

Minutes for St. Margaret Mary Parish Pastoral Council March 5, 2024 meeting

Present: Fr. Max Behna, Steve Novotny, Lise Nauman, Kelly Metzger and John Runger. Jennifer Nolan and Bob Presnak attended via Zoom.

The meeting opened at 7 pm with a prayer led by Lise Nauman.

Clarity Questions

Fr. Max led the council in a recap of the clarity questions from Amazing Parish. He showed a framed posted that illustrates the clarity questions that will be hung in the Parish office meeting space.

1. Why do we exist? To help people experience new life in Christ
2. How do we behave (what are our core values)?
3. What do we do? Encounter Christ, grow in Christ, and be Christ to the world
4. How will we succeed? Radical hospitality, faithfully Catholic, vibrant community
5. What is most important right now (what is the rally cry)?
6. Who must do what?

President's Report – Steve Novotny

Steve asked Council members to look at the attachments he sent and send feedback through the week, with the exception of the February meeting minutes, which were approved with the suggested corrections.

Steve invited council members to share suggestions they have with Fr. Max regarding items that might be considered as the new budget is created. Items suggested for consideration were renovation to the public bathrooms, repairs for the baptismal font, and repairs in the HVAC system moving from analog to digital. Fr. Max reported that that the HVAC improvement was already completed.

A Pastoral Council calendar has been shared. Steve requested that council members review it and send any feedback to Steve.

Parish closing and school closing update. The Diocese announced that five parishes will close and seven will combine, which will bring the existing 16 parishes in the Joliet Deanery to seven. Additionally, two schools will close and one new school will open as a part of this consolidation effort. The decision to close/combine parishes is based on decreasing attendance, staffing shortages and mounting expenses from aging facilities.

There was a discussion on whether it makes sense to continue to do ongoing analysis of mass attendance / new parishioner demographics to determine where people are coming from and whether they are within our parish district or from other places. Steve has spoken to Rochelle about it. Attendance updates will likely be given on a quarterly basis. As new parishioners register their demographics are being entered into the database. There was some discussion of whether we want to publish a printed directory rather than just have the information internally as another tool for helping parishioners get to know one another.

Pastoral Council recruitment – Kelly and Jennifer have started the recruitment process and are meeting with Fr. Max next week to finalize the process. Council members were encouraged to talk to people who might be good candidates and judge their level of interest. A formal update will be given at next month's meeting.

Pastor's Report – Fr. Max

Tabernacle update – We have received an estimate of \$40k for the tabernacle itself. Don't have an estimate for the stand it will be sit on. Spoke to Fr. Mark from Notre Dame Parish in Clarendon Hills who did this recently and their stand cost \$15k. Fr. Max has been approached by parishioners with offers to fund the tabernacle initiative. If the decision is made to move forward with the project this funding option will be more completely vetted.

The weekend of 3/9-3/10 Fr. Max will offer a very brief introduction of the proposal at the end of Mass. This will include that potentially adding a tabernacle to our church will incorporate two themes – the year of revival and the other being the Parish with a Heart. Tabernacle door specifically customized with a heart on the door. Will share more the following weekend. The weekend of 3/16-3/17 Fr. Max will preach about it, give some explanations, and share why it is being proposed to the Parish. Fr. Max and the council are open to hearing from all parishioners and listening to their feedback. If the decision is made to move forward, then a timeline will be established. That weekend we will have posters with the tabernacle and what it will look like in the worship space. Stand will come out over the brick seat. Table is slightly deeper than the brick seat.

A question was asked if it would still be possible to have it installed by June 1st, the feast of corpus christi. Fr. Max commented that time is getting tight so we'll have to see after parish feedback is received. Steve asked if Fr. Max wanted Council members present after Mass that weekend. Fr. Max thought that would be a good idea.

Staff update – Chris Holstein continues to be outstanding. He’s gotten a lot done already.

Alpha has been great. First night had a very positive spirit. Many of the participants are people who do not regularly attend the optional events at the parish, which is a very good sign. One of the goals of offering Alpha is that it is a tool to cast a very wide net. Goal is that by the end something is stirred up in their faith life and they will start attending more at the parish.

The cost of the four benches has all been covered by designated parishioner donations (each one cost \$1,600).

Rally Cry Update

Fr. Max introduced the new Rally Cry, which is question 5 of the Clarity Questions: what is most important right now?

- Last rally cry – Build a Firm Foundation, which involved five defining objectives
 - Fortify PLT (last spring just Fr. Max and Rochelle)
 - Diversify the group: Added three new members to include deacon/part time staff member/long time parishioner, key volunteer/PC member/Commission lead/long-time parishioner; and business manager
 - Develop a solid, cohesive staff
 - Fully staffed including business manager; facilities manager; sacrament coordinator; added new Adult Faith Formation assistant
 - Empower the staff to own the Clarity in their roles
 - Invested time in staff retreat and monthly formation to understand the Clarity and apply it to our roles
 - Examples of what we’ve noticed:
 - Unceasing prayer = praying as staff daily, praying with parishioners.
 - Healthy teamwork = more collaboration between staff members
 - Positive attitude = embracing and integrating the Mission within roles and ministries
 - Form the PC in the Clarity Questions
 - PC retreat similar to staff
 - Support and enthusiasm of the Clarity Questions is truly appreciated!
 - Empower the PC to live out the clarity and their defined role of advising, assessing, and assisting.

- PC started to meet with Worship Commission to form them in Clarity and will continue with other ministries.
- Next rally cry is **Breathe New Life**. Inspired by the prophet Ezekiel 37: 1-4
- Why? We've built a foundation including the "structural skeleton". Now it is time to start filling it in and build upon it = breathe life into it.
- What does this look like?
 - Leaders, ministries, and parishioners are on fire for the mission versus going through the motions.
 - Faith and life are integrated. No boundaries with our faith.
 - Ministries and their activities
 - Our parishioners
 - Want to get out of our walls and into the world; have to make sure we are healthy and vibrant internally.
- New Defining Objectives:
 - Prioritize the Alpha initiative
 - Want to really push this in the fall and potentially have double the number participating; this is a significant way of attracting and integrating parishioners more fully
 - Engage the staff in the new Rally Cry
 - Want this to be a whole staff initiative. At some point will assign staff to help with this initiative while also weaving it into their current ministries. Might be reaching out to individual parishioners.
- Enhance the ministries
 - Wanted to make current project part of this new Rally Cry. Want to breathe new life into the ministries. Help people take a step back and reflect on their ministries are going.
- Update the church and campus beauty and functionality
 - Concrete way of breathing new life into our parish. Enhancements for the Narthex, bathrooms, tabernacle, parish offices, etc.
- Onboard and integrate new parishioners
 - This looks like being really intentional about bringing in parishioners who have recently registered at the parish and might find themselves only going to Mass. Want to help them take a more active part in the ministries and life of our parish.
- Hope is if we execute all five of these things really well, by the end of August, will bring really positive energy into our Parish.
- Who knows what the Holy Spirit can bring on through that and it will continue to grow and start to look further out into the world. How do we enter into dialogue with Catholics who haven't been in church since COVID?

A Council member commented that staff and volunteers called families during the pandemic. It was very favorably received. There was a database that was used and notes were taken on any information received during those calls. A question was asked about what happened with that data or the file.

A comment was made and asked to go back to Building a Firm Foundation as the Rally Cry. When look at the staff and Pastoral Council, feel like there is still communication and integration between the staff and PC members that needs to be strengthened as a part of building a firm foundation. At times feel like staff are more focused on their own work and priorities. Would like to see more of staff and Pastoral Council interaction. Fr. Max said he feels like that is good point and is hearing that communication is a focus. Each group might see things that the other doesn't.

How do we better integrate new parishioners? A Council member commented that pastoral council and some parishioners would be better vehicles for that than the staff. Would be good to get to a clearer sense of who and how to lead that initiative. PLT defined some sub goals. Council could speak into that and suggest other initiatives. New parishioner event three times a year – campus tour, exposure to ministry, personal introduction to Fr. Max.

Fr. Max invited council members to reflect and let this digest and suggested that at the next Pastoral Council meeting we can return to the conversation if people have questions or want more detail.

Appreciation Dinner Survey Results

Members of the pastoral council met on 2/27 to go through the survey results.

Key takeaways/ Recommended changes/additions

- Summary of survey shared with Council members
- Perhaps next year also include 5 p.m. Mass to make it an Appreciation Event; make it clear that they need to register for the dinner
- With round tables can fit 225; fire code allows for 300 in the parish center. if people sat in the classrooms that would add 15 people more per individual classroom.
- Suggesting that the budget be increased by 10% with the growing number of participants
- People really like family style and that costs a bit more to have the servers
- Invitation and sign up – make sure there is a way to sign up with a tool so we can message them directly (SignUp Genius was suggested); like to have a few

people that want to sit with a friend; possibly collect any dietary needs and allergy information; make sure that if people call the office to RSVP that we get their email information

- Want to be sure we have a way to invite staff and special guests (i.e., Fr. Max's parents). Want to get RSVPs for all of these additional guests.
- Had some discussion about dessert. Bob provided good feedback on how much coffee and creamer might be needed. Might revisit the idea of doing cookies/brownie bars in addition or instead of cake. Want to get desserts out in the front area of the parish center so people know they can take it home with them if they want to. Might be something the teens can help with.
- Coat check – we have extra claim tickets that can be used next year. Be sure to have a sign to point people toward the coat check. Reach out to Dan Lawler about teens in late November/early December. He takes care of communication with them. Someone needs to oversee the teen volunteers and they need to have Protecting God's Children certification.
- There were people who wanted to tip the teens and those who did tip the teens. Suggestion was to put out a tip jar for people to generally give a donation toward a Youth Ministry cause.
- Should we invite other volunteers? Is there a way to ask or at least receive those who would like to help. It's meant to be an event to celebrate the volunteers but also recognize that some people would want to help.
- Need to make sure we make the request to Men's Club (formal email to president) in November and again as the event gets closer. Same with the band.
- Check in table – could let people know about coat check, table seating, and the appetizers at check in.
- Food choice is always something to consider. Some people were interested in pasta menu. People really like Angeli's. Need to also get someone who will do family style and are within budget and are responsive. Sharko's did a great job working with the teens, keeping on a tight schedule (all food served and dinner completed by 8:10. This helped move the evening along), and kitchen cleanup (this was unexpected and a great help to the Appreciation Dinner team).
- If we get higher numbers we'll need more plates.
- Fr. Max thanked the Council again for all of the work to make this a positive event.

Mission and Vision Ministry Roll Out Plan

Steve met with PLT

- Updated the presentation and made some edits to cut it to closer to an hour
- Gave some feedback on the ministry reflection form

- Discussed accountability if someone on pastoral council asks someone on staff to do something. Is it reasonable to expect they will do it?
- Thought the presentation to the Worship Commission went ok. Didn't get a lot of feedback. When we got to the one-on-one sessions there was active dialogue.
- There was some friction regarding the idea that we wouldn't want a "mediocre" volunteer and what to do if there is someone willing but particularly skilled.
- Can get two kinds of mediocrity coming through – heart not in the ministry anymore and are just going through the ministries versus someone who is giving everything they can but aren't the highest performers. Should be handled in different ways. Interior excellence versus exterior excellence. Holding people accountable if it is within their control (like they aren't showing up)
- Ministry enrichment forms: where do we stand with them, what do we do with them, how are we following up?
 - The first thing we should do is exchange forms with the ministry leader and to have dialogue and establish action steps.
 - Steve commented that he would like to get some feedback on whether the level of detail is what we are looking for before we move forward with additional ministries.
 - Fr. Max is willing to get more in depth with the Worship Commission since he directly oversees them, but would not go to that level with other ministries.
 - A question was raised about whether anything that is an area of opportunity have a timeline attached to it. There may be some things that will take a longer time. Pastoral Council will need to continue to accompany these ministries over time, perhaps biannually making contact as this is a continuous improvement process. Discussed the need to plan for how that would be handled as people roll off council. Would the new council member continue the work? Ministry leader is the one who is really keeping that moving forward. It is the leader who is supposed to be enhancing the ministry. Help them take ownership and continue to pursue excellence.
 - Next steps – having a meeting to plan the roll out to the next groups
 - Administration and Finance, Service, Formation will be next groups we meet with
 - Fr. Max and PLT are comfortable with us deciding how this rolls out
 - Want to make sure we have good communication and follow through
 - Request to give PLT an update on April 8th

Commission Reports

- A question was raised about the increase of the baptism fee, especially given that this is an entry point for young families getting involved in parish life. Fr. Max said that the staff was looking at fees in general and it was pointed out that the increased baptismal fee, which is a suggested donation not a requirement, was based on our neighboring parishes.
- The same was done for weddings previously.

Closing

Fr. Max led the closing prayer and the meeting adjourned at 9:25 p.m.