

Mary, Mother of Mercy
Parish Council Meeting of 11/15/2019 ~ Minutes

Present: Laurenda Denmark, Tom Duff, Gerry Frank, Susan Guydosh, Scott Hamula, Fr. Bernard Maloney, Janice McLaughlin, Charles Mullins, Richard Pell, Kathleen Rourke, Lynne Stager, and Barbara Willers

Guest: Lee Anne Fox

Excused: Jackie Leidenfrost, Andrew Morpurgo, and Leo Kawczenski

Absent: Tim Davis, Nancy McGourty

Opening Prayer: “God’s divine life in us through Jesus Christ...”

Minutes: The minutes for the September 12, 2019, meeting were accepted as written.

Committee Reports:

Witness Committee (outreach, social action) report by Gerry Frank with Lynne Stager:

- “Share the Warmth” box has been placed on the St. James rectory porch
- The Seneca County coat collection on the fourth Saturday in October was able to serve 33 families.
- The Christmas project in Seneca county provided privately funded assistance to people in need, they have been doing this for over 30 years, most people in Seneca County are eligible.
- The Angel tree gifts were distributed on Dec. 11 in Ovid and included food vouchers and gifts for kid.
- Gerry and Lynne will put up the annual hat and mitten tree at St. James after Thanksgiving.

Fellowship committee (social activity and communication) report by Janice McLaughlin:

- It will be a “Sweet” (not “donut”) Sunday on the first Sunday of each month at St. James.
- There has been a request for a photo directory form LifeTouch. Would need someone to coordinate it.
- This is Janice’s last meeting as she is moving out of town. Her work on socials and fellowship had a “major impact on helping form our new parish community.”
- No word on who will chair the fellowship committee once she leaves.

Word committee (education and evangelization) report by Susan Guydosh:

- There are 13 children from 8 families in religious education from grades 1 through 7.
- They had their first meeting last month and will meet again this coming Sunday, covering Eucharist
- Confirmation classes: the confirmation ceremony will be on April 29 in Seneca Falls. There are 6 students in their first year and 2 in their second year of instruction.

- The Catholicism classes for adults vary in numbers for the morning session and 8-10 for the evening session.
- 2 people are considering joining the church and are in their second year of RICA.

Worship committee (liturgy) report by Tom Duff:

- 11 people responded to the ministry fair at St. James and Holy Cross, mainly to join the fellowship committee. No one volunteered from St. Francis.
- The People in the Pews subcommittee has met and identified some socially-based problems. What is key is fostering sense of community for both people who come to church and those who don't. Examples: Socials, youth involved in liturgy, keeping present people engaged, vibrant and relevant liturgies.
 - Some discussion about engaging those who have stopped coming: special liturgy or service event? Would it help to have volunteers or vans to pick people up and bring them to Mass?
 - Reengagement is key and depends on efficient communication, including social media or getting e-mail addresses. Postal mailings once a month don't work over time.
 - It is crucial that we work to retain people as we work to reengage others.
 - A Christmas postcard was suggestions and the PC thought it was a "good idea." We also need to get added to the Ithaca Journal's list of Christmas Catholic Masses.
 - We need to create a communication plan for everyone on our parish mailing list for all of 2020. This would include messaging for social media and Facebook.
 - Fellowship photos are right now the most popular items on our FB and Instagram pages.
 - There is no scheduled follow-up meeting planned for the People in the Pews committee
- Weekday Mass – Father has proposed that, because we are not three parish but one parish, 40 miles long, with three churches, we need a consistent time and location for daily Mass.
 - Presently it is 9:00 a.m. on Tuesday and Friday at St. James / 9:00 a.m. on Wednesdays at St. Francis/ and 8:30 a.m. on Thursdays at Holy Cross.
 - Father feels it is easier for people to have one geographically central local and consistent time for daily Mass. This would provide an equal opportunity for everyone in the parish to attend Mass.
 - This would also cut down on heating in the winter as heating in a smaller church is preferred, even though the heating fuel for St. F. is the most expensive of the three churches.
 - Others at the PC did not agree with father. "People are used to having Mass in their church."
 - The Friday Mass at St. James is well attended with 20 people, many from outside our parish. Father said they can go elsewhere. Someone else asked "What do they contribute?"
 - Why switch from 9:00 to 8:30 a.m., on top of the location change? Father admitted it was for his personal convenience, to start his day earlier.
 - The discussion that followed included some of the following concerns: too much of a change at once (time and place), making it harder for people to receive the sacraments, we could end up without a parish priest, worried that this is a first step towards closing a church, putting everything in Interlaken is not good for the parish.

- One suggestion was to give the new schedule a 6-month trial.
- The discussion ended when it was pointed out that Father had already made up his mind and it was a done deal.
- The schedule change will begin Jan. 1.

Finance Council report by Lee Anne Fox:

- Positives: we have an income of \$55k over last year's \$52k. Our expenses are now \$44k compared to \$45 last year, so we are moving in a good direction for both.
- Non-operating or extra building expenses of \$29k included work on HC and the St. Francis sacristy (which also hit in the previous fiscal year).
- Our weekly collection are down but our electronic giving has gone up, over \$3k over last year.
- We need to make sure we use some of our money to provide enriching programs for people, like the Catholicism classes. Last fiscal quarter no money was spent on the people.
- Will there be a problem with reaching our target for the CMA? Only recently (2-3 years) have we reached our goal. A tough environment this year may lead to a need to contribute money to make up the difference, as the diocese requires of parishes who don't make their goal.
- Much of our merged savings is in the diocese's Communis fund, very hard to get it out.
- 3 generous families have moved away, reducing our income by \$8k.

Building and Grounds:

- The diocese requires parishes to submit a 5-year plan of anticipated building needs before they will approve anything. Even though it is "our" money in the investment fund, they are trying to be sure we have funds for future needs. St. James has met the 5 year plan but not yet from HC or St. Fr.
- St. Francis sacristy project has been completed and Holy Cross trim painting is in process, the St. James porch and steps have been completed.
- Ron has researched pre-pay for winter fuel at HC and St. F. Mirabito will do it and maintenance but first tanks need to be raised and fixed. The HC rectory tank needs to be replaced. E&V will continue to fill the oil on that tank as Mirabito refuses due to danger.
- It was pointed out that the sidewalk at St. F. has a point where it is raised and many have tripped over it.
- We need to come up with a way to silence cell phones before Mass begins.

Other business:

- The mission of our parish and church is to "promote Jesus Christ." We need to look at how we can boost our own faith and invite people to look at the Gospel and Jesus. We need to stay focused on what we are about. How do we do these things?
- Father's vacation will possibly be in February.
- How do we get more people to join our committees? One example is the ministry fair (see above). Another way to is to get committee members to reach out into the community.
- It is important that the PC members are more of a "think tank" than "worker bees."

- The Geneva Family Hope Center, pro-life, will be using the HC rectory as a satellite office, providing educational materials for young people. Today was their first day and they will be open every Tuesday and Thursday, from noon until 4:00 p.m.
- Immaculate Conception is not a holy day of obligation this year.
- A large THANK-YOU to Janice for all she had done for our parish. Susan and Scott have helped her and a new fellowship chair will need to be found. An alternative will be chosen by father to fill Janice's PC term.
- "Happy birthday" to Tom for his birthday today.

Next meeting: January 9, 2020

Closing prayer: Glory Be

Respectfully submitted by Kathleen E. Rourke