St. Rita Parish Pastoral Council
Tuesday, March 12, 2024
Church Narthex

Members in attendance: Myra Fox, Bill Greinke, Ellie Hammond, Bob Mitchell, Pat Rossman, Mark Schmitz, Anna Marie Smetana, Jean Weaver and Mary Claire Weisensel. Also in attendance was Trustee Dennis Collins.

Guests:
St. Louis: Corrine Angotti, Trustee; Donna Mooney, PPC Secretary

St. Paul the Apostle: David Holland, Trustee; Jennie Tremelling, PPC; Michael Clementi, PPC; John Mand, PPC and liaison to PFC; Gayle Titus, PPC

Excused: Dave Eberle, Sharon Gierahn, Fr. Michael

The opening prayer was led by Bill at 7:10 p.m.

Approval of Minutes: A motion was made by Mark Schmitz to accept the February 13, 2024 minutes and it was seconded by Jean Weaver.

Discernment Process: Pat is looking for 1 more volunteer to assist Sharon Gierahn and Dennis Collins in leading the discernment discussions in May. No date has been selected as yet. Mark Schmitz stepped forward to help with this process.

Liaison Reports: The following reports were distributed via email prior to the meeting: Human Concerns (Brown Bag Lunch Program), Safety & Security, Planning and Stewardship. Bob Mitchell reported on the Finance Council. There were quotes for new computers that were reviewed and discussed and they decided to go with some quotes that were provided at the meeting. There was some movement of funds from BMO to Johnson Bank as they have better interest rates and there will be another account moving to Johnson Bank in November. These will be put into money market accounts, so we do have access to the funds, but it still earns interest. The SR Business Manager stated that we must account for funds in and out of accounts for SR. Tamper proof bags and forms are to be used and there are rules to be followed whether by the Archdiocese or our insurance carrier, Catholic Mutual. Also, with the computers there was an additional fee for licensing that we should have had a long time ago so the PFC authorized money for that without taking 3 bids.

New Business:

RSPA: Bill mentioned that the RSPA, which is our PTA from SR School, had sent a thank you to Bill and Father for attending their last meeting. Bill stated that these meetings are open to all PPC members. Bill suggested that one PPC member attend these meetings each month. The next meeting will be held on March 18th in Cascia Hall. Father suggested the location.

Flagpole Update: Andrea Scharding told Dan Schrank and Bill that she is leading a small group

that is putting together a package to replace the missing flagpole. If more money is needed, she will let Dan or Bill know.

2023 Festival: The financials have been reported. If you are interested in seeing the results, Bill has a printed report.

Parish Financial Review: Bill told us that a financial review is coming from the Archdioceses. This audit will occur in the month of March – it appears that it involves the realignment of parishes and that we are but the first.

New Parish Formation: There is a Formation Committee meeting being held tonight at St. Paul's. This committee will help the new Pastor to put together the priorities & actions to be taken, whose to do what, when will it all happen and so on

Business Meeting Adjourned: The business portion of the meeting was adjourned at 7:20p.

Bill welcomed our guests from St. Louis and St. Paul's and told them that we had Jim Sisak, a Trustee from St. Mary's on the Lake attend our meeting last month. Bill stated that we learned a lot about St. Mary's and that Jim stated that he had learned a lot about St. Rita.

Bill explained that we are just opening a door and trying to start a conversation regarding the clustering all our parishes. It will be nice to know who's who and what is important to your parish as well as you learn what is important to us.

Discussion began with introductions of all present and an exchange of literature describing the organization and leadership of the commissions and committees composing each parish. The many similarities were noted and contact information exchanged.

Follow-on discussion points included:

- Volunteerism – the opportunities afforded by our combining of efforts.
- Finances – LOA Campaign, festivals, Siena Schools
- Possible Shared Services – Formation, Human Concerns
- Aging of parishioners & assets being under, or not, utilized – the same story in all parishes.
- Hope expressed through youth formation activities – revitalize and add needed vibrance.

Much discussion was had regarding the commissions and how their efforts can be joined.

Some specific discussions:

Jean asked how closely St. Paul and St. Louis work together as they share a priest. The response was that they are very independent of each other on committees and councils. They only share the same priest and business manager. Dennis mentioned that our DRE from St. Rita has worked very closely with DRE from St. Paul and the DRE at St. Mary's. Dennis stated how encouraging this is that committees are already reaching out to each other to assist each other on different projects. Folks have already picked up the ball to on another front. St. Louis has attended one of festival

meetings and are willing to help us out if we help them with theirs in the fall. We have the same issue as St. Louis regarding volunteerism. It's hard to get people lined up. A lengthy discussion developed regarding volunteerism in general at our parishes. Also, it was mentioned that all our parishes are aging. Corrine Angotti brought up the possibility of merging the Religious Ed programs but as of now they do share Mary Beth Clowney from St. Paul's as she is the DRE for both parishes. They are independent of one another on most classes except confirmation. Last year St. Louis had 7 kids in confirmed. Corrine does feel that the religious education programs will be merged into 2 churches. As St. Louis is way north and close to the interstate a lot of their members come down from Franklin and southern Milwaukee. For them to attend either a religious education class at St. Paul's or St. Rita would be doubtful as it's quite a drive. This will be the challenge for the families involved in these programs from St. Louis. The programs at St. Paul are not small. They have combined 6, 7, 8 grades; 9 and 10 grades are also combined. As like all over the classes fluctuate in size from year to year. The question was asked how many kids do we have involved in Rel. Ed here at St. Rita. Mary Claire responded that we have about 10 kids that will get confirmed this year and we have also combined 9 & 10 with about 12 kids in that class. St. Mary's had a total of 6 kids in Rel Ed classes. Vacation Bible school was discussed and as of now St. Paul and St. Rita are the only ones participating in this.

Bill asked about Human Concerns groups at each parish. St. Paul has Respect for Life, Prayer & Worship and Happy Crafters to name a few. Ellie went to St. Paul's church last week for mass and picked up their pamphlet with all of their ministries listed which is extensive like ours but some of those are inactive at this time. Bill did share with our guests, our organizational chart and breakdown of each ministry including contact information.

Jean Weaver asked if St. Louis had a school at one point and yes, they did. The school closed sometime between 2000 and 2010, so it has been closed for awhile. The Archdioceses decided to close that school and people are still upset with that decision even though it was not making ends meet. They used the building for day care for sometime but that ended about 1 ½ years ago. So, they have the same situation as us. St. Paul has a condo close by for the attending priest. St. Louis has a house on the property for their priest but now it is rented by a special needs group. St. Paul's has the one building, St. Louis has 3 buildings (church, school & house) and we have 3 buildings (church, school & Casia Hall). St. Louis does use the school as church office space and meeting areas.

Another discussion developed regarding the LOA campaign for each parish. When this campaign started we had to designate where our portion of the money would be used as a capital expense. St. Louis' money was designated to be used on the church on upgrading and maintenance. No money was set aside for the school or house. St. Rita's money would be used to move the church offices out of Casia Hall to the church. We would be building onto the narthex area with new office space. St. Paul's designation was for the church. They need a new roof and carpeting in their narthex and meeting areas. Windows and cement work have already been done. St. Paul's was built in 2002. Dennis mentioned that our LOA funds may be put into interest bearing accounts that can make money for us. This money must be kept segregated from our general account.

Jean Weaver spoke about a committee which was started a couple of years ago that has morphed into what it is today a standing (permanent) Planning Committee. During the Covid years people

were not coming back to church as quickly as everyone hoped for. We were low on altar servers, getting young families to mass and so on. Also, this Cmte recognized that we needed a broader scope of people on the cmte, so we recruited people that were not on the PPC. We tried to get representation of different age groups which they did. With this group they saw a lot of things that were important to the parish that needed to be worked but they wanted input from the parishioners on what they thought was important to the parish. They sent out a survey asking for the top 3 major issues that you might have with the parish. At this time, Bill interjected that we had sent out a census the year before so we knew the breakdown of the parish. That census was done on paper with mailings and blank forms available in the church narthex. This time around they tried a Google form which we could email out to everyone and the parishioners that do not have email addresses a paper form would be sent to them. It was a bit challenging, but they got through that. The responses that came in digitally were 82%, 9% by mail and 9% completed after mass. The issues that they gave people to choose from are: Casia Hall, mass attendance, parish membership, parish finance, festival, the school and young families. The parish was asked to choose 3 issues that were important to them. The 3 issues most identified were: 1st) parish membership 2nd) mass attendance and 3rd) these were all very close Casia Hall, finance, school and young families. A very distant selection was festival. Michael Clementi asked how many members do we have? Anna Marie referred to the Deanery Data report sent out by the Archdiocese with this information. St. Rita has in 2022, 1,015 members, St. Paul has 1,906 members, St. Mary's 466 members and St. Louis with 764 members. Corrine Angotti mentioned that with the coming of fewer masses one of the positive things coming from this will be the feeling of a full church. When she goes to St. Louis on a religious education Sunday it feels full. But the same amount of people in St. Paul's church would feel empty. St. Paul's will hold 1,000 people, St. Rita 950, St. Louis 200 and St. Mary's 340. The change in membership is as follows: St. Rita down 43%, St. Paul up 4%, St. Louis up 2% and St. Mary's down 19%. Jean got the conversation back to the Planning Cmte discussion. Before we got wind of any of the combining of parishes, they started to develop a 3 year strategic plan. They used the results from the survey and came up with 5 objectives. As it sounds, these objectives would work for all of the parishes as we similar issues. They are: 1.) Increase attendance at mass 2.) Increase the number of young adults and families who attend mass 3.) Strengthen the sense of community 4.) Increase collaboration between church and school 5.) Eliminate our need for deficit budgeting.

Jean brought up that since Siena was formed the SR school feels less and less our school. This is also draining a lot of the parish finances for its support and there are not as many catholic families attending the school. We do not have anything to say of what goes on in the school so that has been a major issue over the last 4 years. Corrine Angotti spoke and said you can't imagine the bitterness that St. Louis has. They were forced to close their school and now they must support the Siena School System. St. Paul has no school and they to, must pay the SSS tax. A very lengthy discussion followed. Mark Schmitz mentioned that he attended the SR Open House at the school along with a number of PPC members. He was very surprised at what he saw at the school. He saw display's that the students made on Pope John Paul II and displays on St. Peter. There were not just drawing but 3-D dioramas of Pope John Paul, St. Peter and Noah's Ark.
We have 63% 144 children are Catholic, 7% 16 kids are Christian, 8% 19 kids are Lutheran, 1% 1 child Methodist, 2% 5 kids non-denominational, 12% 28 kids no religious affiliation, 10 people did not list anything, 1 child Presbyterian, 2 kids Baptist with a total of 227 children.

(At this point, Fr. Michael arrived and joined our meeting.)

Jean spoke about the last meeting of the Human Concerns which Mark Schmitz is the liaison, that they received a letter from the St. Luke's Episcopal Church with a request. This church hosts the Hospitality Center 5 days a week feed the homeless people in our area. They are looking for 2-3 local churches to help with the "Brown Bag Lunch Program on Saturdays. Jean suggested that this would be a program that we could do all together, all 4 parishes. Mark spoke further about this program. The thought was that this would be a good opportunity for the catholic churches to get involved with. They have 8 Saturday's open for a group to make sandwiches and distribute them. We would make the sandwiches at one of our churches and then take them to St. Luke's for distribution. It takes about 1 ½ hrs. to distribute with 8 to 10 volunteers and the cost would be anywhere from $150.00 to $200.00 per Saturday. Also, we would like to do this once a quarter. This might be a good multi-generationally project and this could be used as service hours for high school students. Everyone please think about this and if you have any questions or would like to say let's move forward on this, please contact Mark Schmitz via email. He's email address was shared.

Father Michael shared his thoughts on the Formation meeting at St. Paul's. Very much like ours with introductions and so forth. Father said that by the end of the night he walked away feeling renewed and refreshed. He is very confident of success with these 4 parishes and the different avenues we can take to get to know one another.

Upcoming PPC Dates:

Tuesday, April 9, 2024
Tuesday, May 14, 2024
Tuesday, June 11, 2024

The closing prayer was led by Father Michael at 8:37 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Patricia Rossman
Secretary
St. Rita Parish - Parish Pastoral Council