



## Leadership Community begins another cycle of discernment: **IDENTIFYING the signs of our times.**

As our parish enters into the third year of our parish theme and calling, “Hearts on Fire! Encounter Jesus, Embrace His Kingdom,” our Leadership Community (parish council, staff and Fr. Paul) is beginning a year of discernment to better understand our God given calling. We begin this new cycle of discernment because God calls us to renew ourselves on a regular basis in order to meet the changing historical and social circumstances that confront us. Change is therefore not an option for our parish but a necessary part of our calling. For us, discerning God's call is central to our life and mission and must be continuous if our parish is to be faithful and effective in ministry and mission.

On August 19<sup>th</sup> the Leadership Community gathered to prayerfully reflect upon the 72 interviews and online surveys conducted with parishioners to better understand their hopes and concerns for themselves, our local community, our nation and our world. We used the insights from these interviews and surveys to help us shed light on the times in which we live. Collecting input from parishioners about the world they inhabit and using this information in order to identify the signs of our times, constitute the first two steps in our discernment process.

After prayerfully reflecting on the input from our parishioners the Leadership Community identified the following signs of our times that will become the focus of our discernment going forward:

- ◆ **We recognize in our parishioners, a deep concern about the growing political and social polarization in our community, our nation and in the world. Social unrest, racism, exclusion and various forms of domination are increasing people's feelings of isolation and are fueling a rise in unhealthy forms of individualism.**

- ◆ **We also hear from our parishioners' a growing anxiety about the future of their families; especially regarding their financial stability; their health and access to health care; and the strength and stability of their family's faith life.**
- ◆ **At the same time, our parishioners find hope in the actions of individuals and communities who reach out beyond their own in order to help those in need. They are encouraged by young people who are eager to make a difference in the world by serving others. Our parishioners see God at**



(L to R) Brian Peltz, Fr. Paul, Peggy Soeldner and Sam Schroeder discuss the interview results from parishioners.

**work in communities of inclusion, collaboration, cooperation and kindness, and they are inspired by the witness of Pope Francis.**

The next steps in our discernment process will include analyzing and better understanding the social and cultural forces

at work in the concerns and anxieties represented in the signs of our times. We also want to explore and understand the hopes that energize our parishioners and that create healthy life-affirming communities. Finally we want to interpret all that we have learned through the lens of Catholic teaching and Sacred Scripture.

As we move through this process we will be asking for your input. Today we would like your input on the signs of the times we have identified. Does the Leadership Community's description of the times in which we live resonate with you? If so, how? If not, why?

Please complete our parish online survey to give us your input. Go to:

[smmp.com/discernment](http://smmp.com/discernment)