

Parish Town Hall Mtg. Minutes – 2.5.2023

1. Written 2020 to 2025 Parish Goals distributed
2. Opening prayer by Father Pete
3. Welcome and introduction of town hall meeting. Per PPC bylaws for parishioners to meet with the pastor, Parish Pastoral Council (PPC), and Finance Committee.

Baron Johnson: Introduction of strategic goals (mission statement and visions statement)

Goals:

- Introduction of PPC members
 - Explained goal to integrate Spanish speaking and English speaking communities into a single church, not two separate churches. Most of this outreach has currently been from the Hispanic side.
4. Monica Gawet (Chairperson for Finance Committee): distribution of current parish financial statement
 - Introduction of Finance Committee
 - Parish is in greatest financial strength in our history.
 - Last year almost all debt was paid off
 - Loan balance down to \$91k, should be paid off prior to end of this fiscal year
 - Total annual budget \$1.37M. Fiscal year beginning July 1
 - YTD rev: \$861k, above budget
 - Current fiscal year surplus \$185k
 - Surplus to operating budget +\$203k
 - Operating cash \$230k
 - Healthy cash reserve balance
 - Maintenance projects:
 - 2 HVAC units (already paid for within budget)
 - Roof repairs and exterior repairs upcoming
 5. Finance Committee Questions from Parishioners

Question: What part of monthly collections goes directly to diocese?

Response: There is a cathedral assessment of 2% of our assessable income.

- There are other assessments: priest retirement funds, communications, schools, etc.
- Amount is based on formula of assessable income calculated yearly by the diocese.
- Total assessment is approximately 18% but varies year to year.

Question: With projected projects, is there any new construction currently planned?

Response: Not currently.

Question: With capital plans, we had previously considered expansion of music room, extra classrooms, renovate kitchen, are they still going forward?

Response: Costs for music room rose significantly, at that point a parish survey was done, and paying off parish debt was preference.

- We did proceed with replacement of sound system for main church. Some other projects were completed.
- Father Pete: we are a point looking into the future, where we can discuss, what are our needs? Perhaps capital projects will be one of those things.
- We pay \$15k monthly out of budget into church loan payment in addition to separate donations. Those funds will become available after loan payoff.

6. Father Pete: Introduction of parish staff

7. General Parishioner Questions

Question: Please speak to care of creation efforts

Response: Ministry started in Sept. 2021 consisting of a group of people living out life laid out by Pope Francis. Various initiations to teach parishioners/parish to not waste things and reuse of things that are recyclable or renewable. For example, as we replace old items for more energy efficient ones, we donate old ones to various places (Habitat for Humanity). Also, controllable thermostats, etc. to only heat/cool places that are planned to be in use.

Question: The homeless community, what is evolving there? What is the plan?

Response: 1.5 years ago, we were asked if people could stay on the church property in their vehicles. We said yes in collaboration with a Place to Stay. Baron, as well as Father Pete, have come to pastor them. There is not a formal ministry, but they are allowed to stay if they are "good citizens." We believe it as a blessing to the parish. Some have stayed an extended time due to safety and the care received. Youth deliver left over food. Martha's Hands offers them a meal once per month.

Question: Do we have insurance, or need it, to cover homeless in case there is an incident.

Response: Our insurance is Catholic Mutual Group. We have looked into it, and we would not be liable for an incident involving them staying on campus. If something happens due to a parish function, then we can be liable, but with simply them being on exterior property, we are not liable in case of an incident. If we let them sleep inside, it would be considered a parish activity, and we could be held liable if something were to occur. There is a mutual desire from several priests within the diocese to be pastoral to the homeless.

Question: There is program called SOS (Street Outreach Service Day), at New Providence, coming to MLK Center. Are we involved?

Response: SOS consists of quarterly events hosted at different churches where we invite homeless to receive different services.

- Vicki Johnson: We make sure that any facility offering their services, they have done so knowing what will occur, and will make sure their insurance will cover anything that takes place. There are things that happen outside and inside of the buildings. We have offered our facility in July. Father Pete has attended a day previously to observe the process. If there is a specific need for OLOF parishioners, the parishioners will be notified.

Question: How has human waste been handled within our homeless community?

Response: Baron Johnson: We have talked to the community about that. We have spoken to them consistently about cleanup in their area. We need to formally address human waste with them. We do monitor them with cameras to prevent drug use, fighting, etc. There are things we can do to be good Christian neighbors to them.

Question: Rather than “hodgepodge” efforts, we need a focused program to deal with this (homeless population) because it is growing. Maybe make them participate at the parish for particular items?

Response: Baron is the homeless ambassador for the parish.

Question: What do the homeless use for electricity? Would we be held liable if there was an issue.

Response: Insurance can impede the work of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Typically, the homeless use generators, but once we did let a very sick person plug into parish electric panel.

Question: Could we have the homeless sign a disclaimer?

Response: Luis: When the homeless first came to our parish, we extensively checked with the city, the police, our insurance company, etc. Most within the homeless community at our church are not there as a first choice. Once we enter into a formal agreement, we then become more liable for incidents per our insurance program.

Parishioner comment: If we are to live by the Gospel, we do not live by litigation. These are human beings on our property. Sometimes we must live beyond litigation and recognize that if we are to be disciples, we must be open hearted.

Question: One thing I notice, at most Catholic churches, is that we don't have a lot of late age teenagers. I didn't see that in our goals. I think we should add that.

Response: Great point. We will definitely discuss that soon.

Question: With all the churches in the county, is there anything to do as a concerted effort working with the local government to address the homeless population. Maybe more patrols, etc. in anticipation of growing increase of homeless population.

Response: The county does have a warming station at Central Baptist Church when temperatures drop below 25 degrees. OLOF works there Wednesday nights. We feed them and share with them. There is an organization, John 3:16 that is putting together a place to house the homeless. A Place to Stay is quite involved with it. In general, the homeless population does not want to be in the system or sign a waiver/paper. Several churches in Blount County house homeless and feed the hungry.

Parishioner comment: We also have the United Way which acts as a resource for people who want to provide for those in need. Unless you are not involved or volunteering, you likely don't realize all the efforts taken place to help the homeless.

Question: Where are we with progress of exterior repairs?

Response: They are to begin late spring due to weather conditions.

Question: Is there an update on the upcoming convent coming to Blount County?

Response: The Benedictines of Divine Will and the Benedictine Daughters of Divine Will introduce their “family”-based charisms of Catholic faith to the Diocese of Knoxville. Most information can be found to in East TN Catholic newspaper.

Parishioner comment: Blount County is growing fast. We should be very welcoming to new people moving to community.

8. Father Pete: closing prayer
9. Meeting adjourned