



ST. PAUL'S ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH

Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting – June 14, 2021

Elected Members Present: Christine Forbes, Deborah Harrison, Patricia Davies, Kevin Green, Peter Adams, Pam Vogt and Rosa Gonzalez

Elected Members Absent: Ross Terranova

Ex-Officio Members Present: Fr. Sean Harlow, O.Carm. and Deacon Carl Locatelli

Recording Secretary: Deborah Botti

Ex-Officio Members Absent: Deacon Michael McCabe

Others Present: Liz Locatelli and Maxine Martin, Reopening Committee
Julie Laurenzi

The meeting began with prayer at 6:46 p.m.

Minutes of the meeting of May 9 were accepted.

Reopening Committee Updates

With the easing of COVID restrictions, including the recent CDC announcement that those who are vaccinated needn't social distance or wear a mask in most situations, feedback from the ushers was discussed.

- How many ushers are really needed now; one in the East Wing, one to help people with questions and one in the hall, if necessary? And a streamer? It was pointed out that when the hall is filling rapidly, such as last Sunday with several families, the third volunteer is busy. The next schedule, through August 8, will designate three ushers and one streamer weekly.
- There is no longer any need to count the number of people attending each Mass.
- Entry to church will remain through the East Wing only. Data indicates that recirculated air, especially through a purification system such as we have, is preferable when indoors. If a breeze should blow through the open main door, it has the potential of spreading covid from an infected person in its path. The Archdiocese has promulgated this from the beginning.
- Should pews continue to be blocked off? Some churches still are; others aren't.

- Now that the mask mandate has been lifted by the state, some people might be reluctant to come back to Mass without a mask. And right now, while St. Paul's "highly recommends" that a mask be worn, it can't be mandated. Yet, there is a dangerous variant out there, and young children have not been vaccinated. Maybe seating should be designated for families? Or is there some way to convey that mask-wearing protects vulnerable parishioners?
- Reopening Committee members were excused at 7:15 p.m.

New Ministry Proposal

Julie Laurenzi, a parishioner and retired social worker who was recently widowed, joined the meeting to discuss her proposal for a Consolation Ministry with a mission of supporting and consoling bereaved parishioners. Julie would organize an orientation in grief and bereavement for a core group of volunteers interested in participating. These volunteers would reach out to those who suffer a loss. Packets of information and resources would be prepared that target specific losses; i.e., a parent who loses a child grieves differently from someone who has lost a spouse or a sibling. Whenever possible, someone from St. Paul's would attend the wake and/or funeral, send cards and visit, if the family requests, especially during anniversaries and holidays.

There are pieces of this in place now. Father Sean and the deacons reach out to families. Parishioners who are also Hospice volunteers do go to funerals. Christian Services organizes repasts. A Consolation Ministry would bring it all together.

This is not intended to be a support group or therapy. However, perhaps down the road a Memorial Mass might be periodically celebrated – some churches do that quarterly - followed by coffee and cake.

Father Sean and all Parish Council members agreed that this was a superb idea, and the Council pledged its support. The Ministry would fall under Christian Services' umbrella and be assigned a liaison.

Christian Services (Order of reports was switched)

Follow-up discussion ensued about a proposal from the last meeting regarding volunteers to reach out to parishioners who have been recently discharged from the hospital. The deacons can ask those hospitalized if they'd like a call from someone, and the prayer chain is also a good access point. The list of those requesting prayers could go to the Pam, the Christian Services coordinator, who could then distribute the requests to the volunteers.

There are still some concerns. This has the potential of being overwhelming for one person to coordinate. There is also the issue of training and how to prevent a volunteer from giving unsolicited advice or inadvertently saying the wrong thing.

No decisions were made at this time.

Social Activities

A September barbecue is being considered. However, it's still difficult to guarantee that the virus won't be an issue then. While there are many good signs and the numbers are dropping, the variants are still a concern - especially as children return to school.

Administration & Stewardship

- St. Mary's in Washingtonville, a very large parish, holds two outside Masses on weekends. A parishioner/carpenter built a large 16-by-13 permanent stage on a hill. It has electric and a protective vinyl roof. Some people sit in lawn chairs placed next to their cars, with others even pulling up chairs across the street. Mass is broadcast over an FM station with the help of a parishioner/DJ who brings his equipment. The Communion line forms by an outside door. This is an option to keep in mind.
- It's taking longer than anticipated to get the front-door refinishing estimates. More work might be required because of warping. Drying could still be tricky – with six hours needed between coats of polyurethane, and it's been difficult to pin down replacement costs.

Education & Faith Formation

Nothing to report.

Worship & Spiritual Life

- Music and lectors have returned.
- A return to receiving the Blood of Christ is not immediately foreseen, so there will be no change in the Eucharistic Ministers' schedule at this time. There are always Eucharistic Ministers at each Mass to pull from if one is needed.
- The Youth Ministry's first in-person meeting was rained out. The kids still want the virtual Thursday meetings, so they will continue. In-person events will be planned at least monthly. The Ice Cream Lady is scheduled for July 9.

Art and Environment

The search for a new coordinator continues.

Chairperson's Report – Christine Forbes

In terms of reopening, it's clear where we are heading. Seating is the concern, particularly in the East Wing. It is not being used to its full capacity because no one wants to sit in the middle. And an usher requesting someone to move in or let another pass is not always welcome.

The only other option I see is to open the first couple of pews in the front of the East Wing for those who are comfortable sitting closer to others.

Vicar's Report – Fr. Sean

There's a big expense on the horizon. The whole church, including the hall and classrooms, will be deep-cleaned in the summer. Dirt and stains will be extracted from carpets; the floors stripped and refinished. Crystal Blue Cleaning Services, Inc. has the contract with the Archdiocese to sanitize its schools, and the Catholic schools remained

open safely during the height of the pandemic. It's a good thing to be forced to do.

The meeting closed at 8:18 p.m. with prayer.

Next Parish Council meeting will be Monday, July 12, at 6:45 p.m.

Respectfully submitted, Deborah Botti