

St. Thomas More Parish Council  
Retreat and Planning Session  
Saturday, May 12, 2007

Summary

**A. Mission, Vision, and the Parish Council**

1. *What is the mission of our parish and what is the parish council's responsibility in regard to that mission? Evaluation of the last year.*
  - a. We discussed the central mission of the parish as the proclamation of the Gospel, and reaffirmed our understanding that this includes serving the spiritual, educational, and social needs of our members and the evangelization of the broader community.
  - b. We discussed some of the implications of the call to evangelize the larger community and the need to see how we do that through different ministries.
  - c. We discussed the relationship between St. Thomas More as a student center and as a university parish, clarifying that we see both aspects as mutually beneficial and seek to integrate them more so as to fully realize these benefits.
  - d. With respect to the parish council's responsibility in regard to the parish's mission, we discussed the idea that the parish council's primary role is one of leadership and coordination, as well as engaging in proactive communication throughout the parish. It is the parish council's responsibility to work with Fr. Ray in thinking about the direction of the parish as a whole, in prioritizing and resolving problems of the parish as a whole, and of helping to coordinate the work of the many parish committees. It is crucial, as Fr. Ray said, that we achieve a shared vision with the parish.
2. *What is our vision as to what the parish should be doing over the next couple of years to fulfill its mission?*

In terms of the priorities we set for the parish council over the next couple of years, we identified six things we want to focus on:

- (1) **Finances**, especially
  - (a) bringing the first capital campaign to a resolution with a full accounting and a town meeting so as to regain the trust of the previous donors and set the stage for a future capital campaign,
  - (b) education about tithing, stewardship, and Catholic schools.

- (2) **Space**, especially
  - (a) assessment and utilization of existing space, and
  - (b) planning for future space needs
- (3) **Student-Parish** Relations, including
  - (a) an election of one student to the parish council in the fall, to bring us into compliance with our constitution
  - (b) the appointment of two Peer Ministers to the parish council
  - (c) an effort to learn from other university parishes about how they have integrated the student and non-student parts of their parishes
- (4) **Communication** within the parish and with the larger community
- (5) Create a more functional **committee** infrastructure (see below)
- (6) Planning for a new **student-community center**, emphasizing an evaluation of our programmatic needs for a new building, its design, and its financing.

## **B. Committees**

1. *What committees exist on paper at St. Thomas More and what is their present status and strength?*
  - a. We received a list of committees from Kelly. (See attached list.)
  - b. We recognized that much of the information is out of date and decided to carry out a survey of parish organizations to establish if they still met, who was their contact person, what they do, and how many people participate. Earl will design the questionnaire.
2. *What committees are essential to the parish?*
  - a. Sims provided us with a set of general committees under which most of the existing parish committees could be grouped.
  - b. After discussion, the parish council settled on the following eight general committees, in alphabetical order:
    - (1) Campus Ministry
    - (2) Communications
    - (3) Education
    - (4) Finance

- (5) Liturgy
  - (6) Parish Life (including fellowship and hospitality)
  - (7) Property
  - (8) Social Action
- c. Exactly which parish organizations will fall under which of these committees will be decided after the survey of existing parish committees, as will the overall organizational chart.
- (1) One question is whether organizations such as Communion and Liberation or the Knights of Columbus will be located under the Parish Life Committee.
  - (2) Another set of questions had to do with the relationship of the parish council with the parish staff. In addition to working out the question of who is in charge when Fr. Ray is away, we will have to figure out ways for the staff to coordinate with the general committees in the areas that affect them, such as Cindy with the Education Committee, Erin with the Campus Ministry Committee, Debbie with the Finance Committee, John with the Liturgy Committee, and Gloria with the Communications Committee.

2. *What relationship should exist between the committees and the parish council?*

- a. To the extent possible, matters pertaining to each of these general committees should be decided within the committees. So, for example, the Liturgy Committee should coordinate liturgical ministries and respond to parishioner concerns about the liturgy, while the Property Committee should resolve questions involving the maintenance and management of the parish's properties, etc.
- b. We decided that a discussion of the matters represented by each of these general committees should be held on a quarterly basis initially (see meeting calendar below), and that they could decide subsequently on a different schedule (some more frequent and some less, as needed). It may be important for some committees, such as the Finance Committee, to send written reports on a monthly basis, even though we will discuss finances in more detail on a quarterly basis.
- c. We asked that two members of the parish council take special responsibility for each of the general committees. Where no committee presently exists, the parish council members should take steps to help get one formed and to organize at least its initial meeting. Where a general committee already exists, parish council members should communicate with its members and coordinate

activities with them. For the 2007-2008 year, those responsibilities are as follows

(1) Campus Ministry	Casey	Charlie
(2) Communications	Earl	Julia
(3) Education	RC	Sims
(4) Finance	Charlie	RC
(5) Liturgy	RC	Sims
(6) Parish Life	Julia	Casey
(7) Property	Mark	Sims
(8) Social Action	Earl	Charlie

- d. The parish council agreed that it should take responsibility for an annual stewardship event to invite parishioners to participate in parish activities and organizations.

### **C. Meetings**

1. *How can the parish council best fulfill its role through our monthly meetings?*
  - a. In terms of general principles, we agreed that less of our meeting time should be dedicated to the details of each area (for example, to discussing the repairs on one of the rental units) and more time to making sure that the relevant committee (the Property Committee, in this case) is functioning effectively.
  - b. We should communicate to the parish that all parishioners and staff members are welcome to attend any parish council meeting.
  - c. Suggestions from the Suggestion Box should be communicated to all parish council members via email, so that we are aware of expressed parishioner concerns, but should be dealt with in the first instance by the appropriate general committees. For example, suggestions about the liturgy will go first to the Liturgy Committee to be discussed and resolved and will not normally be discussed in the parish council meetings.
  - d. We agreed that for the coming year, we would dedicate special attention to each of the general committees on a rotating, quarterly basis. Copied below is a list of our meeting dates and the general committees whose areas of parish life will be the focus of those meetings.

2. *Frequency, length, dates, and format of parish council meetings for 2007-2008.*

a. All meetings should begin promptly at 7:00 PM and end by 8:30 if possible. We all recognized that keeping the meeting length within reasonable limits is important to the success of the parish council.

b. A sample agenda for our meetings might look like this:

Call to Order/Prayer

Approval of Minutes

Pastor's Report

Reports from general committees (see schedule below)

Old Business

New Business

Adjournment and Convocation for Next Meeting

c. Monthly meeting calendar:

<u>Month</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Committees Reporting</u>
<b>2007</b>		
June	7	Communications, Liturgy, Campus Ministry
July	5	Finance, Property
August	2	Education, Social Action, Parish Life
September	6	Communications, Liturgy, Campus Ministry
October	4	Finance, Property
November	8	Education, Social Action, Parish Life
December	6	Communications, Liturgy, Campus Ministry
<b>2008</b>		
January	3	Finance, Property
February	7	Education, Social Action, Parish Life
March	6	Communications, Liturgy, Campus Ministry
April	3	Finance, Property
May	1	Education, Social Action, Parish Life
May	17	Annual Parish Council Retreat and Planning

### **Conclusions, Evaluation, and Prayers**

We concluded our meeting expressing general satisfaction with what we had achieved, and in our final prayers we prayed especially for the health of Becky's mother, who fell and broke her hip.