

St. George Pastoral Council Meeting Minutes

May 23, 2021

6:30 pm, Zoom

Attendees

- Clergy: Fr. Stephen Sledesky. Trustee: Margot Burkle. Members: Elaine Carter, Yolande Eldridge, Debra Falvey, Maureen Fuest, Harold Hutchinson, Joyce Ippolito. Peer Ministers: Matthew Celotto, Bobby Haig.
- Absent: Valerie LeShane, Criona O'Brien, Bill White (Trustee).

Opening Prayer/Reflection: Fr. Stephen led the Council in the opening prayer/reflection.

Welcome/Acceptance of April 2021 Minutes: Yolande opened the meeting. She advised that Valerie took the minutes last month, but she has not submitted the minutes yet, so the Council will vote on the April minutes at our June meeting.

Pastor Report: Fr. Stephen gave the Pastor Report. Fr. Stephen announced last week that he will be leaving St. George for a new assignment on July 1. He stated that although he expects the Pastoral Council to continue with the new pastor, Fr. Dillon, the Council serves at the pleasure of the priest, so the Council leadership should meet with Fr. Dillon to give him a sense of what the Council does.

Fr. Stephen expressed his gratitude for the Council and our efforts to guide the parish over the six years since he came to St. George. He hopes Fr. Dillon will work with the Council for at least a year before making any changes to its structure.

Fr. Stephen advised that Cara Correll has formally resigned her position at St. George, so the Council is now lacking a staff representative. The parish now has a need for someone to take over her duties with respect to baptism preparation and family/pre-K programs. Fr. Stephen said he plans to talk with Fr. Dillon about how best to move forward, and in the meantime, Sr. Kathleen will help with the baptism prep and family programs. Fr. Stephen is unsure if a new deacon will come on board to replace Fr. Dennis. Yolande said that she was sure that anyone on the Council would be willing to help the new pastor during the transition period.

Peer Ministry Report: Bobby Haig gave the Peer Ministry report. There was nothing to report today, since the Peer Ministry program is finished for the year. Yolande thanked him for his service, and asked about his plans for next year. Bobby will be going to Cornell University to study engineering, and we all congratulated him and wished him well in his studies.

New Members: Fr. Stephen announced that three new members were selected for full three-year terms ending in 2024: Beth Kozarec, Stephanie Deixler, and Susan Croce. Cara McCormick will serve the final two years on Johnna Sullivan's term, ending in 2023. Greer Corner will serve the final year left on Andrew Wang's term, ending in 2022. Finally, Fr. Stephen advised that he still has to make his own appointment, and he should be able to give us that person's name next month.

Outdoor Mass Proposal: Yolande advised that the Outdoor Mass Committee created a proposal for the Council to review. However, she stated that Fr. Dillon will be the only priest, so an outdoor mass might be too much for him to handle on his own. Fr. Stephen pointed out that an outdoor mass at 11:30 would affect a significant number of people, so he recommended consulting regular attendees of the 11:30 mass. Yolande said that she feels strongly that an outdoor mass would give people more options. Margot mentioned that she does not think we should do anything until Fr. Dillon is here; she recommended putting this discussion on hold for now. Fr. Stephen advised that he was not sure whether the reopening guidelines from the archdiocese would allow outdoor masses to continue. Permission might be required to have outdoor mass on a regular basis.

Other Business: Fr. Stephen said that Fr. Dennis will also be leaving the parish after June 30, although it is unclear where he will be. He was at St. George so that Fr. Stephen could support him during his rehab, and Fr. Stephen does not know whether Fr. Dennis will go with him to his new parish. Fr. Stephen reported that Fr. Dennis is doing well in recovery and that he is in Montowese Rehab in North Haven.

Yolande said that the next meeting will be our last meeting of this year, and asked if we could hold the meeting at her house. She suggested that we discuss whether meeting on Sunday nights is still the best time for us, as Sunday nights are not always good for families. She also said we might discuss whether the pastor reports and peer ministry reports might be submitted in writing prior to the meeting in order to dedicate time in the meeting to other matters.

Prison Ministry Brochure: Fr. Stephen described the prison ministry run by the First Congregational Church, which has worked closely with kids to make duffel bags for people being released from prison. As ex-prisoners often have nothing—no clothes, toiletries, etc.—this ministry is very much needed; so much, in fact, that First Church is looking for help from other churches. Fr. Stephen said we should consider two options: (1) St. George could develop its own ministry to create a certain number of duffel bags, perhaps in collaboration with First Church, or (2) each church could take a piece of the ministry, coordinating different tasks. Margot said that this was a great idea, especially to reach out to other churches. She recommended putting a notice in the bulletin to ask someone to head this ministry. Yolande agreed that this is a great idea. Bobby suggested the peer ministers could help as well. Yolande offered to write up something for the bulletin. Fr. Stephen said there might be an educational component to this as well; perhaps a confirmation class could be dedicated to this topic. Yolande wondered if there might be opposition to this from parishioners, perhaps by victims of violent crime. Margot stated that anything we do invites pushback, and we should push through regardless. Fr. Stephen quoted Matthew 25, pointing out that there is a basis in scripture for this ministry and that this is a corporal work of mercy. If we work within the context of our faith teaching, there should not be an issue. Maureen added that we need to do more to live the Gospel. Fr. Stephen ended by emphasizing that it is good to do things together with the other churches on the Green.

Debra asked if we might consider having a mass in remembrance of those lost to COVID-19. Fr. Stephen advised that there will be a mass of remembrance in November, and perhaps it could cover this as well.

Next Meeting: Yolande closed the meeting by stating that she will send invitations out for the next meeting, to be held on June 27 at 6:30 pm.