

St. Francis of Assisi Pastoral Council Minutes

Assisi Room of the Rectory

January 18, 2018

Members in attendance: Alicia Church, Debra Crone, Fr. John Dillon, Justin Fitzgerald, Charles Gichohi, Arleen Hall, Mark Harang, Daniel Koscinski, Alec Niedermaier, Ann Pierre, Ken Raker and Travis Tomon.

Ex-officio members/staff in attendance: Deacon Dan Finn and Melissa Egan (communications coordinator)

Minutes:

Deborah McDonald, executive director of the Archdiocese of Washington's Parish Pastoral Planning, addressed the St. Francis Pastoral Council at its meeting January 18 about its role as a consultative body to the pastor and the Indicators of Vitality Process that it will undertake this spring.

At what was the first meeting of the newly convened Pastoral Council, McDonald explained that the role of the body is to be the "listening ear to the community." Its purpose, she said, is to encourage one another in the mission of the church.

In leading the Pastoral Council members through an exercise to better discern their role, McDonald said the Pastoral Council would be integral in making disciples. After reflecting on a passage of Scripture, council member Alicia Church said the passage called her in her role on the council to "step outside of her comfort zone," while Debra Crone said she must remember that, as a council member, she is "worshiping God, not herself."

McDonald stated that the mission of the parish is to:

- Create the basic community of the Christian people
- Initiate and gather the people through liturgical life
- Conserve and renew the faith of the people
- Serve as the school for teaching the salvific message of Christ

She also reviewed the council guidelines, including that Fr. John serves as the chair and convenes the council. Ex-officio members, or members that serve by virtue of their position, include permanent deacons and parish staff members.

McDonald also reviewed that members can be selected by the following methods: election, appointment by the pastor or selection by representatives of parish organizations.

McDonald then gave the council an overview of the Indicators of Vitality process, an archdiocesan tool to assess the planning and evangelizing capacity of the church. The tool was created in 2005 by then-Bishop Donald Wuerl in the Archdiocese of Pittsburgh (PA). Fr. John has tasked the Pastoral Council with undertaking the Indicators of Vitality Process in the parish this spring.

McDonald presented the five “touchstones,” or desired outcomes, for the Indicators of Vitality Process. Once parishioner feedback is collected through an online survey or town hall meetings, the desired outcomes are:

- Increasing the evangelization capacity of parishes
- Examining where parish life and ministries are strongest
- Finding the opportunity for new growth and a stronger evangelization effect
- Flexibility to meet the needs of individual parishioners
- Providing an opportunity for parishioners’ voices to be heard in a non-threatening fashion

Also explained were the five areas that the process measures:

- Liturgy and worship
- Education formation
- Community
- Service
- Administration

McDonald laid out the process to execute the Indicators of Vitality process, which would include the following:

- Fr. John would select Pastoral Council members to serve on the Indicators of Vitality team
- Pastoral Council members would review the standard Indicators of Vitality survey.
- The Indicators team would add or modify questions that the council and Fr. John have identified as key
- The team would determine the roll-out process, date to launch the survey and the date to close it
- The team would determine the process for reviewing and reporting the findings to parishioners
- Parish leaders and staff would incorporate the findings in the parish planning process

McDonald suggested that, as the Pastoral Council develops St. Francis’ survey, they ensure the diversity of the parish is reflected in the survey format and launch, such as possibly offering the survey in other languages for non-English speakers.

“The process gives you the fruit,” McDonald said. “It’s an opportunity to ask the community whether this parish reflects the people.”

When asked what role parish staff have in the execution of the survey, McDonald responded that staff will help facilitate the process, create needed documents, ensure engagement of shareholders and provide a liaison role.

Under other business, the council also discussed Saturday, Jan. 20, being the First Reconciliation for children receiving that sacrament. Executive Committee member Alicia Church also discussed the Volunteer Appreciation Dinner and Dance, which was to be held Feb. 3 in the Parish Center.