for review, approval and distribution of the package one week prior to each meeting. Responsibility: All Council Members**
- 2. Select replacements for the two open Parish Council seats. One will be selected from the Hispanic Ministry. Deacon Dennis will be speaking with Carlos about this. Msgr will select the other one.**
- 3. Check on the various meetings, seminars, workshops, etc. that our Diocese sponsors and report on those of potential interest at our next meeting. Responsibility: Nelda Ragan**
- 4. Invite Meagan Toohey to our February meeting as a guest speaker. Responsibility: Deacon Dennis**
- 5. Thank you letters need to be sent out to the October 25 meeting attendees from the various ministries. Responsibility: Parish Staff**
- 6. Complete a final review of the needs / challenges submitted by our various Parish Ministries prior to the October 25 meeting and identify any that are not already included in the prioritized suggestions listing from that meeting. Responsibility: Peter Abitanto**

**An updated list of the “Recommendations / Accomplishments of St. Mark’s Parish Council” is attached. This covers our activities since April 2005.**

## **Recommendations / Accomplishments of St. Mark's Parish Council:**

(This will be updated and distributed quarterly.)

1. Established new acting Council Leadership – 4/26/05
2. Recommended proceeding with the Parish Directory project – 5/24/05
3. Recommended more Parish socials to help bring people together. A Parish Picnic is scheduled for Sept. 25. Monthly Wine & Cheese events will be held starting in October after one of the Saturday 5 PM Masses. Breakfast socials are being considered after certain Sunday Masses. – 5/24/05
4. Started ongoing interactive discussions of “The Seven Essential Elements of Parish Life; Descriptors of Worship” and how best to tie these into our Three Year Planning Cycle. – 6/28/05. Completed discussions 9/27/05. One key recommendation from this was to consider establishing a Liturgical Committee.
5. Recommended we try offering Communion in both species. – 6/28/05  
Started on Holyday weekend of 8/13 & 14; now planned on all Holydays and on weekend masses once a month.
6. Recommended establishing a more uniform dress code for Cantors and Readers at Mass that is more complementary with the Celebrant's vestments. – 6/28/05
7. Started having presentations / discussions at Council meetings individually with other key Parish organizations:
  - Finance Committee – 6/28/05
  - Adult Faith Formation – 7/26/05
  - Holy Name Society & Readers – 8/30/05
  - Hispanic Parish Council – 9/27/05
8. Recommended final version of Three Year Planning Cycle Mission Statement – 7/26/05
9. Recommended a written response on the results of the Parish Survey – 7/26/05  
Published in Bulletin on 8/21/05.
10. An open meeting with all Parish Ministries was held in Father Child's Hall on October 25, to discuss how we could all work collectively to help meet the goals of our Three Year Planning Cycle Mission Statement.
11. A meeting was held on Nov. 19 with Msgr and Dennis to discuss the formation of a Liturgical Committee as previously recommended.