

St. Augustine Parish Pastoral Council Minutes November 20, 2006

Attendees: Father Bob Whelan, Polly Bahadur, Deacon Joseph Bichotte, Pat Conway, Edgar Flores, Gillian Frasier, Sister Ellen Glavey, Mozart Guillaume, Richard Lewis, Eileen McHugh, Rosario Pelaez, Reneida Reyes, Michelle Somerville

Excused: Gladys Cruz, Ellen Byrnes, Michael Fitzpatrick

Welcome/Introduction of New Members

At the start of the meeting, each member received several handouts and a binder on Parish Pastoral Planning from the Diocese.

We opened the meeting by introducing ourselves to our new members. The new members present were Rosario Pelaez, Michelle Somerville, Edgar Flores, and Mozart Guillaume, as well as new Ex Officio members Deacon Joe and Sister Ellen.

Review of Fall Training Sessions and the Planning Process

Those who attended the Diocesan training sessions on September 30th and November 19th of this year caught the rest of the group up on the major points that were covered in these sessions. These meetings were for the purpose of preparing us for the Pastoral Planning process. The first of these meetings was more general information, while, in the second, parishes that were in different stages of the process had the opportunity to share their experiences.

We reviewed Addendum 1 (p. 6 in the blue binders), which outlines the steps of the Planning Process. Father Bob reminded us that there is a Pastoral Council formation step in the process because most parishes didn't already have a Council. So those parishes that did have a Council (like us) are renewing their Council, while others are just beginning.

We are currently pursuing Step 1: Listening. This step includes the two Diocesan planning sessions we have already attended, and also One-to-One Conversations and Parish Self-Study.

A key element of the Parish Self-Study is an in-pew Data Survey, which we were planning on conducting on December 3rd. This survey is comprised of census-type questions as well as particular ones for parish life. These surveys will provide us with basic parish demographics and hopefully help us in planning. Surveys were made available in English, Spanish and Creole.

These first steps will prepare us for Step 2: Visioning, which is primarily focused on holding a Parish Assembly (which we will probably have in March). The purpose of the assembly is to gather everyone's opinions and come up with a Mission & Goals for the parish.

We'll then move on to Step 3: Planning, in which parishioners will meet in smaller groups and focus on the Goals in a practical way. This will result in Step 4: Implementation, which will consist of publishing a Parish Plan that will go to the Bishop and be carried out here.

Pat mentioned that, at the November 19th session, parishes were already discussing how they can share resources they've come up with as part of the Planning Process. One parish has put together a "Planning

Matrix” – an Excel spreadsheet that can be filled in with the info gathered in the Listening and Visioning steps.

The emphasis of this whole process is to involve the laity in decision making, creating first a parish plan and eventually a cluster plan. The goal is to have a more formal system of councils and a Cluster Council for each neighborhood which can facilitate as we need to share more resources.

Setting of Parish Dates for Each Step

This Planning Process has been running in cycles, so different parishes are doing parallel steps at the same time. We’re in the third – and last – cycle, although there will likely be a fourth for parishes that need to catch up or have difficulty getting their materials finished. We’re looking at a schedule as follows (we’ll have to look at the dates we’ve planned for the PPC meetings and see if they fit into this overall schedule):

One to One Campaign – We will be doing this from now through January, hoping to be wrapped up by the beginning of February. Data should also be coming in from the surveys in mid-late January.

Parish Assembly – We’ll have to pick a date, but this will likely be a two hour meeting on a weeknight. We’re looking at Monday evenings in March, and Father Bob suggested we pencil in the 12th or the 19th as possible dates. We’ll have to do some estimating of how many people will attend, but it seems like if we got 200 that would be a lot. Once we have a better sense of this number we can decide on where to hold the meeting, but Gillian suggested the school auditorium as one possibility.

Mission Statement & Goals – We’ll write these after the Parish Assembly, using the input we’ve gathered. We do have an existing mission statement (which predates Father Bob), and we may want to look at this and see if it’s worth reworking it. The goal is to have these done sometime in April.

Reflection Groups – These groups will take the Mission Statement & Goals and turn them into real, tangible steps. We’d like to move this date up from the suggested timeline and do the sign-up for these groups around Pentecost instead of September.

One-to-One Conversation Training

We reviewed the process for how to conduct the One-to-One Conversations (on p. 10 of our binders). The goal of these sessions is to build individual relationships between ourselves and other members of the parish community.

The idea of these conversations is for each of us to have face to face meetings with individual parish members to hear about more about them, what their feelings are about the parish, what they’d like to see more of, and what they believe in and care about. We want to understand what their passion or interest is in being a member of the parish community. In order to do this, we should be willing to share things about ourselves as well. It’s important to set a time limit to respect everyone’s time – we agreed 20-30 minutes would be sufficient. There is more information in the binders on how to set up and conduct these conversations.

We discussed how we might be able to engage parishioners in this process and look for people who’d be willing to have these conversations. Father Bob and Pat mentioned some ways other parishes at the larger meeting had done it including:

- Picking people up after mass – looking for people and asking them if they have 20 minutes to talk about the parish.
- Have a designated mass where several PPC members are present and ask if anyone is willing to participate that they find a parish council member after mass either to talk then or set up a time to talk later.
- Access people who are interested in/signed up for Stewardship committees.
- Talk to parents who are waiting while their children attend Sunday school classes.

We agreed that 5 people per PPC member month (10 total each) seemed a reasonable number of One-to-Ones for each of us to try to do, and then we discussed some general guidelines for the meetings:

- They have to be one on one. Even if a couple would both like to stay after mass, we'd need to split them up between two council members.
- We should keep in mind the special talents/interests of the people we talk to in order to better evaluate later how they might be involved later in the Planning process.
- We should not take notes during these meetings – once the One-to-One is finished, write your notes down on index cards (we'll be able to use these later during the planning of the Parish Assembly).
- At the end, ask the person if they'd be willing to come to a Parish Assembly to discuss these and other issues. We'll let these people know when the Assembly is scheduled.
- We also discussed that, in order to access people who don't attend mass (they don't have to be parishioners, but should be Catholics), we could ask people if they have any non-practicing family members that might be willing to talk with us.

We agreed to each try to do One-to-Ones with one other Council member and one other person in the Parish before our next PPC meeting.

Rounds

We conducted very brief rounds at the end of the meeting.

Richard mentioned that someone at Mass had told him during Stewardship that they had signed up for service committees in previous years but never heard from anyone from the groups they signed up for. He urged us to be sure that group leaders get the information on those who have volunteered and that people get contacted by group leaders in a timely fashion.

Pat mentioned that there were a series of special gatherings scheduled for people who want to meet about the Pastoral Planning process and get more details. She had flyers at the meeting for those who were interested.

Our next meeting is on Monday, December 11th – please meet up with another PPC member and at least one other parishioner before that meeting for One-on-Ones.