



St. Mary's Parish Council Minutes – September, 20 2021

Meeting Held in Forcucci Faith Formation Center

7:00 pm meeting called to order by Sean Hughes

In Attendance: Father Stephen Sledesky, Sean Hughes, Josh Livingston, Larry Christian, Jim Cramer, Leon Rippel, Susan Falkner, Lori Ryan, Jeff Ryan, Paul Mikkelson (via Zoom), Noreen Kusiak (Women's Guild), Benjamin Reynolds

Absent: Betty Bible, Paul Henault

Opening Prayer (Lectio Divina) led by Fr. Stephen.

SEAN HUGHES OPENING COMMENT

Welcome to Father Stephen. Grateful to have you as our pastor Look forward to getting to know and work alongside.

Welcome to Ben Reynolds for accepting role as youth representative

Invitation to engagement of the council members and to model dynamism to our faith in these meetings, come prepared, give of yourselves, bring ideas forward. Build up the body of Christ in our community. Great opportunity to embrace change (Susan Falkner)

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Minutes approved for June 9th meeting which will be posted on parish website.

FATHER STEPHEN OPENING COMMENTS

Reflection on the first three months. Grateful to be pastor. Experienced warm welcome. Appreciate patience as he is getting to know staff and volunteers. Thanks to Father Matera who has left the parish in a very good state, excellent leadership. Sees parish as being in good shape, initiatives started before coming to fruition.

Update on initiatives begun prior to transition. *New front steps* make a huge qualitative difference to the parish for safety and aesthetics and serve as a message to the community and who we are as a parish. We are waiting for railings to be installed and then will open. We've received a quote for *trimming of trees* on the south part of the property and for

general trimming and expect to begin work soon. *Deferred maintenance in the rectory* being addressed including several plumbing issues and kitchen floor.

First school board meeting. Financials on target. 170 students. Will use some of the surplus from prior year. Cleaning of the basement area in summer. School masses have begun, mostly on Tuesday at 9:00AM at the beginning of school day. Parishioners invited. All wearing masks. Requirement of state for all schools. Morning prayer outside.

Faith formation has begun for the year. A shift in thinking from classroom approach to forming young people to something broader. A change of an attitude and vision, not just name. Want young people to have an experience of faith, not just head knowledge. K-6 offers in person and virtual options.

2020 Synod Update. There was a Mass at Oakdale in August to close the synod. Last synod mid 1990s and late 1950s prior to that. Meant to be visionary and look to the future. Theme: Grow and Go. Synod documents were shared and will be used as a basis for looking at our goals for the year.

Expectations of Council. Parish council is not mandated by church law and left at the discretion of the local bishop. As a result of the last synod, it was determined every parish should have an active parish council and guidelines were established. It is strongly recommended each parish has one. Pastor presides over. It is to the benefit of the pastor. Shouldn't meet w/o pastor. Help foster pastoral activity. The Constitution is laid out very well. Consultative vote if necessary. Father likes consensus building versus voting. The vision of a parish council as articulated by Mark F. Fischer in '[Parish Pastoral Councils: Purpose, Consultation, Leadership](#)' serves as a useful guide to help pastors investigate, consider and offer recommendations and to establish goals and plans to achieve them.

Setting Goals for the Coming Year. Review Mission Statement. Ensure what we are doing is reflective of this. The Constitution is reflective of what we should be doing. Look at what has already begun and the draft pastoral report from Father Matera. Worship Life. Outreach. Evangelization. Year Ahead. Continue this as we look for new goals for the future. The Synod document needs to be considered in terms of priorities. COVID recovery. Where do we go from this point? Crisis is where things turn and move and an opportunity to not always go back to where we were before. A unique turning point to keep in mind.

What are our own perceptions about what St. Mary needs? Parish council members have the best vantage point. Father is open to our ideas. He will rely on us as he is soaking in and respecting what is here. Respects who the parish is, it's history, and a future he will be a part of. Whatever we do must be bigger than Father's time here. Sustainable for the benefit of the community going forward.

What might the Archdiocese present to us in the way of pastoral planning? No discussion when receiving his assignment to the parish. No foreknowledge. We do know however, the model of one parish per town is a directive from the archdiocese. Need to think about what could be asked of us. Realize this could be part of our future. Can we think in terms of a larger community, first working with priests at St Therese and St Catherine.

IDEA SHARING ABOUT GOALS

A round table discussion of parish council members and guests provided an opportunity to voice our own perceptions about what St. Mary needs.

Stewardship fair. Present all ministries. Goal to get more engaged. Last time was seven years ago. Did get new people engaged. Purpose this time would be to re-engage post COVID. We are still missing a lot of people we would love to welcome back. (*Larry Christian*)

Continuing the tradition of an overarching theme for the coming year. The past four years, we have had an overarching theme which crossed all parish ministries including Faith on Fire, Witness, Alive in Christ and Return from Exile. It would be wonderful to work with our new pastor to choose a theme relevant to where we are as a parish community in our journey of faith and to weave it into liturgies and ministries and culminate with a parish retreat. (*Jeff Ryan*)

Marketing and community engagement as a form of evangelization. There is much we could do to promote the good works of the parish and to draw people in and share the joy of Christ in the community. This could manifest itself in a number of ways. Shirts and hats for the school. Pro-life ministries. Turn off TV day to get families closer to kids. A hiking / walking ministry. (*Paul Mickelson*). Sending cards to all new families moving into the area to welcome them. A free weekly dinner for anyone who wants to show up. An article in the paper to promote parish life and articulate how we are helping the community in various ways(*Josh Livingston*).

Focus on younger families. Feel we don't reach them. Not enough to get youth involved. Not just knowledge based faith formation but lead by example. Make families feel wanted and engaged. Get behind Steubenville East. Get kids involved in Social Action. Liturgy too. Music. Virtus will be required for some of these. (*Susan Falkner*)

Energize the parish further. Reach community in the post COVID world. Playing offense in spreading the faith versus playing defense and managing a decline in participation. Actively invite people into the parish. (*Sean Hughes*)

Other ideas. Outside mass (*Larry Christian*). Hybrid meeting capability for virtual and in person participants (*Jeff Ryan*). Integrate school and parish activities (*Noreen Kuziak*). Leverage the upcoming Advent season to put some of these ideas into practice such as giving each ministry a way to showcase what they do, e.g. food drive, bible study, prayer shawl, giving tree, etc. (*Jeff Ryan, Susan Falkner*).

YOUTH REPRESENTATIVE

Mary Keenan is rotating off council. Need to appoint another representative. Steve DiMotta offered two candidates who are seniors at Simsbury High. We will be extending an invitation to **Anabelle Delacruz** to join and provide an honest teen perspective to the council.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Liturgy. No report this month.

Faith Formation of Youth. Sessions began last week. K-6. In person and virtual. 135 children. Volunteer facilitators are still needed for K and 3rd grade. Parents are homeschooling until volunteers step forward. Middle school also began. 53 students. All classes are in person. The program we developed is based upon The Chosen. High School starts in October. Flexible scheduling signup. 1st Sunday of the month between masses.

Social Action. (Get this from Sean).

School board. Father covered in his comments. Basketball will be back! Looking to augment the board.

Finance Council. Will cover next month.

CLOSING

Final thoughts. Susan Falkner is working on an updated roster of who is on council.

Homework. All council members were given a copy of the Synod report to read and reflect on prior to our next meeting.

Closing Prayer (Liturgy of the Hours Night Prayer) led by Fr Stephen.