**St. Maria Goretti Parish**

**Pastoral Council**

**Zoom Meeting**

**Notes**

**January 19, 2021**

Pastoral Council Members Present: Father Chung, Deacon Steven Vandercrone, Janna Kerr, Cheryl Ryan, Maria Richardson, Kim Staudt, Dave Mazeroski, and Charles Amuso. Members excused: Douglas Smith, Gloria Nguyen, and Ron Boak.

Father Chung opened the meeting with a prayer at 7:05 p.m.

1. Parish Update – Father Chung reviewed the status of the reserve Parish funds that have been invested in bank certificates of deposit in a “laddered” approach for several years. Four different banks have been used. This was done to increase the interest earned by moving the funds from the money market accounts that paid very low, almost negligible interest rates.

At the beginning of the current pandemic, in March 2020, the Investment Committee (Father Chung, George Mick, Kim Staudt, Douglas Smith and Charles Amuso) has been looking for ways to get a better return on the Parish reserve funds. Father told us that we are able to maintain those funds because of the continuing generosity of our parishioners, especially during the pandemic.

The Investment Committee reviewed a number of possible investment strategies and is recommending the following:

* 1. That the parish invests a portion of the reserve funds in the Catholic Foundation of Greater Philadelphia (an organization that is separate from the Archdiocese that has recently been formed to help parishes with investing and also with capital campaigns and other financial matters). The Catholic Foundation invests only in areas that are in accord with Catholic teaching. The investments are all managed by Merrill Lynch. The funds will be invested in a balanced portfolio managed by Merrill Lynch.
  2. That the Parish also invests funds with Janney Montgomery Scott, also in a balanced portfolio.
  3. That the funds be invested in a dollar cost averaging approach, monthly, to mitigate any risk due to possible dramatic changes in the markets.

1. After discussion by all members, the following motion was made and adopted:

That the plan recommended by the Investment Committee be approved: The parish would place up to $1,250,000 in investments: Up to $500,000 with the Catholic Foundation of Greater Philadelphia and up to $750,000 with Janney Montgomery Scott for the purpose of improving longer term returns on the Parish monetary resources. The investments would be made over several months in order to mitigate market volatility. Motion was made by Kim Staudt and seconded by Charles Amuso. All voted in favor: Deacon Stephen Vondercrone, Dave Mazeroski, Janna Kerr, Maria Richardson, Cheryl Ryan, Kim Staudt, Charles Amuso, and Father Chung.

1. Committee Reports
   1. Pastoral Plan- Janna Kerr/David Mazeroski – No report.
   2. Facilities and Development and Fund Raising Committee – Kim Staudt reported that Goretti Fest is scheduled for Friday, May 7, 2021. This will be an opportunity to invite parishioners to very enjoyable event.
   3. Religious Education/Family Faith Formation/Volunteer Ministry Program

- Maria Richardson, Director of Family Faith Formation, Religious Education and Parish Services reported the following:

**PREP**

* + - The good news is that for years, the Catholic Church has been talking about the parents being the 1st Catechist of their children, and this year it is happening!
      * Numbers are not apples to apples because we don’t have included this year Kindergarten (CGS) or Adaptive neither of which has been possible in person this year. We also can’t account for what 1st grade might have looked like because many parents decided to hold them back this year.
        + Without all of that, we should have had 305 students in PREP. We have 284 registered as of today and it is constantly changing.

Our goal is to keep children and families growing in faith in any way that we can. As of this week, we still have people registering for home-based PREP and as long as they can cover the material and pass the assessments by September 1, they can move up to the next grade level. We have done everything possible to make PREP a year of family catechesis without stress for our families who have so many stresses right now

We have 21 children who have not been registered, many from families who have made a decision to skip PREP this year and get back on track next year and I believe they will.

Out of 284 registered, 243 are Home Based PREP. 41 registered for the Ed Center

Those who come to the Ed Center needed to sign a Participant Release and Waiver of Liability provided by the Archdiocese along with a weekly COVID screening form, we take their temperatures, have socially distanced the desks, sanitize everything, etc.

Most families are going through faith with their children at home; we have a list of Catechists who are on call to help them when needed by grade level.

I changed book publishers 2 years ago and thank God. OSV has a great deal of online support, videos, music, projects, and all grade levels learn the same concept the same week at an age-appropriate level, there is a family discussion page each week and a quiz at the end of every chapter. It could not be better for where we are now. I am convinced that it was divine providence when we picked it!

* + - We had the last Confirmation in the Archdiocese before the pandemic and we are now preparing again for March 11. We have Bishop Deliman. We have 86 receiving and it will look a bit different because of the pandemic:
    - The in-person retreat that was scheduled for January 16 was canceled. In its place, we have a series of videos that I have created for teens and parents/sponsors. There is also a Virtual Retreat being created by the Archdiocese that will be available on February 1. We have also given them the idea to visit one of our local shrines as a family: St. John Neumann, St. Rita, Padre Pio, Miraculous Medal Shrine, or Our Lady of Czestochowa.
      * Teens will enter the church with their sponsor and parents. Each family is limited to those four people along with a few exceptions. At the parent meeting, we decided that we could move forward with that restriction and that we could also allow for necessary exceptions and so far, anyone who has asked for one is being accommodated.
    - We have almost 70 children for First Holy Communion this year.
      * Last year we were in a pandemic so we had several First Holy Communions and Fr. Chung worked very hard to accommodate the needs of our families and make it all work.
      * This year we are hoping to be back to normal by April 17 so we will not make any detailed plans before March.
    - The Mid-Term testing for PREP students is happening now and we have the Kid Talk Child Protection Lessons from the Archdiocese planned for March. They realize that most of the students are learning from parents and so they have some new procedures in place to accommodate that and ensure the bishops that it is happening.

**Youth Ministry/ Children’s Ministry**

* + - Overall, our families are extremely reluctant to have their children meet in groups for anything that is not necessary. We had the Quick Catholic series scheduled for fall and spring and families that have had all of their teens in our programs for years were not signing up. I tried to offer them as zoom meetings and the teens are simply not interested. They are zoomed out!
    - We did have 2 successful ventures that were very well received and that could become traditions for our parish:
      * Prayer on Fire – petitions from parishioners read and burned along with the palm from past years outside. - Very beautiful, prayerful, and fun!
      * Family Service Gingerbread House Family Workshop – we had 25 family spots for Drexel Hall with social distancing, it sold out in 2 days and them Gov. Wolf reduced the numbers to 10 and we changed it to a take-home project. We had even more participation and we also had 12 houses that were donated for our parish shut-ins. We had other parishioners who made homemade cookies and little gift bags to deliver with the houses. People who received them actually cried! – several thank you notes were received
      * We are hoping to have both spring fundraisers, add Quick Catholic back in, and have fun with mini-golf and bowling as soon as possible.
      * I do think we need to “start over so to speak with recruitment. In a year, we had two classes graduating and two groups of freshmen. I would like to give a presentation at mass much like I did when I first came on board but for all of our ministries this time.

**Church Ministries**

* + - We have revamped the Grounds Committee with new leadership under Lynn Hipp and many new volunteers and they are making great progress and doing a great job.
    - We are still looking for a new leader of the Hospitality Ministry. This remains to be a ministry that no one wants to be in charge of. I maintain the position that we need to redefine what it is and simplify it.
    - The Po-Life March this week is going virtual with only a few invited to Washington.
    - In March we had a Virtual Life in the Spirit Conference, we had over 500 people on ZOOM each week for 8 weeks. We had four regular speakers and we had Archbishop Nelson Perez for one of our final weeks. That has grown into a weekly Prayer Group of all ages. There are over 100 people registered and we usually have about 40 people sign on each Thursday evening. This does include people from other parishes as most prayer groups do and there is great potential for this group to meet several times a year in person once things open up.
    - We held the Archdiocesan kick-off for Vocations week here at SMG on All Saints Day, November 1. We had Bethany Music Ministry and Fr. Stephen DeLacy here live and we had a nice crowd. We did not have the technology to live stream then but we do now and that will be good for our future endeavors.
      * I would like to discuss the possibility of creating a virtual tour of our church to post on our web site.

Father Chung led the members in a closing prayer.