

## 10/24/2023 Pastoral Council Meeting

Present: Fr. Robert Barnell, Karen O'Rourke, Debbie White, Kate Brockman, Katie Early, Jake Kerger, Dan Young, Abby Simon, Aaron Thompson, Patrick Parris

Absent: Cindy Robinson, Bryan Back, Teague Ridge, Laura Ridge

Guest: Terry Mulaney, Ascension School Principal

Fr. Robert opened the meeting with prayer at 7:05. Karen O'Rourke chaired the meeting in Cindy Robinson's absence.

The Council approved the minutes from the September meeting.

The discussion for additional members is postponed. Fr. Robert, Patrick Parris and Cindy are reviewing the current by-laws. There are guidelines from the Archdiocese, but each parish handles selection differently. Patrick stated there are templates to follow for the number of at-large members. Once they finish the proposal for the make-up of the Pastoral Council, it will be brought before the Pastoral Council for approval.

**Pastor's Update:** IGiveCatholic – Consensus is to go with security (lighting, cameras and film over the windows). Theresa Garrett is still receiving bids. Fr. Robert stated that he spoke with the Archdiocese and they recommended going for all three projects. If Ascension does not meet the goal, then we will fund as much as possible. Katie Eberwein is ready to put together the IGiveCatholic website. She is planning on creating some videos to garner interest in IGiveCatholic. She is waiting for the goal amount and projects.

Fr. Robert will check to find out if there are any renderings of the proposed sites for the lighting and cameras.

The question was raised whether there will be a representative from Building and Grounds on the Pastoral Council since Dennis Jones is no longer an employee. It would be helpful to know about what projects are going on and the status of each.

Bob Feger is overseeing the landscaping in front of the school. The bid was awarded to Luv-It Landscaping. Work started today.

The Pictorial Directory is coming up. Someone will be at the back of church to help people sign up after the masses this weekend.

The next scheduled meeting is November 28, which is First Confessions. Fr. Robert stated he may be late, but to go ahead and start the meeting.

Fr. Robert asked Aaron Thompson to comment on the discussion at the Finance Committee meeting on hiring police officers at all the masses. Aaron stated that, at this time, it's not something the Finance Committee wants to approve at every mass. However at select masses, like Christmas and

Easter, it could be considered. Fr. Robert is more interested at this time having parishioners that are watching and aware of what is going on around them. Will revisit at future time.

Fr. Robert said that he has not yet been through the Stewardship process as a priest. He said collections are down, and we might need to do some type of Stewardship Campaign. He said the Archdiocese offers a Stewardship training class which will be on November 14, from the Stewardship Training Director of the Archdiocese of St. Louis. If anyone is interested or knows someone who would be interested, a group could attend the training session.

Aaron said collections are down 18% for the first three months. When Covid hit, attendance went down, but people left their donations on auto pilot, but now some of those donations are dropping off. Attendance has not returned to pre-Covid numbers. He questioned if Katie Eberwein would be able to send out a personal e-mail reminding people to complete and return their Stewardship form. There is a definite tie-in between the forms and the collection.

Special Guest, Terry Mulaney will now be attending Pastoral Council on a regular basis to share a broader perspective of school outside of School Board.

Open House was tonight. There were 16 families, 21 children for pre-K and Kindergarten. In the past, Ascension normally averages 17-18 families at the Fall Open House. The next Open House is at the end of January during Catholic Schools Week. It is usually a bit bigger.

Terry said he hopes people read in the [October 18] bulletin or the [October 10] "Lowdown", the school newsletter that Ascension's MAP test results were again in the top 5% of the Archdiocese. At a Principals' Meeting this fall, the Archdiocese recognized Ascension and one other school as the "bright spots" of otherwise dismal test scores. Ascension was 2nd in Math and 4th in Reading.

Terry is offering parent question and answers sessions. The first was last night was K-2. October 30 is for grades 3-5, and on November 13 for grades 6-8. These are to counter the rumors about our MAP scores being down, and other negativity. He said the school is doing great but enrollment has been dropping the past 4 years. He hopes the meetings will get the facts out to the parents and dispel the rumors, and counter the negativity. He wants to get the Marketing Committee together again to promote Ascension School and increase enrollment.

Ascension's last accreditation report is online. The school received the highest accreditation score of any other Catholic elementary school in the Archdiocese. Ascension will have another accreditation visit next year. There will be a preliminary meeting on November 6 to discuss what to expect.

#### **Additions to Committee Meeting Minutes:**

**Worship:** Jake Kerger met with the safety team at Immaculate Conception. He will be working on first responders list in case of medical emergencies during Mass, and coming up with a plan of action. Eventually there will be a manual of protocols for all types of situations.

The Feast Days of All Saints and All Souls are coming up. There will be a Remembrance Table again this year which will remain up for the month of November.

**Finance:** Aaron Thompson reported collections are down for the year. One thought is to have

Fr. Robert communicate either from the pulpit and/or email to the older members of the parish the tax advantages of paying stewardship from their required minimum IRA distribution. If the distribution is paid directly to the church or charity then no taxes are withheld.

Year to date is not too far off budget. The budget was based on 180 students and enrollment is only 170. Tuition rates are up, but enrollment is down.

The Parish is in a good financial position, however, there is a need to find out what has driven stewardship collections down and how to get more students enrolled.

**PTO:** Abby Simon reported PTO is busy. There were 22-24 tables at Trivia Night. Preliminary numbers are showing about \$8,000 profit. It was a fun night.

Trunk or Treat is Friday, October 27. The 8<sup>th</sup> grade will have a dinner to raise funds for their trip.

Bunco will be held on November 3.

**School Board:** Terry Mulaney reported the mission statement is done.

Fr. Robert asked for prayer requests and ended the meeting with prayer.

Next meeting: November 28. There is no meeting in December.