

# St. Francis of Assisi Parish – Triangle, VA

## Pastoral Council Meeting Minutes

18 July 2020 9:30 AM – 11:00 AM

### I. Call to Order & Attendance – Virtual Meeting on Zoom.

- a. Members participating were Fr John O'Connor, OFM, Pastor, Chair Terry Danner, Jean Allen, Phil Bongiorno, Maggie Eves, Vice Chair, John Hales, Clarence Neason, Chuck O'Hern, Michelle Nicolai, Pequitte Schwerin, Dan Sullivan, Ulli Vaerst, Dr Tricia Barber (Principal), Marv Floom (Chair, Finance Council), Marianne Hayes (RE Director).
- b. Angelica Silva was not present.

### II. Opening Prayer - Fr. John O'Connor, OFM

### III. Approval of Minutes - A motion was made and seconded to approve the 20 June 2020 minutes. The chair approved and the minutes will be forwarded for posting on the Parish website.

### IV. Discussion of School Opening Fall 2020 – The following attachments are relevant to this discussion.

- a. Phase II & III COVID Mitigation Health Plan, St. Francis of Assisi Elementary and Middle School (the plan can be summarized as breaking each grade into two separate classrooms, using the teaching assistant and teacher to do the teaching. Lunch will be via a box lunch delivered to classrooms. Many rooms have been freed up for additional classrooms, including the cafeteria and library. There are robust safety protocols. All wear masks, and physical distancing is maintained throughout the day).
- b. Q&A for Learning, School Safety, COVID-19 Safety and Student Activities.
- c. There was also a link a news article. Miller, C. C. (2020, July 16). *In the Same Towns, Private Schools Are Reopening While Public Schools Are Not*. New York Times. <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/07/16/upshot/coronavirus-school-reopening-private-public-gap.html?smid=nytcore-ios-share>
- d. Fr. John led the discussion, with substantial contributions by Dr. Barber. Plans are to open using a five day on-campus program with stringent Corona virus protocols in place.
- e. Dr. Barber sent the plan to the parents and staff. Staff have a few more days yet to respond, but so far one assistant teacher will be unable to work, and a replacement has been identified.

- f. It was noted that several Diocesan schools were closing, some others were teaching in person for K-3 and online for higher grades, and some teaching all grades in person. The Diocese is not recommending high schools open for in person education at this time.
- g. Fr. John felt it is difficult to get parents to pay substantial tuition for on-line education, and that being able to offer an on campus program, with before and after school care, is essential to keeping the school operational.
- h. It will not be possible to have on-line classes and on campus classes simultaneously, as it is a double load on teachers.
- i. The plan to open is in accordance with Virginia Phase 3 guidelines. However, these guidelines could revert, or change in such a way that reopening in person would not be possible. However, at this time it is doable.
- j. There has been positive interest in enrollment with 230 students registered and first payments in hand. Capacity under the revised model will be 250.
- k. PE will be outdoors, and recreation will be outdoors – weather permitting
- l. The Robotics Program will be via Zoom.
- m. Band and Choir will not be offered under this model.
- n. The building will close at 6:30 for cleaning each day, and there will be no use of the building after hours.
- o. St. Francis of Assisi School protocols are more strict than other Diocesan Schools. All students wear masks, safety protocols are the best in the area. Six foot physical distancing is maintained.
- p. The question was asked if people would pay for virtual only school. It was felt that in person school is far more likely to encourage enrollment.
- q. Due to the large amount of information that needs to be communicated, Fr. John is considering compiling and sending a Parish Newsletter soon.
- r. Dr. Barber quoted Proverbs 29:18 “where there is no vision, the people perish”, which seemed to sum up the discussion well. Pastoral Council members were laudatory about the efforts she has put forth on the entire process.
- s. Fr. John noted that Northern Virginia COVID virus status remains stable, but there are issues in the Hampton Roads area.

## **V. Pastor’s Report**

- a. Fr. John noted live stream Mass continues to be well received, but there have been some significant computer issues. Karl Stallknecht reviewed the situation independent of the existing vendor (I3 Tech), and noted there are many problems, not the least of which is significant antiquated equipment.
- b. Fr. John feels live streaming is here to stay. Even after the end of the Covid-19 pandemic would provide a valuable service to parishioners who for one reason or another are unable to attend in person. Making this a more permanent service would require cameras and a Wi-Fi panel to allow control from a tablet.
- c. Fr. John was once again effusive in the support the Parish is getting from Tom Peitler. He noted we are saving tens of thousands of dollars due to his efforts and discussed a possible stipend for Tom.
- d. In person Masses have been mostly sold out. If demand begins to significantly outpace supply a 5:30 Sunday Mass may be added. Weekday masses have resumed, they have a smaller attendance.
- e. Phil Bongiorno asked if there is any kind of Diocesan funding program for Information Technology. Fr. John noted there are Diocesan loan programs that can be used for this, but like all such programs, it adds to the debt load.
- f. The HVAC system will occur in two phases. To provide air conditioning sooner, a temporary system will be installed. In order to safely protect the related power lines a cyclone fence will be installed. Once the final system is online, the temporary system will be removed.
- g. Fr. John noted collections have begun to decrease; particularly mail in and dropped off envelopes. He will make an announcement after Mass noting the need for continued support. There was a brief discussion about electronic-giving, and while it is good, it is hard to find parishes where subscription was beyond 15%.
- h. Fr. John noted the stairs leading up to the St. Mary statue are deteriorating. He asked the Knights of Columbus to consider paying the \$10,000 estimated cost to replace the stairs with new concrete stairs and a railing.
- i. St. Francis hosted a Covid-19 virus testing site on 8 July which was staffed by Sentara personnel. Over 200 individuals were tested and because of the success, the site may be used again in August.
- j. Fr. John noted the Holy Name Province chapter meeting could not be held as a virtual meeting. They will be using data from a straw ballot conducted earlier to elect the next Provincial. The results will be out soon, and the Friar assignments are expected in August.

**V. Communications discussion** – looking for an effective way to reach Parishioners,

- a. There is a need to reach the entire Parish population, and electronic communications are not sufficient for several reasons. A Parish mailing costs \$6,000, but the challenge remains reaching those households without practical access to email or websites.
- b. Some ideas that were discussed were webinars, virtual classes, Zoom meetings, Zoom academy, and all can be useful for certain purposes. These platforms are really limited to the email and web savvy people, still leaving many not contacted.
- c. Marianne Hayes noted in a follow up that the Realm platform is used to mass issue texts or phone calls and might be an alternative or at least supplement to mass mailings. This would have more reach than email or video conferences. Realm is synchronized with the system that contains parishioner contact information. This would also be a lot more practical than a calling tree, which was briefly discussed.
- d. Phil Bongiorno is trying to reconcile what tools the Parish has so they can be used effectively.
- e. It appeared a Parish mailing seemed the best approach, but it will still cost \$6,000. It will be a letter from Fr. John providing information on where we are financially, on site School plan, communication options, religious education enrollment, and continued needs at Francis House.
- f. Confirmations and First Communion events which were postponed will be held in August.

**VI. Finance Council Report** - Chair Marv Floom presented the report. There will be a July Finance Committee meeting to review end of year financial status and the path ahead. The report was informative for all.

- a. School is experiencing cash flow shortfall this summer (circa \$50,000.) Church will cover deficit and advance July, August and September subsidy to support the shortfall.
- b. Tuition payments beginning in August/September will address the deficit.
- c. School is reporting recent increases in enrollment at numbers exceeding the last few year levels, possibly due to public school on-site student capacity shortfalls. The weekly collection rate appears to be falling. First quarter evaluation will be monitored to see if this is a basic trend due to covid-19 church on-site attendance restrictions.
- d. Facilities is well-prepared to maintain high level sanitation best practices on campus when school children and faculty return.
- e. Temporary HVAC system for school is being installed for August & September. The new HVAC system has been delayed until October due to manufacturing back-order delays related to the pandemic.

- f. Currently the Finance Council is not expecting to meet via Zoom before August 17. Parish finance reports to the Diocese will have been completed and submitted prior to this date.

**VII. RE Update** – Marianne Hayes provided a brief update. All RE classes will be online this year. Regarding enrollment numbers, this year is currently on track to be similar to last year's numbers of 550.

**X. Next Meeting** – The next meeting was set for 7:30 PM on August 12<sup>th</sup>.

**XII. Closing Prayer** – The closing prayer was offered by Pequitte Schwerin.

**XIII. Adjournment** – The meeting was adjourned at 11:00 AM.