

PARISH LEADERSHIP NIGHT
JANUARY 12, 2017
MINUTES

The meeting was called to order by Father Marty Goetz at 6:30 PM.

The guest speaker present was Dr. Dan Ebener (Director of Stewardship and Parish Planning for the Diocese of Davenport).

Other present included Fr. Marty Goetz, Fr. Bill Roush, Deacon Bob Glaser, staff members from SS. John and Paul and SS. Mary and Patrick and pastoral council and commission members from both SS. John and Paul and SS. Mary and Patrick.

The meeting began with song and was followed with Scripture reading and prayer.

Fr. Marty stated that 10 months ago we received news that SS. John and Paul and SS. Mary and Patrick would be joining as one parish due to the decrease in the number of priests. At the time of the news Fr. Marty had said we are “on a mission from God”. And since those 10 months have passed one thing has remained constant: we are still “on a mission from God”. He reminded the group present that we are called to be a church of mission. We will not change our mission after joining together because we will still go forth to proclaim the gospel of Christ in Des Moines County. The question or “purpose” of this meeting was to discuss how we could join together as one parish.

Fr. Marty introduced Dr. Dan Ebener (whom he’s known since 1985) to lead us in discussing this transition from two parishes into one. Dr. Dan Ebener has been with the Diocese of Davenport since 1986. He was the Director of Catholic Charities for 20 years. He has taught at St. Ambrose University and is currently the Director of Stewardship and Parish Planning at the Diocese of Davenport. Dr. Ebener explained he wanted to have a conversation with the group using the *snow card method* to address all questions, concerns and/or comments concerning the impending transition into one parish. The *snow card method* is essentially anyone in the group can write their question, concern or comment on a yellow sticky note and then we would discuss each sticky note. This process is used to bring us together as one entity. The *snow card method* had one stipulation, which was that only *one* idea could be on each sticky note. Dr. Ebener explained that once the sticky notes were hung up on the wall they may fall off like snow hence the name *snow card method*. Sticky notes were passed out among the group and anyone could write their question, concern or comment on a sticky note. Sticky notes were collected by two members of SS. John and Paul (volunteers Dorothy Deehring and Liz Sanning) and two members of SS. Mary and Patrick (volunteers Linda Law and Dave Ehret). These volunteers went into another room and organized the snow cards by categories. The rest of the group was instructed by Dr. Ebener to find a parishioner they did not know and go and introduce themselves and have a conversation for 5 minutes while the volunteers organized sticky notes. Once all snow cards were organized they were each addressed according to what category they were in.

Liz Sanning discussed her snow cards first. They are as follows:

STAFF CONCERNS:

Will there be additional stress added to our priests by joining as one parish and being down a priest while carrying same workload: There was worry that our priests would get burned out by having additional duties due to decrease in the number of priests. Dr. Ebener pointed out that by joining together as one parish the priests and clergy would have some duties that would be decreased. An example he used was the meetings the priests and clergy must attend on a monthly basis. We would no longer have two parish councils and two finance councils thus eliminating additional meetings because there would only be ONE parish council monthly meeting and ONE finance council monthly meeting.

How would joining as one parish affect our current Youth Ministry Program: Our Youth Minister Amanda Nichols addressed this question stating that the short answer is joining the two parishes together would have little effect on the Youth Ministry program. She did state that the long answer to this question would be in more in changing the name.

Will there be a combined parish website? SS. John and Paul business manager Barb Brown answered this question stating that there will be just one website once both parishes are combined. She stressed that having one website would be less confusing for everyone. Fr. Marty noted that currently there is a common website (Des Moines County Catholic Parishes) that links all information together.

Will emails addresses of priests and church staff change? Fr. Marty and Barb Brown stated no email addresses will change once parishes are joined together. All email addresses will remain the same. **Fr. Marty note: Email addresses of priests/deacons will stay the same but staff might change to reflect the new Parish name.**

Will commissions and councils be reformulated? Dr. Ebener answered this question stating that groups will come together to create one entity. For example, instead of having five commissions at SS. John and Paul and five commissions at SS. Mary and Patrick, they would join together to create a total of *just* five commissions.

Will there be duplication of resources at the rectories or with the staff? SS. Mary and Patrick secretary Erin Stott answered this question stating that there would be no duplication but just a realignment of duties.

Will there continue to be a Parochial Vicar assigned to our parish? Fr. Bill answered that we will keep a parochial vicar. He stated that we currently have six Masses on the weekends and that requires staffing at least two priests.

Will the Mass schedule change? Fr. Marty answered that the Mass schedule will not currently change. It was adjusted on June 1, 2016.

Can lay ministers serve only in their current building if they choose or will they be open to serve at any site? Dr. Ebener stated that lay ministers may stay at same church building but if open to rotating that would be acceptable as well. No one will be forced to change serving at church buildings. Dr. Ebener stated that while this is an optional choice it would be beneficial to integrate as much as possible.

Comment concerning staff read by Liz: "I have faith that Father Marty, Father Bill and Deacon Bob can lead us through this transition".

Linda Law discussed her snow cards. They are as follows:

PARISH NAME CONCERNS:

Will we have one parish name or will we keep the individual church buildings names? Dr. Ebener answered this question by stating we will need one parish name for the corporate entity of all three buildings. He referenced a similar situation that took place in Clinton County where the combining of parishes prompted the nomination of three to four suggested *new* names for the combined parish. He stated it only took ten minutes for the leadership group to come to a consensus for a new name. He also stated that Bishop Amos supports using a consensus as the preferred decision making process in a parish.

A question then asked to Dr. Ebener by parishioner Sue Moss was if other parishes going through this process used a consensus as the deciding factor on a name *or* could everyone in the parish get to vote on a name. Dr. Ebener responded that this ultimately would be the new parish council's decision (to either decide on a parish name using the consensus method or let everyone vote). He did state that using a consensus was a good method and it has been successful in similar situations.

Why can't Masses be more evenly divided between the three church buildings instead of having more Masses at one church or another? Fr. Bill responded that he feels Mass locations are fairly equal. Parishioner Dorothy Deehring stated that some parishioners who once attended 11 AM St. Paul's Mass feel shorted because this was the only Mass the was cut from the schedule back in June. St. Paul's church currently does not have a Saturday Mass nor a late Sunday morning Mass. Dorothy stated that she was speaking for those parishioners of St. Paul's church who are still hurting from the loss of the 11 AM Mass they once attended. Dr. Ebener responded that the new parish council will have to address this.

Can we call the combined parish and it's churches a campus? Dr. Ebener responded that this decision will also be something the new parish council will have to address.

What will happen if we have to close one of our churches? Dr. Ebener stated that currently there is no plan to do this. He explained that a decision of that magnitude could be 5-10 years down the road. One parishioner asked that since Bishop Amos is retiring soon will a new Bishop assigned to the Diocese decide to close one of our churches (specifically mentioned was St. Paul's church) sooner than 5-10 years? Dr. Ebener stated that throughout his experience of working for the Davenport Diocese for 20+ years new Bishops that arrive at the Diocese come with no preconceived notions. Dr. Ebener stated that he himself will still be working at the Davenport Diocese for a few more years and he sees does not foresee a church closing to happen here. Fr. Marty also included that from July, 2016 – June, 2018 the parishes are investing \$825,000 in capital improvements to *all* of our churches. He stated that spending close to one million dollars indicates that no closures are coming.

BUILDING CONCERNS:

What will happen to the rectory at SS. Mary and Patrick? Fr. Marty stated that this decision will be made with the leaders of SS. Mary and Patrick or new parish council once construction on SS. Mary and Patrick is complete.

Will the individual identity of the parishes be gone? Dr. Ebener answered that the physical identities of all church buildings will remain, but the identity of the parish will change and shift and grow into one.

When will we transition into one parish? Fr. Marty responded that the shift into one parish could happen between Easter Sunday, April 16, 2017 and July 1, 2017. Dr. Ebener added that this is a legal issue and we need to file our new parish with the Official Catholic Directory (formally known as the Kennedy Directory). The Official Catholic Directory is a listing of all Catholic parishes and schools. It is published annually every September therefore the deadline to be registered is in July.

With finances being combined how will financial decisions be made per church? Dr. Ebener stated that this will be the decision of the new finance council. It will be up to them to decide the financial needs and priorities of the newly combined parish. Dr. Ebener noted that the finances will no longer be distributed into two separate “pots” but will instead all be in one “pot” to use for all three buildings.

How and where can we meet as a community for social events? Various parishioners stated that currently no church building/parish center is large enough to meet *all* together for parish events (such as religious classes or fall festival). Dr. Ebener responded that Notre Dame School seemed like a viable option for community events for the new parish. He also stated that the new parish and finance councils could look further into this issue but currently Notre Dame was the obvious choice for community events.

What will happen to the SS. Mary and Patrick Altar and Rosary Society?

Parishioner Kathy Osinski stated that the Altar and Rosary Society will continue and anyone is welcome to join.

How will we combine the existing organizations and committee's? Dr. Ebener responded that this will be the work of the new parish council. He pointed out that during this transition it's important we *do not* lose parishioners who want to participate. However, we do not need to continue on as two separate entities and need to join as one.

Will memorial donations be combined among the three church buildings or used specifically at the church building where it was received? Dr. Ebener stated that the new finance council will decide this. Dr. Ebener suggested parishioners be encouraged to leave memorials to the *entire* parish (we will have to come up with ways to discourage but not prevent parishioners from only picking a certain church building to bequest memorials). Dr. Ebener stated that some combined parishes have set up a trust at each of their church buildings but ultimately the new finance council will decide how bequests will be allocated.

How many members will be on the finance council? This question was raised by a parishioner due to the content of the previous question. Dr. Ebener stated that the average finance council has 8-12 members. Currently SS. John and Paul has seven finance council members and SS. Mary and Patrick has five finance council members. However, Fr. Marty requested that the new finance council have less than 12 members (ensuring that both SS. John and Paul and SS. Mary and Patrick will be equally represented).

Dorothy Deehring discussed her snow cards. They are as follows:

UNITY CONCERNS:

Dorothy stated that all unity concerns in her category had been addressed from the previous questions. One parishioner commented that we have to remember "We are all Catholics and what's the big deal!" Dave Ehret stated that the snow cards he had were already addressed in what had been previously discussed (under the staff concerns, parish name concerns, building concerns and unity concern). Therefore, Dr. Ebener left remaining meeting time to parishioners to state any additional comments they may have. There are as follows:

GENERAL COMMENTS:

1. Had Dr. Ebener read the minutes from the feelings meetings that Fr. Marty had held? Dr. Ebener responded no he had not.
2. One parishioner stated that they were concerned for fellow parishioners who expect things to remain the same during the transition.

3. Another comment was made that we all need to remember it is Necessary for this transition to happen but in the end it will be beneficial.
4. All PAR groups need to lead with only positive attitudes.
5. We need to encourage our students to get involved.
6. It is necessary to have equal representation between the two parishes (despite SS. Mary and Patrick's being smaller).
7. There is still concern for a church building to close.
8. Why are we not discussing or indicating what our long term goals will be?
9. It was stated that people who volunteer may feel pushed out in the transition. Dr. Ebener stated that once a parish gets larger it is easier to hide. He discussed one of his favorite parishes, St. Mary Magdalene in Bloomfield, Iowa, is a very small parish. They only have 54 members and he noticed that in a smaller parish everyone feels a greater sense of ownership in the parish. He encouraged the group that while we are growing larger as a parish we need to figure out ways to relate to one another as a smaller parish does.
10. Why are so many priests working at the Diocese? Dr. Ebener addressed this question by stating that since 1986 the number of full-time priests working at the Diocese has declined. Currently the *only* full-time priest working at the Diocese is Bishop Amos.
11. Communication in the future needs to be thorough and transparent. There needs to be no secrets and everyone needs to move forward with positivity. Providing the minutes from this meeting is part of that process.
12. How will we combine our music liturgies and funeral luncheon ladies without producing sparks? Dr. Ebener answered that these groups must join together and focus on doing a task that they know. He stated that we need to keep reminding ourselves that we are one in our catholic in faith and keep our focus on the big picture (that practicing our faith can happen in any building).
13. What will be the role of our current parish and finance councils be until the transition? Fr. Marty responded that we will continue on the same course during the interim until the transition is complete.
14. Dr. Ebener said that we need to be the leaven of change and stay positive and focus on being more efficient, more loving and more caring.
15. Deacon Bob Glaser said that while in Rome he attended Mass in a rundown church in the center of the of a beautiful city and he stated it was a wonderful experience and he realizes that Mass is the same everywhere and while he loves certain church buildings he loves being with the church more.
16. Fr. Marty stated he will be going to the Presbyterlal Council on Thursday, January 19th to present our talk and get permission from Bishop Amos to move forward with the combining of parishes.
17. Fr. Marty stated our next parish meeting will be at Notre Dame on Thursday, February 9th at 6:30 pm.

Fr. Marty concluded the meeting at 8:00 pm with a group prayer and song and thanked Dr. Ebener and all who attended for their honesty and openness. Fr. Marty prayed that our mission be guided by the Holy Spirit.