

**Mother of God  
Parish Pastoral Council Planning Retreat  
January 26, 2019**

**Opening Prayer** – Father Comer

**Introductions:** Staff, Finance Council, Pastoral Parish Council

**Our Mission:** Who do we want be? – Father Comer

Our current mission statement is outdated and based on who we were as a parish years ago, when the area around us was a very different community. The new mission statement should be shorter and address who we are now and who Jesus wants us to be (not who we want to be).

We have an internal mission that aligns with the two great commandments:

1. Worship God (the most important)
2. Love one another (be a support system for each other)

Our external mission is the great commission from Matthew's gospel—"Go make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit," i.e., evangelization.

We discussed three books of interest to our work on Council:

*The Purpose-Driven Church* – Dr. Rick Warren

*Rebuilt: Awakening the Faithful, Reaching the Lost, and Making Church Matter* – Michael J. White

*Divine Renovation* – James Mallon (suggested by Mary Ann Kelly)

Judy McGovern asked if copies of these books could be made available for those who are interested.

**2018 Review** -- Cindy Hassan

Cindy reviewed the primary goals from last year:

- Emphasize welcoming/hospitality
- Evaluate our mission statement
- Reinvigorate parish committees

We had great participation in our hospitality events and getting new people involved with planning and working at them. The timing of events after the 11:30 am Mass has worked out particularly well.

Contributing toward making Mother of God a “cradle of the arts” was the Emmet Cahill concert last April, which drew many local and out-of-town visitors. The event raised \$6,000 for the parish. Emmet will be returning on April 24 for another concert.

Fr. Comer said that the Friendly Sons of St. Patrick will be doing a concert here on March 1.

Mary Ann Kelly and Carol Fausz have done an excellent job of contacting and welcoming new parishioners. Approximately 50 new households joined our parish last year. We need to keep them and our long-term parishioners busy by reactivating existing committees or creating new ones.

David Johnston, Covington city manager, presented at one of our meetings to tell us what’s going on in the city.

#### **Finance Council Report – Michael Sketch**

Our goal for 2018 was to get our finances in order. We have retired the debt on the elevator and the sound system projects.

Sunday collections bottomed out but are on the rise again. People are more inclined to give to the DPAA if the funds are earmarked for projects. The 2018 campaign overage was designated to repair the steps across the street. Work has already started and will be completed as weather permits.

Income from the parking lots pays for maintenance and landscaping. The lots are rented at full capacity.

We also moved the parish offices to the St. Aloysius Center.

We have met our goal of making sure the investments in the Memorial Fund are socially responsible. We have also changed our philosophy about rolling money out of the Accumulation Fund to the Memorial Fund. Previously, we would roll it over when we hit the \$200,000 mark. Now we are waiting until we are at \$400,000.

The Memorial Fund is restricted to the upkeep of the church and the rectory. The balance is a little over \$2 million.

The Accumulation Fund is the interest that comes from the Memorial Fund. Half of the \$400,000 balance will go toward painting the bell towers. Future projects include replacing the boiler, which has developed a pressure leak.

Fr. Mike would also like to create a training space in the Hall with flat screen TVs for presentations.

## Group Discussions

We broke into smaller groups, based on four of the five major components of our parish structure:

- Worship
- Fellowship/Services
- Outreach/Service
- Evangelization/Discipleship
- Parish Finance/Facilities

Questions for discussion:

- What is working and what needs attention?
- What are the needs?
- What could be improved and how do we facilitate?

Deacon Tom noted that the goals we set for the coming year need to be measurable. Mark Rosing suggested creating a dashboard showing the progress made toward reaching our goals, marked by a red, yellow or green light.

## Insights From Group Discussions – Steve Oberjohn

Worship (Cindy Duesing)

- **Sunday Masses are two different experiences.** How do we unify the two communities? Ideas considered: Have joint celebrations periodically. Switch the music groups on occasion?
- **How can we support the music at the 9:30 am Mass?** Can we offer funding to hire a soprano, alto, tenor and bass?
- **It's getting more and more difficult to recruit talented musicians; what is our succession plan?** Young musicians don't seem to be as willing to make the weekly commitment for rehearsal and playing at Mass, unless it's a paying gig. The Contemporary Ensemble celebrates its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary next year, and members are getting older. How do we ensure that the quality of music continues?
- **We need a budget for music to cover supplies, training and education.** Contemporary Ensemble members have been paying for supplies out of their own pockets and no longer belong to the National Pastoral Musicians association, which sponsors annual conventions and other educational opportunities. Michael Sketch advised that a request can be made to the Finance Council to make it work. Patti Steinmetz puts the budget together based on the previous years' expenses in April.
- **How do we strike a balance between business and ministry?** Traditionally, choirs have been made up of volunteers, with a paid director and accompanist. The choir at the 9:30 Mass previously resorted to hiring principal voices (SATB) to ensure all the parts were covered. This would be a stickier proposition for the Contemporary Ensemble, which has been all volunteer except for the director position.

- **We need in-house training for ministers.** We could hold a continuing education night for Eucharistic ministers and lectors. Mary Ann Kelly reported that some of our new parishioners have expressed interest in these ministries but need to depend on when the diocesan training is scheduled (every six months). Deacon Tom mentioned that the training schedule can be modified to expedite training. Cindy Duesing suggested hosting an appreciation event for all of our ministers.
- **Could we have do some education about why Mass is so important?** People might be more inclined to value the Mass if they understood it.
- **Welcome people as they are—spiritual direction instead of rules.** Other churches invite participation. When it comes to joining the Catholic Church, there are a lot of hoops to jump through. Could we focus more on spiritual direction? People are looking for something that brings them joy. Joe Nienaber suggested inviting musicians/ministers from Catholic Churches that have a different culture, for example, Our Savior Church hosts a “coming home” service.

#### **Fellowship and Service to the Parish** (Bridget Kaiser)

- **It’s important to give one-on-one invitations.** That’s how you get people involved, especially the younger generation.
- **Single, under-40 crowd.** Brad Torline is the diocesan young adult ministry coordinator. He is sponsoring a series of talks by Dr. Allen Hunt, starting at Mother of God on Feb. 5.
- **Communication with young adults must be conducted through the channels they use.** This includes social media, email and text.
- **High school ministry needs to be a parish priority.** We want to entice them to stay after graduation.
- **What do we offer for married couples with kids?** Often they leave the parish when their kids start going to school. We need to offer them something they can’t get anywhere else. We could also provide babysitting during parish-sponsored activities to make it easier. We can tap into high school students who need service hours for this.
- **We need fund-raising to support these activities.** In addition, we need to engage volunteers in these efforts.
- **Look to Crossroads as a model.** Fr. Mike asked what Crossroads does well to get people coming back. They put scripture into today’s terms. They have a strong social media presence. They personally welcome people and interact with them as individuals. But Catholics have the Mass, which is unique. We aren’t aiming to be like Crossroads. We need to be the best “us.” However, personal interaction and communication are key components we can use.

#### **Outreach** (Vic Canfield)

- **Develop programs to invite people into the parish.** One suggestion is a blessing service using our relic of St. Arnold, the patron saint of hops (coordinating with a Braxton Brewery invite).
- **Look more closely at how we deal with people in need who come to our door.** Currently, we give out an index card with contact information for social resources. It

feels like a dead-end, since we have no way of knowing if they have the means to follow through. Do we need to do more?

- **Hold neighborhood –specific work days.** Parishioners could volunteer to help the poor and the elderly with cleaning up their yards, doing repairs, inside cleaning, etc. This type of activity especially appeals to young adults who like to see and feel the difference they can make. These groups would be ambassadors for the parish, and it would also build community among our parishioners.
- **Host age-specific gatherings at the parish.** The purpose would be to brainstorm with them about what kind of activities they want to see happen at Mother of God.
- **Distribute flyers in the neighborhood to raise awareness of specific events at Mother of God.**
- **Reinstate our “Gifted Agencies” program.** Invite speakers from each one to build awareness of local agencies and ministries and provide opportunities for parishioners to get involved.
- **Can we have signage in front of church?** This sign could offer information about parish events.

#### **Evangelization/Discipleship (Steve Oberjohn, Cindy Hassan)**

- **Our parish is charged with evangelizing to two audiences:**
  - **Internal**
  - **Outside community**

We asked several questions about evangelization:

- Is evangelization a subset of our other groups?
- What is the role of Parish Council?
- What is the role of Finance Council?
- What is the role of staff?

Evangelization is a key point in our mission statement.

Although this topic was intended to be addressed as a “stand-alone activity,” we recognized that there are elements of evangelization and discipleship in everything we do. Kathy Stevie pointed out that “doing” and setting an example through our work (e.g., volunteering in the community) is a powerful form of evangelization.

In addition to our bringing awareness of other ministries in Covington to our parishioners, Michael Sketch emphasized that we needed to make our parish more visible in the community. Cindy Duesing reminded us that we had discussed developing a marketing plan. We agreed that this exercise would tie in well with our other goals, including discussions of long-range planning.

#### **Goals for 2019 - Cindy Hassan**

We noted several themes during today’s meeting that can serve as the basis for setting goals for this year:

- A. Revise/update our mission statement.

- B. Re-energize/engage our committees. A ministry appreciation event would be a good starting place. We could also bring the chairpersons from the various ministries/committees together to brainstorm.
- C. Reactivate the Communications Committee, which would be charged with developing a marketing plan for outreach to the community and bringing it to Parish Council for approval.

Due to time constraints, we weren't able to include a discussion on long-range planning; however, work on our mission statement and a marketing plan would give us a starting point for long-range planning.

**Closing Prayer – Mary Ann Kelly**

**Next meeting – February 18**