

## St. George Pastoral Council Meeting Minutes

June 29, 2020

7:00 pm, via Zoom

### Attendees

- Clergy: Fr. Stephen Sledesky, Fr. Ricardo Borja. Trustees: Margot Burkle, Bill White. Members: Sarah Celotto, Maureen Fuest, Diana Harris, Harold Hutchinson, Joyce Ippolito, Valerie LeShane, Joe Nelly. Peer Minister: Kiana Vallo.
- Absent: Deacon Bob Tartaris, Rose Ann Kelley, Laurie LaTerza, Criona O'Brien, Marilyn Rowland, Andrew Wang. Peer Ministers: Bobby Haig, Dominic Riccio.
- Visitor: Cara Correll.

**Opening Prayer/Reflection:** Joe Nelly led the opening prayer.

**Welcome/Acceptance of May Minutes:** Joe Nelly asked for a motion to accept the minutes of the May meeting. Maureen Fuest so moved, Valerie LeShane seconded, and the minutes were accepted unanimously.

**Peer Ministry Report:** Kiana Vallo gave the Peer Ministry report. She said that Claire Nicholls said that although the senior mass would not be able to occur this year, they may try for a small social gathering to say goodbye to the seniors in our church.

**Pastor Report:** Father Stephen gave the Pastor Report. He gave us the sad news that Fr. Ricardo will be leaving the parish on July 15 to go to St. John 23 Parish in West Haven, where they needed a Spanish-speaking priest. Fr. Stephen commented on how much he has appreciated Fr. Ricardo and will miss him.

Next, he reported on the Sunday mass reopening, which is being done per the state guidelines. The guidelines allow opening at 25% capacity or 100 total persons, whichever is less. For St. George, that means 100 is our limit. Reopening for daily masses has gone well so far, with pews roped off for social distancing. Ushers have had training sessions. Masks are required, and the church is regularly cleaned, particularly high-touch surfaces. Help is needed for funerals. They are challenging because they are attended by people not familiar with the church's COVID routine. At the daily masses, Fr. Stephen and Fr. Ricardo have been distributing communion, but additional eucharistic ministers are needed. The daily masses haven't been too well attended so far.

Fr. Stephen reported that Lori Roche in the church office has retired, and she needs to be replaced. They are considering altering the position slightly, to cover more than just religious education. He also reported that the Italian Festival and carnival are both canceled this year, but drive-in movie nights are planned.

**President's Report:** Joe Nelly gave the President's Report, stating that we need five new members for the Pastoral Council. We discussed ways to identify potential members, including mass announcements and contacting those who were interested last year.

Joe next asked for nominations for officers for the 2020–2021 board. Valerie LeShane stated that she had received nominations for Sarah Celotto as President, Harold Hutchinson for Vice President, and Joyce Ippolito for Secretary. As Sarah and Harold were unsure about accepting their nominations,

elections were postponed for the time being. Sarah and Harold promised to prayerfully consider their nominations.

Next began a general discussion of the role of the Pastoral Council. Margot Burkle asked if there are other models for lay oversight of the church, alternatives to a pastoral council. Father Stephen said we need to consider our goals as a community. The council gives direction to the parish. For example, we don't know what the life of the parish will look like during COVID. How can we assist the parish? What will religious education look like during the next school year? Fr. Stephen says that he doesn't want to be too directive; the council shouldn't exist just to rubber-stamp his ideas. He wants to know from us: What are our dreams for our church? Who are we reaching or not reaching (e.g., LGBTQ community)? We also discussed how the council might work more effectively with the staff.

Discussion then moved to celebrating Fr. Ricardo, which will be difficult in this time of social distancing. Fr. Ricardo said how much he has enjoyed his time at St. George. Fr. Stephen reported that Fr. Dennis will be joining us.

**Just Faith:** Margot reported on the Just Faith program. Diana said that those running the program will be learning to facilitate this social justice program, which will run two hours a week for eight weeks and will involve reading assignments, prayer, discussion, speakers. The ultimate goal is to put this into action in our community. The first session is July 15. Fr. Stephen mentioned the importance of social justice issues to the church. He described the birth of social teachings in the Catholic Church (with Leo XIII's encyclical on workers' rights during the Industrial Revolution). Fr. Stephen said he is in communication with the other churches around the Green about this program, which transcends Catholicism. He believes the program is a good way to connect with younger people who are interested in social issues. A parallel program for teens is a possibility.

**Closing comments/prayer:** Joe said there will be a Discernment Meeting on July 29 (via Zoom) for potential Pastoral Council members, and invited all of us to attend to share our thoughts about serving on the council. Joe thanked everyone for a great year and then led us in the closing prayer.

**Next Meeting:** The next meeting will be held on September 27 at 6:30 pm.