



## **ST. PAUL'S ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH**

### ***Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting –March 13, 2023***

**Elected Members Present:** Julie Laurenzi, Michael McGovern, Tom Fobert, Beth Schick, Rosa Gonzalez, Hector Hernandez, Gale Britto, Kate Gallaher-Carson and Anne Savastano

**Elected Members Absent:** None

**Ex-Officio Members Present:** Fr. Sean Harlow, Deacon Carl Locatelli, Deacon Michael McCabe and Mark Carson

**Ex-Officio Members Absent:** Peg Hoblin

**Recording Secretary:** Deborah Botti

**Others Present:** Emma Gonzalez Laders

**The meeting began with prayer at 6:47 p.m.**

**The minutes of the meeting of February 13, 2023, were approved and seconded, with the correction of a typo.**

**Julie Laurenzi opened the meeting by introducing a guest, Emma Gonzalez Laders, who appeared before the Parish Council representing herself and other parishioners.**

### **Reaction to January's Parish Meeting**

Emma said she had been wanting to share this take-away from the budget meeting in January, and expressed gratitude to Fr. Sean for allowing St. Paul's to continue to prioritize Corporal Works of Mercy despite the concern about finances.

A brief discussion ensued about the Food Pantry and other forms of outreach that help define St. Paul's and validate the work of the Parish Council.

Emma Gonzalez left the meeting at 7:00 p.m.

### **Ministry Reports were provided:**

### **Administration & Stewardship**

- There is more trouble with the HVAC system. Apparently, the unit on the roof that circulates the air for the purification system and air-conditioner is out of its housing. We will be getting an estimate soon from Val Bruni Plumbing & Heating.

- The response thus far to the Cardinal's Annual Stewardship Appeal is OK but not outstanding. It's doubtful that goal will be met by Easter.
- Maxine will be preparing a report comparing last year to this year to determine how the increased giving campaign is doing. Anecdotally, comparing the five weeks of contributions before Christmas to the five weeks after the parish meeting, the numbers are encouraging. Sal Lucido reports 22 more people on WeShare. Still, will that be enough to take care of the budget or will additional strategies be necessary?

### **Education and Faith Formation**

Religious Education highlights:

- There were 63 people at the Stone Soup Feast, where crockpots of meatless soups were shared – along with conversation and recipes.
- The Lenten Family Movie Night scheduled for March 3 was postponed to April 14 because of wintry weather.
- Mary's Way of the Cross on March 10 was simply beautiful.
- The Children's Living Stations of the Cross will take place on March 24, and 115 people have already signed up to attend.
- Discussion ensued about whether attendance at Mass should be required of families with children in the religious education program. Many parishes do – at least for the sacrament classes, and this is a question that the religious education coordinator has raised. However, if attendance is required, how do you prove it? And if a family isn't compliant, then what? If religious education is denied, then more weight is put on the Mass than catechizing the children – and children can't drive to church. But, if you want to join the club, shouldn't you play by the rules? It remains a conundrum.

After an almost three-year hiatus, the Adult Faith Formation Committee held a reorganizational meeting on February 19. While the Wednesday Scripture Study, Book Club and Gospel discussions have continued on Zoom, going forward, AFF would also like to use the time after Sunday Mass for special programs – such as the one held yesterday. Fourteen people attended Pat Davies' presentation on Spiritual Direction and the Ignatian Exercises.

### **Christian Services**

- There will be a repast after Connie Capria's Memorial Mass on March 18.
- Prayer Blanket making with the Confirmation candidates took place on February 17.

## **Social Activities**

At last count, there were between 100 and 110 tickets purchased for the St. Patrick's Day Dinner. The cutoff is 120.

## **Worship and Spiritual Life**

Nothing to report.

## **Art and Environment**

Anne Savastano will spearhead decorating the church for Christmas. Jessica Carpino and Kim Porpora will continue to decorate for Easter.

## **Chairperson's Report - Julie Laurenzi**

- It was thought that we could replace the carpeting in the chapel with blue carpet squares left over from when the church was carpeted. However, it was determined that a subfloor would have to be installed – and using the reserve of carpet squares would mean damaged carpet in the main church couldn't be replaced. Given the current financial circumstances, we decided to put this on hold. The carpet is old, but clean.
- With winter on its way out, should the next Parish Council meeting be face-to-face or continue on Zoom? Discussion ensued on the pros and cons, and while most members would be fine either way, quite unexpectedly Zoom was preferred. So for now, meetings will continue on Zoom.
- The Pine Bush Community Band will perform at St. Paul's on Monday, July 31, and Monday, November 17, which is before Advent. The Youth Ministry will be contacted to assist with seating and programs, and help will be sought for the set-up days.
- Anne Savastano will be meeting with the Archdiocese regarding the young adult group she is interested in starting and provide details, such as potential activities, at a later date.

## **Vicar's Report – Fr. Sean**

Nothing to report.

## **Other Business**

First, Mark and Kate Carson are bringing the Archdiocese's Christ Life program to St. Paul's. The program is comprised of three seven-week sessions. The first, with a focus on Discovering Christ, will run from Sunday, September 17 through Sunday, November 5, (if Columbus Day Weekend is skipped). The second session, Knowing Christ, will be scheduled for the spring of 2024, and the final session, Following Christ, for the fall of

2024.

Each session will start with a meal that Rick Dzurilla will prepare (freewill offerings will be accepted), followed by a video presentation, handouts and small-group discussion. Fr. Sean has agreed to purchase the program, which the church will own. A core group of facilitators is being formed. Four people are going to Dunwoodie for training later this month, who will then be able to train in house. Adult Faith Formation has pledged its support.

People do have to sign up for all seven weeks and will sit at the same table for the duration, enhancing the experience. Other churches report tremendous, revitalizing results from this dynamic program.

Secondly, the Archdiocese has released updated directives, allowing the Eucharist to be distributed in both species once again. While some people would welcome the return of the cup, the vast majority aren't ready. Parishioners are still not even comfortable shaking hands. And if only a small number take the cup, which is a sign of unity, the intent is not fulfilled.

Next, the Finance Committee has offered to make phone calls to folks who have not been to Mass in three or four years. "Is there anything you need?" "Do you still regard St. Paul's as your parish?" A concern was raised that such a call might not be perceived in the same positive fashion as Deacon Carl's outreach during the COVID lockdown – but a solicitation for contributions instead. A script will be written and submitted for Parish Council review, which could even include the Christ Life series.

Finally, a decision has not yet been made on the permanent placement of the streaming equipment.

**The meeting closed at 7:52 p.m. with a prayer.**

**Next Parish Council meeting will be Monday, April 10, 2023, at 6:45 p.m.**

**Respectfully submitted, Deborah Botti**