

St Thomas Pastoral Council 11-24-15 Meeting minutes

Present: Fr Bill, Dcn Jim Miles, Rod Gauvin, Mary Cavnar, Bill Cavnar, Paul Thiefels, Joanne Thiefels, Cathy Dowling, Marie Williams, David Williams

Absent: Frank Lum, Fr Todd, Moira Cullen, Paul Jackowski, Naomi Corera

Minutes of the 10-27-15 meeting were approved.

Alpha course follow up: Mary Cavnar spoke with Mary Guilfoyle, Alpha Coordinator at Our Lady of Good Counsel. The following is from an email reply by Mary Guilfoyle:

When I visit with parishes interested in launching Alpha I always recommend that they be prepared for "after Alpha." People want to remain with their small groups and continue to grow as disciples.

We're in the process of piloting "Discipleship Groups" which we hope to launch in January 2016. In the meantime we offer:

- 1: Called and Gifted
2. Bishop Barron's DVDs
3. Many go into RCIA
4. New Leaven <http://www.newleaven.org>
5. And finally, many utilize the program below that Fr. John developed in the Winter of 2014 after our first launch. Mary Guilfoyle also included this description of the follow-up Alpha program that Fr. John Ricardo is developing:

The Alpha 201 course was offered on Wednesday evenings during the months of January and February 2014. Participants and interested individuals may view videotaped recordings of each session on the parish YouTube page.

Fr. Riccardo uses presentation software for many of the talks. Copies of those presentations are available for download:

- Week 2-Mercy
- Week 3-Fear
- Week 4-Suffering
- Week 5-Greed
- Week 6-Surrender
- Week 7-Worship
- Week 8-Primacy of Love

Discussion among those present is as follows:

Deacon Jim suggested that we could do a follow up to Alpha using a Catholic Family Movement type format. Also, the Alpha small groups could become a

“nucleus” for a new group as new people could be brought into existing groups. Alpha groups could grow larger and smaller groups then split off.

Cathy Dowling suggested the follow up to Alpha could meet in homes.

Bill Cavnar suggested that the parish should provide some recognition for the kitchen ladies, perhaps flowers. Someone will speak to Monica about this.

Since the Alpha course was originally made for use by all Christian denominations, should the follow-up have something specific to Catholics?

Jubilee Year of Mercy – What should St Thomas do? Some ideas:

- need teaching on spiritual and corporal works of mercy by Fr Bill
- Fr Bill perhaps write a “mercy” blog
- a pilgrimage to a mercy door, perhaps Toledo Cathedral?
- a pilgrimage to other locations: Carey, OH or Indiana for example
- pray Divine Mercy Chaplet at specific times during the week
- Christ the King parish will be doing a mission on mercy
- Offer more availabilities for confession. Fr Bill has seen an increase in numbers of parishioners coming to confession.
- Bill Cavnar mentioned being proactive to people in need. He referred to an article in the National Review: “**I Am a Pathetic Sheep**”, which asks how we can turn from our Pharisaical tendencies to exclude and condemn those who make us uncomfortable, and instead find ways to include them and address their needs. This article fits very well with the Year of Mercy.
- An emphasis on reconciliation
- Focus on Corporal and Spiritual works of mercy for each month of the Jubilee Year
- Offer healing services, both physical and spiritual healing
- Mailing to all “inactive” parishioners inviting them to take part in the Jubilee Year of Mercy
- Promote our own parish St Vincent de Paul as a place to practice the corporal works of mercy
- The Washtenaw Vicariate has its next meeting on Dec 12 and will include a discussion on mercy. Perhaps the priests will come up with a plan for the Year of Mercy for parishes.
- There are many parishioners who are ill and needing help
- Make a “mercy team” in our parish; utilize Deacon Warren and others who have contact with the sick/homebound
- Consider a “Welcome back to the church” for lapsed Catholics; hold a “Homecoming dinner”
- Invite someone who has returned to the faith to give their testimony
- Look at the monetary costs of Annulment, reduce this if possible

School update – The fifth grade teacher is no longer employed due to serious psychological issues. This resulted in the loss of 9 children (3 different

families chose to leave the school.) She is still on contract so it is a double hit financially to the school, plus the loss of students. Miss Marshall has formed a committee to replace her. The fifth grade is doing better now. Another committee is looking at long-term issues such as retention and attrition after the fifth grade.

Father Lobert at Father Gabriel Richard HS would like to strengthen the school's relationship with St Thomas parish.

The Pastoral Council should look at the strategic plan of the St Thomas School committee.

Consider trying to get Sisters of Mercy teaching at St Thomas. Also, the Servants of God's Love has teaching Sisters.

Ann Arbor is a highly transient community; 10% of the population turns over annually.

A good sign right now at the school is that there is an increase in the number of children in Kindergarten. About half of the preschool students continue on into Kindergarten. The preschool is finally starting to break even financially.

Rod referred to an inspiring article by Anthony Esolen in *Crisis Magazine*: "[A Parish School Turns Failure into Success](#)", which gives a remarkable account of a parochial school in Grand Rapids that has undergone a renaissance by returning to a classically-oriented education.

The parish may need to provide additional tuition help to families that cannot afford the current tuition.

Church renovation – Two companies will be sending mockup ideas for a mural of the risen Jesus to be placed over the sanctuary and a mural of our patron saint, St Thomas, demonstrating his initial doubting and his later coming to believe. Cost is approximately \$1 million.

Diocesan wide fund-raising issue – There will be a meeting with Bishop Boyeau on Dec. 10

Follow up of issues – Paul Thiefels suggested that as a council we should follow-up on items that are discussed and not just leave things open and unresolved. We'll try to indicate open items at the end of each set of minutes to make follow up easier. For example, we heard from Jessica Dudek, a parishioner, regarding her fundraising for her work with InterVarsity. The doctrine statement has nothing objectionable to our Catholic faith according to Bert Ghezzi and George Martin.

Open items:

- support for Jessica Dudek
- follow-up of Alpha
- Year of Mercy