

St. Mark's Parish Council Meeting Minutes

January 31, 2006

Council Members:

Msgr. William Carton	non-voting	Present
Deacon Dennis Saake	non-voting	Present
Mr. Frank Prettyman	non-voting	Present
Nelda Ragan	non-voting	Present
Karen Pappas		Present
Gary Cademartori		Present
Peter Abitanto		Present
Mary Ellen Ballou		Present
Tom Hayes		Absent
Melissa Rafter		Resigned due to conflict
Frank Sharp		Present
Carlos Zuna		Present

Highlights:

We welcomed two new members to our Parish Council, Dr. Frank Sharp and Carlos Zuna. Carlos is the head of the Hispanic Ministry's Parish Council. Diana Zuna, who will serve as an alternate when Carlos is not available, was also introduced. Deacon Dennis reported that Melissa Rafter advised that she regretted that she had to resign due to an unavoidable conflict in her schedule.

Following the introductions, Karen thanked everyone for coming and went over routine business of the Parish Council as to when meetings are scheduled and how the materials are prepared and sent out in advance of the meeting. She added, that this was the first meeting of 2006, and we are building on the work that was begun at the October 25, 2005 Special Parish Council Meeting with the heads of all the Parish Ministries and offered extra handout packages to the new members and members who could not attend that meeting. She also advised that beginning with this meeting, the materials from the 2006 Parish Council meetings, including agenda and minutes, will be posted on the website and announced in the bulletin so that all parishioners who are interested can review the work of the Parish Council as detailed in the minutes.

An End of the Year report was given by Peter which highlighted the various recommendations and accomplishments of our Parish Council in 2005. These items were documented and included in the handout for this meeting with our previous meeting's minutes.

Deacon Dennis reported that the major church renovations are completed. The new Heating and Air Conditioning systems are installed and working, the roof and outside masonry have been repaired and sealed, the kitchen has been renovated, and Father Childs Hall has been painted. The Rectory renovations are next on the

list along with the outside landscaping. Our new Parish Directories are now expected to be available in 3 weeks.

Monsignor Carton announced that during Lent at St. Mark's there will be daily confessions, The Way of the Cross on Fridays at 10:30 AM, and a 4 day mission in the second week of March. Also being scheduled will be a Mass of Healing and Communal Penance. Special Children's' presentations are planned during Lent on Ash Wednesday and at certain 10 AM Sunday Masses.

Nelda reported on a new Diocesan Program called "Share Your Faith", a 9 session Evangelization training course given one Saturday a month between January and November 2006, and suggested that we have parishioners attend and report back on these sessions. Monsignor will review this and will likely invite certain individuals to participate.

In reviewing the Action Items from our 12/6/05 meeting, Karen volunteered to prepare a letter for Monsignor to send to all participants from our various Ministries who attended our 10/25/05 meeting. Peter reported completion of a final review of the needs / challenges submitted by our various Parish Ministries prior to the Oct. 25 meeting and identified three that were not already included in the prioritized suggestions listing from that meeting. These were:

1. The Finance Committee could use help locating and evaluating high quality products and contractors to help with the work planned for renovations.
2. The Knights of Columbus needs assistance improving communications between St. Mark's and their Council # 3231.
3. Adult Faith Formation needs assistance to determine what areas of interest in the Church the people in the Parish would like to pursue.

It appears that the first one is no longer needed, however, Monsignor and Deacon Dennis will check with the Finance Committee. Monsignor mentioned that the Knights of Columbus generally meets at St. Dennis' Church, but he will follow-up and speak with them directly. The third item needs further attention and will be added to our prioritized list under Adult Catechesis.

Discussions then began on the suggestions from our Oct. 25 meeting and specifically on the Priority 1 items related to "How can St. Mark's foster Adult Catechesis?"

Monsignor reported that we can grow our Bulletin to 8 pages and the intent is to have up to 4 pages focused on Evangelization.

Deacon Dennis had attended a workshop recently and was exposed to some prepackaged programs with lesson plans and handout materials published by Harcourt with interactive sessions for parishioners of all ages that addressed many relevant topics relating to Advent, Lent, etc. that we might consider using. We agreed to establish a committee to review this program material for use at St.

Mark's. Volunteers for this committee were: Deacon Dennis, Nelda, Karen, Frank and Mary Ellen.

Frank suggested a Bible study program but he is concerned that the times this might be scheduled may not be convenient for many parishioners. Deacon Dennis then reported on a web site that provides Bible study specific to the daily Readings that parishioners could access at their convenience. Deacon Dennis will check with our new Webmaster to create a hot-key on our web site to access this.

Monsignor announced that a special Homily is planned during Lent to encourage our Parishioners to invite inactive members of our Parish back to Church. And a special handout has been prepared for this. Gary mentioned a program from another Parish that had a specific liturgy for new people coming back to the Church. Gary also suggested a specific program for CCD parents and have more special Masses with their participation.

Mary Ellen suggested we meet with some of our teenage Parishioners to see what their interests are. Monsignor reminded everyone that we need to get someone to run our Youth Program first.

Diana reported on the Hispanic Ministry. Their CCD program is running. First Holy Communion will be scheduled at their 5 PM Sunday Masses. Confirmations will be combined with the other youth of our Parish when scheduled. More transportation help is needed to enable others without transportation to attend Mass. Some suggestions were discussed to recruit volunteers, especially Parishioners in the transportation business. There are currently about 2000 Hispanic families in our area between Point Pleasant and Belmar.

Monsignor said that at our first Hispanic Mass 3 ½ years ago there were 29 people in attendance. Now we have over 300 active families in our Hispanic Ministry.

Our next meeting will be on February 28, 2006 at 7:30 PM.

Action Items from January 31, 2006 Meeting:

- 1. Get all suggestions, inputs, agenda items to Karen for our meetings by the 10th 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. 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**
- 3. Invite Meagan Toohey to our February meeting as a guest speaker. Responsibility: Deacon Dennis**

- 4. Thank you letters need to be sent out to the October 25 meeting attendees from the various ministries. Responsibility: Karen & Parish Staff**
- 5. Review the Harcourt program that Deacon Dennis had learned about at a recent workshop for possible use at St. Mark's. Responsibility: Deacon Dennis, Karen, Nelda, Mary Ellen and Frank**
- 6. Contact our Webmaster to create a hot-key to the site that provides Bible Study on our daily Readings. Responsibility: Deacon Dennis**
- 7. Prepare for continued discussions of the prioritized suggestions from our October 25, 2005 meeting (these are attached for everyone's convenience), and start reaching out to other Parishioners. Responsibility: All Members**
- 8. Check within Sea Girt to determine the regulations regarding outdoor signs so we might know what our options are if it is decided to upgrade our Church sign. Responsibility: Mary Ellen Ballou**

Suggestions From Our October 25 Meeting

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

- 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

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

Determine what areas of interest in the Church the parishioners would like to pursue with Adult Faith Formation

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 and 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

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