

## **Pastoral Council Meeting Minutes**

**Thursday, March 11, 2021**

**6:00 pm**

**VIRTUAL MEETING via Zoom**

**Prayer:** Betsy Zolper

**Formation:** Betsy Zolper

### **Review of Minutes**

Motion to approve as submitted, seconded, and passed.

**School Update:** Jeanne Bliss (for Kimberly Parker)

The School is increasing in person learning, grades 5-8 moving from current 2 days to 4 days/week, with 95% of teachers vaccinated.

- Staggered approach – 8<sup>th</sup> grade started this week; other grades to follow.
- Next year 5 days in school for all grades – 20 students per classroom
  - Will continue to offer concurrent learning (on line)
- The plan for the remainder of this year and next was overwhelmingly approved by teachers and families.
- 200+ applications for 2021-22 school year

Excellent year, despite the pandemic; the students are participating in many charitable activities:

- Lamb Center chosen as outreach project by 3<sup>rd</sup> graders
- Catholic Charities dress-down day March 17
- Rice Bowls

A question was raised about lunch outside for students?

- Currently using parking lot by parish offices
- Experimenting with inside seating; hallways, etc., but difficult to maintain social distancing.

**PTPO Update:** Jennie Hooker

Thanks for support of Italian Gourmet dining for dollars event; owners pleased as well.

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- Next event: Panera in Vienna, March 17, 4-8 pm

The wine social with Oakton Wine Shop was a success – 30 families joined

Finally, PTPO is 85% of the way to its Lion Laps fundraising goal for the year. April 19 deadline for donations; Jennie will send out the link for those who wish to donate.

## **Finance:**

### **Tom Brownell**

Church financials are looking good:

- Collections are on par with the previous year, despite the pandemic;
- One-time \$50K Required Minimum Distribution donation from a parishioner in January;
- Expenses down, due to reduced services, in certain areas;
- Cash position good, due to all of the above and PPP loan;
- Extraordinary dividend – DIAL account – Est. \$183K;
  - Receipt expected in March

School financials are also looking good:

- 2021-22 School Year bringing all kids back 5 days;
  - 20-21 students per classroom, per new guidelines
  - Expect to fill all seats

### Capital Improvements

- Air conditioning chiller replacement in progress;
- Accepting bids for new columbarium unit;
- Thankfully, the boiler does not have to be replaced at this time;
- The Finance Council is working on a detailed list of capital improvement projects to aid planning and budgeting.

### PPP Loan

- Application for forgiveness of loan is in process;
  - Hope to obtain by end of fiscal year
  - May not be possible, due to changing requirements imposed by government.
- The Finance Council will make clear in monthly Bulletin financial reports that cash includes PPP loan proceeds, which still is technically a liability that must be repaid.

**Commission Reports (Questions or Discussion):** Written reports received Tuesday of week of meeting

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- a. Community Service – Sarah Kirk  
No questions
- b. Religious Education – Andrea Kramer  
No questions
- c. Community Growth – Betsy Zolper  
Following Christ follows Alpha; new Following Christ session after Easter
- d. Worship – Pam Burke  
First Communion in May – Liturgical Arts plan to spend increased money on flowers than has been the case on other weekends during the pandemic.  
  
A question was asked on how parishioners can contribute offerings for flowers – opportunity already exists at Christmas and Easter with special envelopes but not year-round.
- e. Youth – Tom Pell  
No questions

### **Old Business:**

#### Lent and Easter Schedule

- Diocesan requirements have changed – permits feet washing on Holy Thursday.
- Easter Vigil Mass – no change for now: Mass to be live-streamed from the chapel.
- Cleaning: Crystal Sheehan reported that the office is looking into the ability to schedule more cleanings, including the possibility of using volunteers
  - Some additional services can be obtained from the company, at an additional cost
  - Use of volunteers can be problematic because of difficulty in scheduling volunteers and in ensuring that all tasks – particularly bathroom cleaning – are performed.

#### Parish Survey

- Thanks to Sarah, Marjorie, and Andrea for preparing survey.
- The Survey link was shared starting February 26.
- 300+ responses in just 10 days.
- Summary:

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- Worship Online: 50% are accessing St. Mark online; 25% other places
  - Concerns: Poor audio, video quality – these issues are being worked on
- Worship In person: 32% at St. Mark; 12% at other communities
  - 40% want more in-person Masses.
  - Concerns: Difficulty hearing clergy through mask; limited music/singing.
- Parish connections
  - 40% are staying connected on line; 40% not attached.
  - Parish members want a closer relationship with school; more social events.
- Parish communications
  - 30% want more communications from Fr. Pat and the staff.
  - Concern that people are not being informed of options – particularly those with limited or no internet access.
  - One possibility is to “push” out bulletins by email
    - Crystal noted that any such email “pushes” must be opt-in only.
  - Mailings are a possibility, but each general mailing costs \$1,200 - \$1,500, plus requires substantial volunteer time and effort.
- Discussion of options:
  - Resumption of outside Communion Service
    - Mass outside is logistically difficult and not favored
    - Easter Sunday Mass @ 11 will be livestreamed and Communion distributed in back of the Church
  - Resumption of Sunday Youth Mass
    - Tom Pell stated that online efforts with youth have not been very successful
  - There was general agreement that we need to report back to the parish on the results of the survey and show action on one or more items of concern.

**Recommendations.** As a response to the parish survey, the Pastoral Council recommends that St. Mark:

- Resume a weekly outdoor Communion Service after Easter, when weather is likely to be better.

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- Resume a monthly Youth and Family Mass on Sunday evenings beginning in April.
- Send a parish-wide mailing to acknowledge the survey feedback and any liturgy or activity changes under consideration, promote the upcoming Holy Week/Easter worship schedule, and promote the ability to opt-in to the monthly parish e-newsletter.

### **New Business:**

**Parish Communications.** Betsy Zolper expressed concern about a submission by the Pro-Life Committee in the February 21 Bulletin that relied upon possibly questionable sources. She inquired as to the chain of review for Bulletin submissions. It was noted that Fr. Pat reviews all Bulletin submissions for content.

**Recommendation.** After discussion, the Pastoral Council appointed a working group, consisting of Andrea Kramer and Pam Burke, to prepare a draft parish communications guide spelling out what our current communications are, how they work, guidelines about appropriate sources that may be cited, and procedures to be factually reviewed by the staff. The working group will present the draft guide to the Pastoral Council at a subsequent meeting, for final review, in advance of submission to Fr. Pat. The communications guide will provide for annual review by the Parish Staff and the Pastoral Council and for regular circulation to ministry heads.

### **Eyes and Ears:**

Discussed in connection with Parish Survey.

### **Father Pat's Comments**

Sunday is Laetare Sunday – time to rejoice

Unfortunately, there are no RCIA candidates in our parish this year, but we join with the Church throughout the diocese and around the world in welcoming new members at this joyous time.

**Closing Prayer:      Father Pat**

**Meeting Ends: 8:00 p.m.**

**Next Meeting: April 15, 2021**

# Service Commission Report for March 2021

Gift of Peace: Every first Thursday, we provide one meal/month to the Reston Shelter. Food is prepared in volunteer's homes, delivered to St. Mark kitchen, then re-delivered to the Shelter. St. Mark has such generous volunteers!

Hot Meals Team (FACETS): St Mark is providing donations to FACETS to purchase food in place of our usual meal contribution. This process is expected to continue at least until May 2021.

Matthew 25: Amazing supply of food continues to be donated in our M25 area from Parishioners. Food is constantly re-distributed to our area organizations in need.

PACT: Ministry: we are still not able to visit our homebound due to Covid.

Social Action Linking Together (SALT):

## **Other Random Service Projects:**

Rice Bowls: We have distributed enough Rice Bowls to all of the students in St. Mark school and the RE program. those funds will go to help Catholic Relief Services.

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# Religious Education Report for March 2021

## SACRAMENTS

- Baptism: There are NO Baptisms during LENT.
- First Reconciliation: more than 70 second graders received the Sacrament during February (all with Fr. Pat). Thank you to Fr. Pat for his gentle way with these 2<sup>nd</sup> graders; he made them less nervous!
- First Eucharist:
  - a. First Eucharist for 3<sup>rd</sup> graders is scheduled for April 24-25 at Mass (9 children). These were postponed from last year.
  - a. The rest of the First Eucharists are scheduled for all weekend Masses in May.
- Confirmation: Bishop Burbidge delegated faculties for Confirmation to Fr. Pat due to social distancing requirements. There will be 3 Confirmation Masses: 5/21, 6/8, and 6/9 at 7 pm.
- RCIA Sacraments: twin SMCS 4<sup>th</sup> graders and one teen are preparing for the Sacraments of Initiation in 2022, and are anticipated to be Catechumens by Sept 2021.
- Easter Vigil 2021: No one will be receiving Sacraments at this year's Easter Vigil.
- Full Communion with Catholic Church: There are now 3 Baptized women preparing for Full Communion.

## ADULT FAITH FORMATION

- Bible Studies:
  - a. *Exodus* Bible Study ends 3/25 (Thursdays 10 am)
  - b. 27 people started the *No Greater Love* Bible Study last week for 5 weeks (Monday 10 am and Tuesday 7:30 pm).

## CHILDREN'S FAITH FORMATION

- The RE year for children's faith formation is in week 21, and ends April 26, 2021.
- A survey is being developing for catechists and RE families to determine interest for in-person RE classes next year, starting either September 2021 or January 2022. Online and homeschool options will continue to be offered. RE classes are expected to be Sunday mornings for in-person; Monday would continue to be online with a catechist.
- Sarah Lundquist, the new RE/YM Administrator who started in December 2020, has been a huge asset to the RE Office. She keeps everyone organized, the office staffed 8:30 am-4:30 pm Monday through Friday, and is spearheading several projects. Life is significantly better for Kevin Flores and Jean Lupinacci since she joined the team, so deep thanks to Sarah!

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## March 2021 Community Growth Activities Report

**Always Our Children:** The St. Mark ministry for the LGBT community, their families and friends, continues meeting, by Zoom. Our mission is to be a presence within our St. Mark community - a place of support and welcome. Our meetings are held every other month on the second Monday.

**Bakers for Funerals:** Cannot have receptions. Will likely recruit when receptions resume.

**Bereavement:** The Bereavement Program online by zoom, has 8 guests, and is aided by four facilitators. Thanks to Kathleen Kelmelis for sending information on recent St. Mark mourners, 2 people signed up when I reached out. The program will go through April 11. We will start another series when we receive more interest.

**Care for Our Common Home Ministry (CCH)** – Learning more about creating a pollinator-friendly Mary Garden. Would like to try this at St Mark. Adopt a Highway clean April 17<sup>th</sup> in celebration of Earth Day – April 22<sup>nd</sup>.

**Christians in Commerce (CIC)** – Meeting weekly through Zoom.

**Ecumenical Bereavement Ministry through the Becky Love Foundation (BLF):** The Grief Group remains on hold, with hope to coordinate with a new counselor in the next few months.

**Evangelist Ministry - Alpha:** Currently holding online sessions about halfway through.

**Funeral Receptions:** Paused.

**Knights of Columbus (Santa Maria Council):** No March update.

**Le Cercle Francais:** Continues to meet via Zoom every Tuesday from 10 to 12 and converse en Francais.

**MOMs Ministry:** Creator of group has been transferred. New administrator monitors Facebook page and gmail account. Not having in person gatherings due to Covid.

**Movie Night:** Cancelled.

**Newcomer's Committee:** Looking forward to welcoming Newcomers when possible.

**Pastoral Care Team (PACT):** We cannot allow our Eucharistic Ministers to visit with our elderly homebound parishioners until we are cleared by the State/Bishop. Same thing goes for our weekly service/visit with the many folks at Sunrise Retirement Home in Oakton. St. Mark PACT ministers continue with the next best thing – calling to visit via phone.

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**Prayer Requests:** Prayer Requests – We continue to receive many prayer requests that are sent out to our 150+ prayer volunteers. Bill welcomes new members to this group!

**Peace and Justice Committee (PJC):** Not meeting.

**Prayer Shawl Ministry:** We have completed sending scarves and hats to the Lamb Center and are replenishing our supply of shawls. Although we no longer meet as a group on the second Tuesday of every month, any completed work is brought to the church by the members on that day and time.

**Praying College Moms (PCM):** monthly PCM meetings will continue through May/June, 2021.

**Sunday, April 18th: PCM Rosary scheduled for over 600 young adults. Via Zoom: 3:00 -4:00:** A Rosary said for the success of students for their end of the year exams, career choices, summer job experiences, and good health.

**Contemplative Prayer Instruction and Practice.** Frances Chamberlin is leading weekly sessions on Sundays from 3:30 to 4:30 via Zoom. We will use scripture (Lectio Divina) and St. Teresa of Avila's "Prayer of Recollection", as the means to build our friendship with *"the one who most loves us"* (St. Teresa of Avila).  
questions

**Pro-Life Committee (PLC):**

The Pro-Life Committee is participating in the 40 Days for Life at the Falls Church abortion center. It runs from Ash Wednesday to Palm Sunday. There are signs for parishioners near the mailboxes outside the parish offices. None of the abortion centers closed during the pandemic, so our witness was needed all of last year. With the removal of a required sonogram and a 24 hour waiting period the number of abortions appear to have increased.

**Remembrance Ministry:** The Remembrance Ministry continues as always.

**Senior Ministry (M&M's):** Many M&M's are participating in Zoom bible study classes.

**Small Communities of Faith:** All of our Small Communities of Faith are meeting virtually. One group is meeting by Conference call weekly and the others have all adopted Zoom as their meeting venue!

**Soup and Stations:** Paused

**Welcome and Information Desk:** No March update.

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# Worship Commission – March Report

- Special Liturgies
  - March 27-28: Palm Sunday, usual weekend schedule
  - April 1: Holy Thursday Mass, 7:30 PM livestream public Mass in Church
  - April 2: Good Friday Liturgy, 3:00 PM livestream public Liturgy in Church
  - April 3: Easter Vigil Mass, 8:30 PM Chapel livestream
  - April 4: Easter Sunday, 9:30 AM Chapel livestream, 11:00 AM livestream public Mass in Church plus overflow in AC and ELC parking lot area
  - April 24-25: Feast of *ST. MARK*, use 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday Easter/B readings
  - Entire month of May: First Eucharists
  - May 21, June 8, June 9: Confirmation Masses, 7:00 PM

Most of the commission meeting discussion was about the Holy Week Services. Holy Thursday Mass will involve the ritual feet washing by Father. Diocesan guidelines will be strictly followed. How many people will have their feet washed is to be determined. We would like the stripping of the altar at the end of mass which usually leads to adoration in the chapel until midnight. Due to social distancing requirements, adoration will continue to be in church as it has been. That would mean re-dressing the altar to some extent. Laura will discuss this further with Father.

Good Friday Liturgy will allow for adoration of the cross after the liturgy. There will be discrete signs noting there should be no touching or kissing the cross, please genuflect or bow.

All upcoming liturgies are shown above. The new Usher President will be sure there are sufficient ushers for all the services. There has been a good response to request for ushers at our in-person masses.

There have been ongoing on Extraordinary Minister Workshops that have been well attended. And we will be ready for the time EM's can serve again!

## Youth Ministry Pastoral Council Committee Report

### **High School Youth Group**

WorkCamp mulch fundraiser on track...pre orders end March 15 ; Mulch day is Saturday, March 27.

Youth Living Stations will be pre-taped using photos from past years and shown on FB and YouTube Channels. Narration and licensed music added in.

The Diocese is offering two scenarios for Work Camp; the following is the option that we will most likely be going with:

- Gather at your own parish each morning for Mass or arrange to gather at a nearby parish.
- Projects identified by parishes with some support from the WorkCamp office. Parish groups will be responsible for ordering materials for projects. The Work Camp office will assist with general guidance.
- Monday through Thursday- Live evening program at nearby Catholic high school. Dinner devotionals, adult-leader handbook, activities/games, t-shirts, prizes.
- Fee- approximately \$45 per youth participant and adult leader.

### **Young Adult Ministry**

First Fridays are back! We went to adoration and hosted a trivia night at Tom's house afterwards that was well attended; ten people in total. We also had a virtual option for people to join over Zoom. Most however, came in person. It was a good model for how we can have in-person events while allowing virtual options for those who cannot attend in person.

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