

St. Gianna Parish Council Meeting Minutes

Monday, January 22, 2018

The meeting was held at St. Helena's Parish Hall

Parish Council representatives in attendance: Betty Ferreira, Mickey Hunt, Donna Wolcott, Rick Metcalfe, Norma Spadola, Mary Berstene, Glen Baldi, Barbara Judycki, LouAnn Warren, Nancy Kunak, Karen Freda, Peter Gothers, Michael Flynn.

Absent: Margaret Pulito.

Fr. Devine called the meeting to order at 6:36 PM and opened it with a prayer from Ephesians, Chapter 4:1-6- A Call to Unity.

There was a very large turnout of observing parishioners in attendance. He explained that he believes that the meetings should be held to a 90 minute maximum and proceeded to hand out the agenda for the evening's meeting.

The notes for the meeting held on November 20 were passed around to the Parish Council members for review. He asked if the notes could be approved as read. Nancy Kunak made a motion to accept the minutes as read. The motion was seconded by Norma Spadola. Motion passed.

An observing parishioner asked when the minutes could be posted to the website. Fr. Devine advised that it would be soon and he would check with Karla. There was some discussion regarding websites of each individual church versus a more encompassing website for St. Gianna parish, which has not yet been completed. It was determined that it would be posted on each church's current website.

COUNCIL CONSTITUTION AND BY-LAWS UPDATE REPORT

Copies of the first draft of the By-Laws were distributed to the parish council members for review. Unfortunately, not enough copies were prepared to provide to all those observing parishioners. One parishioner asked if these By-Laws could be posted on the respective websites for review. Fr. Devine said that everyone would be offered an opportunity to review the proposed constitution. He invited written feedback and comments by the parishioners to be submitted to him by the end of January. A council member asked to have an additional week to review. Fr. Devine explained that he wanted to be able to provide all feedback to the sub-committee members to review when they meet in February.

Parishioners were asked to submit feedback to the St. Brigid email address. A revised draft will be posted to the websites of the 3 churches.

The question was raised regarding the election process to the Parish Council. Fr. Devine noted that a lot of churches don't have open elections. That decision was due to the fact that many churches did not have ample volunteers to run for election. If enough people volunteer to run, then the election process would be viable.

Norma Spadola was asked to articulate the process by which the sub-committee arrived at the first draft of the constitution. A review of the various Articles and Sections was covered.

Fr. Devine reminded everyone that this was a work in progress.

CHURCH SAFETY AND SECURITY SEMINAR- Nancy Kunak

Fr. Devine asked Nancy Kunak to provide a report on a recent seminar on Church Safety and Security that was held in December by the Connecticut State Police. The purpose of the program was to call to attention the importance of having a contingency plan in place for responding to an active aggressor.

The program included a 2 hour power point presentation covering this very serious matter. LouAnn Warren provided additional commentary about the process of dealing with an aggressive attack at a church. She quoted the statistics that 50% of the attacks are 2 minutes in duration. There is a 3 step process of Run, Hide and Attack. St. Mark's has arranged to have a local police officer visit the church to review the layout of the facility and prepare a plan to protect parishioners in the event of an aggressive attack.

An observing parishioner asked if the State Police would be available to talk to all 3 parishes about this important topic. Unfortunately, the State Police do not currently have the manpower to do so and cannot commit to providing training.

Each parish would need an individual assessment of the layout of their church to develop their own plan. John Freda of St. Mark's, advised that there is similar content to the program of how to respond to an active aggressor on the website www.DHS.gov.

Someone asked if the content of the program could be put up on the website for review. Another parishioner noted that it would not be wise to expose any plans for security on a website. It was determined that when the churches come up with their individual plans for safety, they should be kept private and shared only with parishioners.

Discussion ensued about concern for the security of the churches and an example was provided about a recent event at St. Brigid when a Eucharist Minister's purse was stolen while she was participating in a mass.

Another question was asked if those who are licensed to carry guns are allowed to bring them to a church. The overall thought was that the churches should be treated like our schools where it is not allowed.

Louann will ask what the police suggest and then share this information with St. Brigid and St. Helena's.

It was mentioned that there was someone from Homeland Security, based in New Haven, who offered to provide some direction and advice.

Eileen Rausch (St. Mark) asked if the Archdiocese has a plan in place that could be shared with all churches. Fr. Devine noted that a couple of years ago, the Archbishop wrote a letter to all parish priests asking them to develop their own plans.

Since each church will be responsible for their own plan. Fr. Devine asked for volunteers to have a point person in each church for the purpose of developing a plan for safety and security. The volunteers are:

St. Helena's- Barbara Judycki
St. Brigid's Betty Ferreira
St. Mark's LouAnn Warren

John Freda will send the contact information for someone from DHS to each member of this team.

MINISTRY TO MILLENIALS AND GEN-XERS

There was a meeting held by the Archdiocese that was attended by Father Devine and Donna Wolcott regarding the focus on the future of the church and the importance that the Millennials and Gen-Xers play.

Donna provided a report and stressed that the Archbishop's desire is that every church have a youth ministry program. They want there to be a program that allows the youth to live out the teachings of the church after confirmation and have mentors to help them along. The target audience is the 13-18 year olds.

They want them to find interest in joining the choir, lecturing, becoming Eucharist ministers, etc. There should not be one person leading the program but a group, working together. The point was made that there was once a Youth Minister for the churches but it was a paid position that was unfortunately cut years ago.

Lynn Ryan of St. Brigid's would become a lead for the program and the others involved in the group should be the pastor, CRE and DRE representatives, parents and adult parishioners. There was discussion of having the group talk to the youth of the church and ask them "what do you want to do with a ministry". There are National and Diocesan events that they could and should attend. That led to the concept of getting them involved in fund raising events such as car washes, raffles or even a 2nd collection to fund the youth so that they could attend these events.

Donna stressed the importance of speaking to the youth in the way that they can relate via social media. Their platform of communication centers on Instagram, Twitter, Snapchat and Facebook and it will be critical for us to set up a page and ensure that it is kept updated constantly. Content must be dynamic and not static.

It was mentioned that there is even an app called My Parish that we should look into. St. Thomas the Apostle has an active youth ministry and things like community service are an integral part of the program.

Previously, the task of managing the youth was added to the responsibilities of the DRE. LouAnn noted that this position should be looked at as a paid position because if left solely to volunteers, it will crumble as has proven to be the case in the recent past.

St. Helena's had a youth ministry until last year. It was mentioned that the youth should also be on the Parish Council as this was how it was in the past. Maggie Kiernan (St. Mark) did note that in years past, St. Brigid and St. Mark's shared a youth minister (Peter) and that it was a paid position.

Glen Baldi mentioned his involvement with Camp Sunshine in Casco, Maine and how rewarding and beneficial it was to attend year after year. It was determined that we should put together a Youth Committee and Mary Berstene volunteered to spearhead that.

Father Devine reiterated that we must "go where they're at". Donna also noted that we should strive for "quality not quantity" as it is not the sheer numbers of youth participating that ensures success. It is getting those involved who can be the future of the church. Donna will give the contact information of those involved with the seminar to Mary for follow up. She also noted that we need to have the parents on the same page and to keep them educated on the importance of this program.

Jen Gadaree (Music Director at St. Mark's) mentioned that there are diocesan work camps in the summer as well as summer mission programs that keep the youth involved. That led to the topic of needing funds to offset the costs for such activities and the concept of grant writing. Donna will provide the contact information for the woman in Rhode Island who has been successful in organizing such programs.

PASTORAL POINTS

- **Ushers and Bulletins**

Fr. Devine noted how the ushers at St. Mark's pass out the weekly bulletins as parishioners are leaving the church at the end of mass. He found that relationships developed with the parishioners when this was done. It was not done at St. Brigid's. At St. Helena's, they are left at the door. A suggestion was made that the children could become involved and pass out the bulletins- an idea that was very well received.

- **Lenten Program**, including Sunday Holy hour

Fr. Devine noted that there will still be town wide Stations of the Cross held as it has been done in the past. The schedule for the parish of St. Gianna is as follows:

Feb. 16	St. Mark	7:00 PM
Mar. 16	St. Helena	7:00 PM
Mar. 30	St. Brigid	Noon

Monday night confessions will be conducted at St. Brigid by Fr. Devine. He will leave it up to the other priests to schedule confessions in their respective churches.

He noted on the Monday night of Holy Week at 6:30 PM he would like to have a communal Penance service which would consist of a prayer service, followed by confessions and end with a blessing.

He is also very interested in bringing back the tradition of Sunday Vespers- the Liturgy of the Hours. It is an important part of the church tradition. It would be held at 5:00 PM at St. Brigid.

Fr. Devine opened the floor to suggestions for other Lenten traditions and noted that parishioners could forward their suggestions to him or to Fr. Metzler or Fr. Joseph for consideration. He also noted that the Lenten requirements for easting and fasting will be in the bulletin.

- **Easter Triduum 2018**

Fr. Devine announced that he is seeking to combine services according to circumstances. As such, the programs offered will go from 3 to 2. The full range of services will be at St. Brigid and St. Helena who have the priests with the most experience with these services. There will be nothing offered at St. Helena. He reminded everyone that Thursday, Friday and Saturday of Holy Week are high holy days. He asked everyone to think communally with the city wide stations of the cross.

There was concern raised by Michael Flynn that the elderly parishioners of St. Helena would be inconvenienced by not offering services at St. Helena. June Cunningham (St. Mark) was concerned about the parking at St. Brigid but Fr. Devine reminded everyone that there is plenty of parking at St. Brigid. They also raised the issue of accessibility to the Blessed Sacrament at St. Brigid's as, historically, it has been kept on the lower level of the church and stair access is involved. However, everyone was reminded that St. Mark's positions the Blessed Sacrament on a side alter in the church and no stairs are involved and that addresses the issue for those who are unable to deal with the stairs.

Due to time constraints, there was no time to discuss St. Gianna Patronal Day- April 28 or to have an Open Forum discussion. However, Nancy Czaplak of St. Mark's did submit a list of questions in writing to Fr. Devine for consideration.

It was decided that the next meeting would be held on Tuesday March 6 at 6:30 PM at the St. Mark the Evangelist Parish Center.

Meeting adjourned at 8:15 PM.