

## St. George Pastoral Council Meeting Minutes

September 27, 2020

5:30 pm, St. George parking lot

### Attendees

- Clergy: Fr. Stephen Sledesky, Fr. Dennis Vincenzo. Trustees: Margot Burkle (via Zoom), Bill White. Members: Elaine Carter, Sarah Celotto, Yolande Eldridge, Debra Falvey, Maureen Fuest (via Zoom), Diana Harris (via Zoom), Harold Hutchinson (via Zoom), Joyce Ippolito, Valerie LeShane, Criona O'Brien, Johnna Sullivan.
- Absent: Deacon Bob Tartaris, Laurie LaTerza, Andrew Wang.
- Visitor: Cara Correll.

**Opening Prayer/Reflection:** Fr. Stephen led the opening prayer.

**Welcome/Acceptance of June 29 Minutes:** Sarah Celotto asked for a motion to accept the minutes of the June meeting. Valerie LeShane so moved, Criona O'Brien seconded, and the minutes were accepted unanimously.

**Pastor Report:** Father Stephen gave the Pastor Report. He told us that as Connecticut is now moving to its Phase 3 reopening as of October 8, the church will be allowed to have up to 50% capacity and capped at 200. He reported that masses have been close to capacity in recent weeks. He is considering dropping reservations and accepting walk-ins.

Parish operations are still being done mostly remotely, as indoor capacity is limited. Religious education classes will be conducted online via the Zoom platform, aiming to begin in mid-October. The process of getting this started has been challenging, as there are not enough teachers, and they need training to teach remotely. Online classes are offered to Grades 2-10 only; Pre-K through Grade 1 will be provided materials for pickup instead.

**Just Faith Program:** Fr. Stephen advised that the eight-week Just Faith program was implemented over the summer. This social justice program has a module on racism, which is module they decided to teach due to recent social unrest following the murder of George Floyd. Some components weren't able to be implemented over Zoom, but overall the program went pretty well. Margot, Diana, and Laurie were the ones running the program, and the indicated that they need cofacilitators to help roll the complete program out for the parish. Margot stated how she had learned a lot about the history of racism and was able to apply the learnings from the class to think about current issues.

**Church During Coronavirus:** Fr. Stephen next began a discussion of the challenge to think about how to "be church" when we can't physically be together. Relationships are important, and we are a sacramental church. We lose out when we can't experience the tangible signs of God's presence such as receiving the eucharist. He asked us to consider the question, In this time, what can we do as a parish that can keep us thriving?

He mentioned that parishioners have kept up their contributions during the pandemic, and many ministries are attempting to continue. Valerie mentioned that she called parishioners as part of our outreach during the quarantine, and she found the experience very valuable; it was greatly appreciated

by people. Criona commented on how difficult it must be for older people. Sarah mentioned that she is happy we are moving to Stage 3, making it easier to go to mass. She emphasized that communication is important; maybe having a video for people to see what mass actually looks like would help people feel more comfortable going to mass in person. Johnna added that it is important to tell people it is safe to go to mass. Elaine described how a church in Florida made communion available to parishioners outside of the mass. Johnna further discussed wanting more young people to go to mass in person; there haven't been many people under 50 at masses. Sarah asked if holding mass outside might be possible; Fr. Stephen said it was logistically difficult. Margot suggested the need to think beyond the church, as we can't do much now safely. Maureen asked about the ministry to the sick; Fr. Stephen said it is limited for now due to nursing home restrictions, and also the fact that having eucharistic ministers go into homes is not desirable during the pandemic. Joyce asked if we might consider checking in with our ministries to see if they are operating at any level right now.

**Social Justice:** Fr. Stephen mentioned that the other churches on the Green have put up banners showing support for the Black Lives Matter movement. He said we do not want to do that, due to the political bent of such an action, but that we might want to consider some other way to show our support for issues facing marginalized groups in our community, including Blacks. He suggested perhaps a banner advertising our Just Faith program as a way to show we are sensitive to the social unrest in society without making a blatant political statement. We also discussed that the lack of any statement or banner is not good, especially since other churches do have something—this is one case where not saying something is its own statement.

**Closing comments/prayer:** Sarah asked if anyone would like to meet in person for our next meeting. It was determined we could meet safely in the church hall, and the Zoom link would still be available for those wanting to attend via Zoom. Sarah then led the final closing prayer.

**Next Meeting:** The next meeting will be held on October 25 at 6:30 pm.