**Pastoral Council Meeting Minutes**

Tuesday November 10, 2020

**In Attendance**: Christina Boss, Marilyn Bridges, , Craig Meisman, Rev. Tim Ralston, Bill Rapp,  
Jeanie Stephens (Chairperson), Chuck Cullen (Recording Secretary)

**Absent**: John Kelly, Megan Neuhaus

**Guest:**

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**Note:** Due to the current Covid-19 pandemic, this meeting was conducted via video conference.

**Opening:** The meeting was called to order at 7:04 p.m. by Fr. Tim.

**Faith Sharing/Opening Prayer**: Chairperson Stephens recited a prayer asking God to lift everyone in these times and noting that nothing can separate us from God’s love.

**Christmas:** Chairperson Stephens asked the members about ways we can help celebrate Christmas. She suggested a personal invitation to all parishioners to come, perhaps even placing some notice on the outside sign. Christina Boss asked about the need to sign-up for mass on Christmas. Fr. Tim replied that a sign-up may be necessary. He also informed the members that he was considering two masses on Christmas eve, a midnight mass, and two masses on Christmas morning. Furthermore, with a new camera now installed, it may be possible to live stream a mass to any overflow crowd in Ventura Hall. Bill Rapp inquired about the current six-foot seating arrangement in the Church. He believed using every other pew was possible and that would increase the available seating. Fr. Tim replied that he had measured the distances between pews and that such a concept is not within current health guidance. Marilyn Bridges asked about when the choir could resume. Chairperson Stephens added that one option would be to divide the choir members among the masses to allow singing with social distancing. Fr. Tim replied that the Archdiocese has requested masses reduced duration. He also noted with singing without masks would require even more distancing among choir members. While recognizing that every parish is different, he sees no option for the choir currently. Christina Boss expressed her appreciation of the safeguards taken by the parish and feels safe attending mass. Marilyn Bridges asked about having more in-person events at the parish since the school is operating with close contact among students. Fr. Tim indicated that the school has space to provide distancing. If the parish had more space, additional events could be possible, but that space does not exist.

**Current Financial Situation**: Chairperson Stephens mentioned the recent reports in the bulletin that shows a financial shortfall of over $50,000 in collections so far this fiscal year. She asked the members for suggestions to help that situation. Bill Rapp asked about any PPP loans that the parish may have received. Fr. Tim acknowledged that the parish did apply and was granted a loan. He believed the parish had met the criteria so no repayment will be necessary. He also indicated a new grant of $10,000 may be coming soon. The recent raffle also generated $20,000 for the parish but he added that more collections are needed. Bill Rapp inquired about an e-mail to all parishioners. Fr. Tim noted that they find a lot of incorrect e-mail addresses when they do that, but it can be done. Marilyn Bridges expressed a concern that the bulletin provides a lot of opportunity to connect with parishioners, but she has observed a lack of new material in it recently. Fr. Tim admitted that there have been some recent issues assembled in advance due to Katie’s time off that prevented new material and that some messages are repeated in the bulletin to help ensure more parishioners see them. Chairperson Stephens asked if she could discuss the bulletin with Katie and Fr. Tim approved such a discussion.

**Parish Region Update:**  Fr. Tim reminded the members of an earlier plan to create Pastoral Regions within the Archdiocese. Under that plan, St. Bernadette and St. Thomas More would eventually become a Pastoral Region. There was even some preliminary planning between the parishes a few years ago. Recently, however, the Archdiocese has re-examined its Pastoral Region plan due to newer projections of the number of priests. As a result, a One Pastor-One Parish model is now the prevailing path for the Archdiocese. That model would have one pastor with one staff and one Pastoral Council and one primary church. Other church buildings would remain but offer services less frequently.

Fr. Tim and Fr. James Reutter (St. Mary’s in Bethel and St. Peter’s in New Richmond) have had conversations about applying the One Pastor-One Parish model to their three parishes, ending any plans for a St. Bernadette/St. Thomas More Pastoral Region. The discussions have included input from Fr. Wagner at St. Thomas More and the Archdiocese Office. Approval to proceed has been granted. The next step is to conduct in-parish discussions at all locations. After Easter 2021, representatives from all locations would meet to plan the implementation in more detail. The preliminary target date to commence the One Pastor-One Parish model is July 1, 2022.

The members then asked a series of questions. Marilyn Bridges asked if those parishes have schools. Fr. Tim said they have no schools. Christina Boss inquired if St. Bernadette the largest of the three. Fr. Tim said yes. He envisioned St. Bernadette being the primary location with the other churches serving as perhaps chapels with one mass per weekend at St. Mary’s and St. Peter’s. Craig Meisman inquired about the care of the St. Peter’s Cemetery. Fr. Tim was not certain. Bill Rapp asked about the fate of the two priests. Fr. Tim replied that one would be reassigned.

The discussion then moved to how best to assist Fr. Tim with the transition. Should Pastoral Council serve as an intermediator between the parishioners and Fr. Tim? Should a separate committee be formed? Who else should provide input? How many people should be on this committee? Should an outside facilitator be employed to assist? What backgrounds would be useful for those serving on a committee? The general consensus was that most members of the Pastoral Council wanted to advise Fr. Tim, but that other parishioners or staff will be needed, like the school.

**Pastor’s Corner:** Fr. Tim reiterated that the discussions with Fr. Ruetter have been going on for about a year and that he views Pastoral Council’s input as valuable in this transition.

**New Business**: Christina Boss asked about the Pastoral Council elections that, under usual circumstances, would have taken place in October. Fr. Tim expressed his continued support for all current members, and it was agreed that the terms would be extended for another year unless a member desired to end their term.

**Ending Prayer:**  Fr. Tim asked God for His help in providing unity, peace, and justice. The prayer also asked for God’s guidance.

**Adjournment**: The meeting was adjourned at 8:15 p.m.

**Next Meeting – To Be Determined**

Approved: March 16, 2021