

**St Thomas More University Parish
Parish Council Retreat & Planning Session
23 May 2009**

Members Present: Father Ray Ackerman, Charlie Kenney, R.C. Davis, Earl Whitman, Julia Irwin, Carol Hoffman, Sam Snow, Bill Huntington, Eric Anderson, Brigid Brink, Jennifer Grove, Ben Ballard, Sims Beeler

Absent: Deacon John Pigott, Deacon Tom Schott, Phillip Smith, Justine Summers

Opening

1. Opened retreat at 9:07 am with Ascension Gospel Reading, prayer, and discussion.
2. Charlie reviewed retreat agenda.

Evaluation of 2008-2009

1. A systematic evaluation of the previous year was requested. Over the course of the year, the PC focused on twelve areas of assigned responsibility. For each area, two questions were to be considered:
 - a. What were the most important achievements for the year?
 - b. What were the most important things not achieved?
2. Buildings and Maintenance
 - a. Big achievements: roof and exterior of main facility - though experiencing delays due to rain.
 - b. The practice of assigning a project manager to a single project rather than to an ongoing responsibility seems to work well.
 - c. Still to do: facility electronic door lock system, locate more project managers.
3. Campus Ministry
 - a. Attempting greater integration of parish and student communities. Knights of Columbus an effective means for this process.
 - b. Students are positive about current state of ministry.
4. Communications
 - a. Achievements: maintained open e-mail communication between PC members, office and others; the Bulletin and Dan Lawrence's weekly ministry schedule remained effective communication tools as did the Parish webpage.
 - b. Possible modifications: note in Bulletin listing additional information to be found on the Parish website; implement a system, possibly out of the office, for relaying event announcements to local print media; consider use of paid advertisement space.
5. Education
 - a. Michelle Breedlove has put much effort into RE program.
 - b. New classrooms working out well.
 - c. Neal Judisch's Bible course was a success.
 - d. Positive start for Michelle's first year.
6. Facilities Planning
 - a. History of past development plans reviewed.
 - b. A new plan evolving under the leadership of Mark Krittenbrink.
 - c. Financing for project still unresolved.
 - d. Fr. Ackerman has approached Ken Kenworthy (past big donor to other Okla. parish projects) as well as others for help.
7. Finance

- a. Funding procedure for major projects established between Finance Committee and Parish Council.
 - b. New Parish CPA's hired.
 - c. Giving is well ahead of budget for year.
 - i. Release of Debbie has decreased expenses.
 - ii. 40 new families have recently joined parish.
 - d. Need to have better communication between PC & FC.
8. Liturgy
- a. Mass greeting implemented.
 - b. New Liturgy group in formation.
 - c. Better organization needed.
9. Parish Life
- a. List compiled of all active committees and contact persons.
 - b. Communication link established between PC and the various committees.
 - c. Questions:
 - i. Should Christy be assigned to work on the formation of a Hospitality committee?
 - ii. Should the new families who recently joined the parish be called and invited to the Parish picnic?
10. Personnel
- a. Installed Office Manager and new Secretary.
 - b. Released Debbie Kohls.
 - c. Job descriptions created.
11. Social Action
- a. Some strong core groups exist in the parish:
 - i. St. Vincent de Paul
 - ii. Prayer Line
 - iii. Prison Ministry
 - iv. Food for Friends
 - v. Sue Wilson Charitable Fund
 - b. Steven Ministry in questionable status.
 - c. SVdP & Sue Wilson Fund working to establish working relationship with Norman Justice Alliance.
12. Stewardship
- a. A Time, Talent, Treasure campaign was undertaken. Time and Talent aspects need improvement.
 - b. Music at student Mass a success.
13. Constitution and Elections
- a. Elections process went well, though was somewhat rushed – many willing candidates.
 - b. Unelected candidates might be solicited to participate in other parish projects or groups.

Priorities

- 1. Charlie asked each member to write down list of priorities or projects for PC to take on in coming year.
- 2. Three small groups were formed to narrow down priority lists.
- 3. Results:
 - a. Group 1
 - i. Development and Facilities Planning coordination.
 - ii. Develop/encourage volunteer culture.
 - iii. Coordinated communication: web, calendar, Mass.
 - iv. Support Pastor.
 - b. Group 2

- i. Coordinate communication: website, calendar.
 - ii. Stewardship/Hospitality.
 - iii. Improve visibility of Parish, better PR.
 - c. Group 3
 - i. Facilities Planning/Development.
 - ii. Altar Society/Liturgy
 - iii. Increased participation/PR
- 4. Analysis of the small group priorities revealed three general areas of agreement:
 - a. Facilities Planning and Development.
 - b. Organized Participation and Volunteer Recruitment.
 - c. Coordinated Communication.
- 5. Area specific goals/comments/suggestions were solicited:
 - a. Facilities Planning and Development:
 - i. Follow-through – now that the process is started, keep pushing forward.
 - ii. Ownership – keep people involved in the process.
 - iii. Raise money, organize a fund drive.
 - iv. Mark Krittenbrink to continue to oversee the project.
 - v. Raise ½ the funds quietly before approaching Parish in general.
 - vi. Keep central group small.
 - vii. Make list of other development needs, i.e. the gala, etc.
 - b. Organized Participation and Volunteer Recruitment:
 - i. Communication important.
 - ii. Thanks and recognition effective means of retention.
 - iii. Continue to work with Christy on her recruitment luncheons.
 - iv. Mass greeter can also serve as recruitment officer after Mass.
 - v. Focus on hospitality, welcoming, usher/greeter technique.
 - vi. Place time limit on volunteer commitments.
 - vii. Accountability important – possibly use liturgical minister sign-in sheets as means to purge consistently irresponsible and noncurrent ministers from duty list.
 - c. Coordinated Communication
 - i. Improve visibility of Parish.
 - ii. Improve PR: announcement of events in Norman Transcript, Sooner Catholic, campus paper.
 - iii. Establish communication coordinator & committee to develop strategy.
 - iv. Create a single central calendar for Parish with a responsible overseer and website access.
 - v. Outline/develop Mass announcement submittal procedure.
 - vi. Outline/develop website information submittal procedure.
 - vii. Study the communication structures of other parishes.

Organization and Meetings

1. It was decided that the twelve areas of activity, focused upon last year, could be consolidated into the above three areas. Thus:
 - a. Facilities Planning and Development would absorb:
 - i. Buildings and Maintenance
 - ii. Facilities Planning
 - iii. Finance
 - iv. Personnel
 - b. Organized Participation and Volunteer Recruitment would absorb:
 - i. Campus Ministry
 - ii. Education
 - iii. Liturgy
 - iv. Parish Life

- v. Social Action
 - vi. Stewardship
 - vii. Constitution and Elections
 - c. Coordinated Communication would absorb (or remain):
 - i. Communications
- 2. Each PC member was asked to volunteer for just one of the areas of responsibility above. Thus:
 - a. Facilities Planning and Development:
 - i. Bill Huntington
 - ii. RC Davis
 - b. Organized Participation and Volunteer Recruitment:
 - i. Ben Ballard
 - ii. Carol Hoffman
 - iii. Brigid Brink
 - iv. Charlie Kenney
 - v. Jennifer Grover
 - c. Coordinated Communication:
 - i. Eric Anderson
 - ii. Sims Beeler
 - iii. Sam Snow
- 3. A meeting schedule for the upcoming year was agreed upon:
 - a. Ordinary meetings:
 - i. June 2, 2009
 - ii. No July meeting scheduled.
 - iii. August 6, 2009
 - iv. September 3, 2009
 - v. October 1, 2009
 - vi. November 5, 2009
 - vii. December 3, 2009
 - viii. January 7, 2010
 - ix. February 4, 2010
 - x. March 4, 2010
 - xi. April 8, 2010
 - xii. May 6, 2010
 - b. Annual Retreat:
 - i. May 22, 2010
- 4. Members broke into area of responsibility groups to discuss first steps.

Closing

1. Written evaluations of the meeting/retreat were requested, composed, and collected.
2. Meeting closed with prayer at 2:40 p.m.

Summarized Evaluations

1. Strengths:
 - a. Meeting well-run, on task, on time, with participation from everyone.
 - b. Review of previous year was very helpful, both for old and new members.
 - c. Open, frank discussion, ability to express opinions; friendly, low-key.
 - d. Good ideas.
 - e. Seems like a good group that can work well together.
 - f. Thanks to everyone for dedicating many hours this weekend.
 - g. Good format.
 - h. Visuals were a big help. What were the most important things not achieved?

2. Changes:
 - a. Re-evaluate holding meeting on Memorial Day weekend.
 - b. Reorganization of critical tasks into council structure was confusing.
 - c. Get new members acquainted more with the events of the past year.
 - d. More objective data presented: budgets, etc.
 - e. Introduction of members: i.e. background, years served, day work, etc.
 - f. Describe the mission statement of the parish council and list responsibilities of members.
 - g. Have a general idea or agenda before the meeting beyond our schedule.
 - h. Not just planning, but allow time for a full subgroup meeting.