

**Catholic Area Faith Community of Jesus Our Living Water
Area Pastoral Council
December 30, 2014
MINUTES**

Present: Father Steve, Father Jerry, Michelle Ridl, Ron Dobbs, Donna Carver, Joan Conway, Pat Malmgren, Christa Rivers, and Mary Nordstrom. **Absent:** Dave Reed, Terry Braun, and Tim Macik

We began with the Prayer to the Holy Spirit and recommitment to our Vision statement. Our November minutes and tonight's agenda were approved as printed.

Pastor's Report

- Father Steve thanked everyone coming out on the cold night. We are in the middle of a streak of funerals - five in the AFC this week.
- On the brighter note, he applauded everyone in each parish for all the hard work that went into our Christmas liturgies. They were beautiful and very well attended.
- Father also wanted to acknowledge that he appreciated the APC's foresight and effort last month with the recommendation to drop a Mass; however, he didn't feel that we were ready for that quite yet. He wanted to make sure that the council understood the prayer and reflection he put into the decision to continue with our current schedule until we can hold parish consultation meetings.

Area Committee Reports: The newly-reestablished Area Stewardship Committee met for the first time last night and is looking at a purpose statement and are also working on a policy to present to the APC regarding when an expense is a "normal" expense and when it is a capital expense to be paid by the specific parish.

Information Items

1. Discipleship retreat - January 24, 2015: There will be a bulletin insert this weekend in all bulletins. Leadership in the AFC will be receiving a personal invitation via email. An RSVP is required so that Sister Ellen can know who is in attendance as well as their role.
2. Father Steve will be gone 1/10/2015 - 1/23/2015
3. Ash Wednesday Mass schedule was reviewed

Discussion Item – AFC/Parish consultation meetings

AFC/Parish consultation meetings: There was extensive discussion regarding the upcoming meetings, especially regarding exactly what the agenda and format should be. Father Steve, Father Jerry, and Mary will work on a draft outline bring it to the APC's meeting on February 19. Some other items discussed were:

- The meetings have been set for Monday, March 16 at the Church of St. Thomas More, and Thursday, March 19 at the Church of St. Patrick. Both meetings will begin at 6:00 pm.
- The meetings will be held in the two smaller parishes (St. Patrick and St. Thomas More) with the main purpose being to address some of the questions that Bishop LeVoir posed in his February and September articles in *The Prairie Catholic*.

February, 2014:

“As difficult as it might be, parishioners of small parishes are asked to work with their priests and pastoral administrators to assess their future. This should be done through a process of prayerful discernment and honest, charitable discussion. The “Fourth Plan” states: “The process of discernment that small parishes are to undertake first involves a prayerful examination of their pastoral activities.

1. How are we being nourished by the Word of God, the Eucharist, and the other sacraments?
2. How are we communicating the life of Christ to others?
3. Are we living out our Christian vocation to imitate Christ in his offices of priest, prophet, and king as we should through participation in the parish?
4. Is our parish as vibrant as it once was?
5. Can we reasonably expect it to have our current level of activity in the future, given the area's demographic trends, e.g., declining numbers of individual members, households, and youth in the parish?” (p. 119).

These are all important questions for small parishes to ask themselves as they discern.”

September, 2014:

“I ask that parishioners and pastoral leaders of each parish continue to discuss the future of their parish. The “Fourth Plan for Parishes” calls for each parish to look honestly, charitably, and prayerfully at its future by asking questions.

1. For example, what does the future look like for the parish in five years, 10 years, and 20 years?
 2. Will the Catholic population be growing, diminishing, or remaining constant?
 3. Will the average age of the Catholic population be going up, going down, or remaining stable?
 4. What do these trends mean for the parish and the need for pastoral care in the parish, in the area, or in the AFC?
 5. Are we enthusiastically engaged in the new evangelization? In other words, are we actively encouraging those Catholic neighbors who are no longer attending Mass to come home?
 6. Are we prepared to listen to these Catholics patiently and lovingly?
 7. What does this mean for the future of the parish?
 8. What is the financial status of our parish?
 9. Will revenue be able to cover expenses as time goes on? Should our parish be looking at a merger with a neighboring parish?
- While the reduction in our AFC from four priests two years ago to two priests now is what triggered having the meetings, the focus of the meetings should be on viability/vitality vs. reality and not on the priest shortage.
 - We will send a letter to each registered household inviting them to their parish's meeting. We will also make phone calls reminding people of the meeting and the importance of attending. The meetings will also be in the Lenten *Fiat* and in the bulletin.
 - We will present statistics from our past parish self-studies.
 - One suggested format of the meeting:
 1. Opening prayer
 2. Introduction
 - a) Definitions
 - b) Statistics
 - c) Break into small groups
 - d) Regroup

Our next meeting will be on Thursday, February 19 at 6:30 pm at the Church of Our Lady of the Lakes in Spicer.