



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

### ***Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting – November 14, 2023***

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

**Elected Members Absent:** Hector Hernandez

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

**Ex-Officio Members Absent:** Deacon Carl Locatelli

**Recording Secretary:** Deborah Botti

**Others Present:** Pat Davies

**The meeting began with prayer at 7 p.m.**

**The minutes of the meeting of October 10, 2023, were approved and seconded.**

### **Pat Davies reported on the Adult Faith Formation meeting of November 12, 2023:**

I was asked to come to the Parish Council after the Adult Faith Formation meeting to discuss a new, six-week faith-sharing experience that is not quite like anything we've done in the past. It is based on the book "Love: A Guide for Prayer," and is limited to 10 participants. The book provides daily scriptural passages and a suggested method of prayer, to be done privately at home. When the group comes together on day seven, each will share, not discuss, their experience. This is also a lesson in listening to one another as well as for God's voice through the church community represented in a small group. The underlying message is God's unfailing love for us.

The AFF Committee was supportive, and I have led this program in two other parishes. Once people get used to the format, which is borrowed from the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius, they are brought to a deeper level of connection with God.

We would need to meet in person for an hour and a half. A Saturday morning beginning in January is proposed. Although we don't expect huge numbers to sign up, we could do back-to-back sessions if needed.

The Parish Council gave her the green light.

### **Anne Savastano reported on the Ministry Fair:**

- Some ministries got new members, and the signup sheets have been passed on. There were a number of ministries that didn't need help at this time.

- Interest has been expressed for a broader Ministry Fair in the spring.
- Eight people signed up – four from each Mass – to volunteer as ushers. Discussion ensued about their role and if the offertory procession should be resumed immediately.

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

#### **Administration & Stewardship**

- There has not been a Finance Committee meeting on which to report.
- It appears from the numbers that many are making monthly WeShare contributions as the total from the first week of the month is the largest.

#### **Education and Faith Formation**

- Nothing to report with regard to Religious Education. No coordinator has been found. Some families have been inquiring about the Advent activities that Religious Education used to offer. However, it was known in September, and conveyed to the families, that without a designated coordinator, all that could be provided was a bare bones program. On a positive note, although Advent Wreath-Making won't technically be a Religious Education event, Morag Cuff will organize it this year.
- Deacon Carl is considering a men's faith-sharing group Monday evenings via Zoom for Advent, and welcomes input. There were no questions or objections.
- Discovering Christ has ended. The evaluations provided positive feedback, most notably that participants, which averaged around 46 each week, found it to be a wonderful expression of community. However, a number felt it was more basic and not as informative as expected. The second segment, Following Christ, will begin after Easter. Its content is much deeper, there will be no meal served and the intent is to open it up to all parishioners, regardless of whether they participated in the first session. The third, Sharing Christ, explores what we can do with our faith with the ultimate goal of bringing others in.

#### **Christian Services**

- Donations for holiday baskets are coming in, Hannaford has a good sale on turkeys, and there is a team of shoppers at the ready to purchase what is needed. The baskets will be assembled on November 19<sup>th</sup> and distributed on the 20<sup>th</sup>.
- The Giving Tree was picked bare. More angels will be claimed next year. For those who are still looking for a way to help with gifts in 2023, the Pine Bush School District has many children in need. Katie Carson-Decker is a social worker with that district, and her contact information will be provided in the bulletin for anyone who

wants to help.

- The Memorial Mass took place on November 4, and as anticipated, was very moving. The music was phenomenal, and the candle ceremony always prompts tears. There were 55 names in the booklet; however, the only hiccup was that this year, there were some names submitted but no one in attendance to bring up the candle when the name was called.
- The six-week Bereavement Program, using the book provided by the Archdiocese, was completed by 11 people. There was an unexpected openness and sharing of feelings. A reunion is planned for December, and the program might be repeated next year.

### **Social Activities**

- The Senior Thanksgiving Dinner will take place after Mass this Saturday. Along with the St. Patrick's Day Dinner, an Italian dinner in January is being planned.
- The Pine Bush Community Band will be here to perform its holiday concert on November 27. Mike McGovern will oversee set up in the morning and ensure the doors are open in the evening. The Pine Bush community is always supportive; however, it would be a plus if more parishioners showed up.
- Rebecca Suchy has offered to run a monthly game night for anyone who wants to come. People will bring snacks and games so there is no cost to St. Paul's. It will not be called a "Family" Game Night because that could be interpreted to exclude those who live alone. It will probably be a Friday night – and not begin until January. The consensus was to get the word out there and see what happens.

### **Worship and Spiritual Life**

The Youth Ministry is planning:

- A Zoom introduction to the Gospel of John on November 13.
- To assist with the Senior Thanksgiving Dinner on November 18.
- To continue with the Zoom discussion of the Gospel of John on November 20.
- And to volunteer with the concert on November 27.

### **Art and Environment**

The poinsettias have been ordered through Laurel Grove in Port Jervis and the wreaths from the woman who has made them in the past. This Thursday, Ann will go through decorations to get some inspiration. The Advent wreath will be ready by the first week of Advent.

This year Christmas Eve falls on a Sunday. Technically, the church should be

decorated after the 10 o'clock Mass but before the Mass with the Christmas Pageant at 5 p.m.. Even with some decorating done in advance, this could be tricky given the short window and probable volunteer shortage for that day.

Fr. Sean gave his approval for the decorations to go up the week before, but not lit until Christmas Eve – and no Baby Jesus in the creche.

### **Archangels**

Nothing to report.

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

- Some parishioners have asked us to consider reinstating the Prayer for Peace.
  - Fr. Sean commented that people are missing a part of the Mass because we're always praying for peace. The Consecration is what makes peace a possibility. We exchange a sign of peace. Peace is often included in the Prayer of the Faithful. But still, it's a lovely prayer, and it's fine to include it again.
  - Althoughn not a unanimous vote, it was decided that the Prayer for Peace will be inserted in the back covers of the new Breaking Bread books, which will be in the pews for the first week of Advent.
- In January, when the new members join, we will need to vote because I am stepping down as chair. During COVID, we used Survey Monkey, with which I am not familiar. Could we meet after Mass on January 7 to vote?
  - Fr. Sean suggested that, weather permitting, our January 9 meeting be in person to handle critical business, vote and enjoy a social to kick off the new year.  
The new Parish Council members are guests at the December meeting, but do not rotate in until January. Those leaving will then be off the hook – but they're welcome to attend the social in January.

### **Vicar's Report**

I am proposing the following holiday Mass schedule:

The Mass at 5 p.m. on Saturday, December 23, and 10 a.m. on the 24<sup>th</sup> fulfill the Sunday requirement.

Mass will be celebrated at 5 p.m. on Sunday, December 24, and include the Pageant. There is usually a Mass at 8 p.m., but attendance wasn't good last year. Do we need it this year? (There was no objection to eliminating that Mass this year.)

On Christmas Day, Mass will be celebrated at 10 a.m.

The following weekend follows the standard schedule: Vigil Mass at 5 p.m. and Sunday Mass at 10 a.m. January 1 is not a Holy Day this year, so no Mass on Monday.

**The meeting closed at 8:25 p.m. with a prayer.**

**Next Parish Council meeting will be Tuesday, December 12, 2023, at 7 p.m.**

**Respectfully submitted, Deborah Botti**