

Minutes of the December 3, 2009 Stewardship Commission Meeting

Attendees: Deacon John Nicholson, Fr. Michael Bova Conti, Donna Biggins, Jenn Sneath, Ted Vander Els, Mark Nevils, Jim McCarthy

Review of November Meeting Minutes:

Stewardship Calendar:

Hospitality Weekends. We are continuing the practice of giving individual parish ministries the opportunity to be featured at the monthly hospitality weekends. Currently planned schedule:

- Dec 5 & 6: St Vincent de Paul, Breaking Bread
- Jan 3 (Sunday only): Parish Nursing
- Feb 7 (Sunday only): Women's Spirituality Group, Men's Spirituality Group, Music Ministry (tentative)
- Mar 6 & 7: Stewardship Commission, and 1 or 2 others
- May 1 & 2: Parish Pastoral Council, Finance Council

Library Idea: Donna Biggins wondered whether the religious education/parish library could be enhanced and more widely utilized by parishioners. The Archdiocesan librarian cautioned that a parish library is very difficult to maintain. Library Idea will be shelved for now.

RCIA Update:

We should continue to promote RCIA themes and encourage individuals to come forward, especially those who may have been baptized but not confirmed.

St. Vincent de Paul Ministry Update: 20 Thanksgiving turkey baskets were assembled and distributed. If anyone is aware of families in need, please forward them in confidentiality. Also, Angie Knightly is looking for a service project for her religious education class to help a needy family.

Breaking Bread Update: The fifth round of meals happened on the Nov 14/15 weekend, with ~50 attendees at seven host sites. We continue to seek new members. A combined Breaking Bread group meal, hosted by the parish, will be held on Saturday, January 30, at 7:00pm in the church hall. A save-the-date message has been emailed. A formal invitation will be sent to all Breaking Bread participants in early January.

Collaborative Update: Next Collaborative meeting is Jan 11, 2010. Deacon John forwarded a recent Archdiocesan email summarizing strategic priorities, pastoral planning action steps, and some reflections. It is acknowledged that Catholics throughout the Archdiocese will need to be involved over the next five years for this spiritual renewal.

Called & Gifted Workshop: St Catherine of Alexandria parish in Westford is hosting a workshop on Feb 5 & 6 as a kickoff to their Stewardship campaign. The workshop is designed to help Catholics discern the charisms (spiritual gifts) of the Holy Spirit that they have been given. It helps them begin to learn how to use those charisms to serve God and other people.

- ❖ Donna Biggins to contact St Catherine parish to determine whether there might be openings for OLF in the workshop, and what the cost would be.

Mass Attendance: The Commission continued the November meeting discussion to brainstorm possible explanations for the decline in Mass attendance. It was noted that this issue is not unique to our parish, it is widespread within the Catholic church, and in other religions. This is a very complex issue which must be analyzed with regard to social change, religious trends, individual behavior patterns, secularization and relativism. Commission members were encouraged to research and share information on this issue, e.g. websites, publications, conference materials. If members feel there are issues unique to OLF which could possibly be contributing to the decline in Mass attendance, they should forward them for discussion.

Stewardship Commission Objectives/Priorities:

Consensus was Charles Zech book, *Best Practices in Catholic Stewardship*, is a good base document to assess where our parish currently stands in terms of stewardship implementation, and where our focus and efforts may be best applied. At the October meeting we reviewed our summary observations of the eight best practices, and immediate action we could take:

1) Be a Welcoming Parish:

- ❖ Donna Biggins to consider contacting newly-registered parishioners to invite them to join Breaking Bread.
- ❖ Reinforce the importance of the Welcoming Committee as a vital OLF ministry.
- ❖ Identify ways of distributing newly-registered parishioner information, without violating privacy protocols. Most of the new registrations come from Baptisms.
- ❖ Identify and promote ministry opportunities which support social justice issues. Many of our newer parishioners come forward to help with outreach ministries where they see a need and a plan to address those needs, e.g. Holy Family summer camp, St. Vincent de Paul.

5) Provide the Opportunity for Lay Witness Presentations:

Consensus is we are weak in this area. More attention needed.

- ❖ Commission members are asked to continue to review our summary observations list and look for additional opportunities to take immediate actions to implement Zech's best practices. Forward any recommendations you may have.

Next Monthly Stewardship Commission Meeting: Thursday, Jan 7, 2010 at 7:30pm.