

**Pastoral Council Minutes**  
**March 26, 2012**  
**DRAFT 1**

**Attendees:** Katie Conner, Rhee Fincher, Pat Fair, Steve Givens, Martha Kearns, Ken Maleck, Eric McArdle, Jim Purcell (Chair), Fr. Jerry Ragan, Fr. Scott Winchel

The meeting opened with prayer at 5:33 PM.

**Diocesan issues** presented by Fr. Jerry:

- *Southern Cross* – diocese is planning to change to total parish coverage for the cost of the publication; cost to parish is \$10/subscription and SMOTH requests \$20/subscription. If the payment rate can be increased sufficiently, the parish could break even.
- Support for Aquinas High School: Diocese is considering 6 strategies for supporting Catholic schools – 3 would tax any parish that has offertory >\$250K annually; 3 would tax all parishes; 1 includes “tax” in BAA. Fr. Jerry favors the former; there was no dissenting discussion
- Christmas collection will be devoted to support Catholic schools. There is discussion that the diocese must address viability of schools that are being supported.

**School Commission report on key activities** (Rhee Fincher) – Focusing on marketing SMS

- Key goal of the committee is to increase the number of students at SMS
- Comments from School Commission discussion
  - Several members request more promotion from the pastor to increase the effectiveness of the one-on-one and other effort of the commission members to be more effective in their marketing role
  - Advertising
    - Revise and update the SMS website (interactivity would be helpful if financially feasible)
    - Update school brochure
  - Discuss and improve how we market school; **how we the parish** market the school
  - Communication with families that don’t use SMS (especially target CCD families)
    - Develop forums for comments from Catholic families about why they chose Catholic education
    - Survey parish members with children who do not attend SMS – why do/don’t your children come to SMS? Cover letter from Fr. Jerry for survey
  - Market the fact that the 1 year waiting period for tuition waiver for stewardship has been rescinded (with letter of endorsement from former pastor)
  - Some key reasons why SMOTH families do not send children to SMS
    - Transportation
      - Suggestion: Arrange transportation solutions as transportation from West Augusta and Ft. Gordon seem to be significant impediments. Ft. Gordon bus? Share bus with EDS?
    - Cost
      - Comment: Tuition not an issue for those who participate in stewardship
    - Perception that education not as strong as EDS
      - Comment: Commission believes this is a mis-perception; need to address it with information and facts

- Lack of opportunities for struggling/gifted children
      - Comment: While this may have been an issue in the past, a recent faculty hire addressed the gap
    - Extracurricular activities
      - Comment: Seem to be increasing; needs more discussion to determine if this is an issue we need to address
    - Social (“friends send to EDS”)
      - Comment: Focus on parents and students to address “social” issues
- Strategies to consider
  - Focus on families of younger children
    - Start at baptism – send something from school to parents when child baptized
    - Get parents of young children involved – focus on parents socializing together
  - CCD engagement
    - As a one-time event during CCD on Sunday AM, invite school parents and parish parents whose children do not attend SMS to attend and mingle
    - CCD activities – Invite some SMS children to socialize with CCD kids during CCD
    - Can only take 60/grade level – can’t take all who want to come into 6<sup>th</sup> grade, but could if come earlier; aim efforts at lower grades
  - Youth night and VBS as recruiting tools
    - Youth group – Ask Mike Lammers to be sure that SMS/Aquinas students welcome new attendees
    - Vacation bible school – positive impact
  - Concerted effort from pulpit to advertise school
    - Suggested Mr. Larcher speak
    - Children make announcements monthly before mass
- Comments by Pastoral Council
  - Cultural issues – why would Catholics pay to send children to EDS?
  - CCD – target this group; many from Columbia County
  - Survey CCD parents about why don’t send children to SMS
  - Real estate companies seem to encourage Columbia county
  - Youth group – don’t turn it into recruitment program; however, do encourage being welcoming
  - Bulletin insert about school – myth vs. facts
  - Target parents of young children – spiritual formation; not just school promotion

### **Adult Faith Formation**

- RCIA
  - Suggestion to ask this year’s group to complete and evaluation and recommendation form
  - New/additional leadership?
- Parish missions
  - The future of parish missions seems uncertain with less-than-desired attendance; consider additional electronic means
- Faith Formation commission completed its 2012 survey
  - Maria Novojosky will begin a women’s faith formation group
  - Fr. Frank’s prayer group would like a new leader (still meeting)
  - Catechesis

### **Pastoral focus**

- 2012 – Formation in married love and family life
  - Successful couples' night out – 50 couples
  - Mike and Sarah O'Neil – pre-marriage prep course is going well; preparing to live in love
  - After Easter, promotion "Prayer for Family and Marriage"
- 2013 – Year of faith will focus on stewardship and evangelization
  - Fr. Jerry may expand stewardship commission to include evangelization; put RCIA under it
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    - Social media - Probably need larger budget and maybe fulltime person to develop "active" website; broadcast one homily weekly
      - Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn
      - Fr. Charlie is on YouTube!
      - Distribute bulletin electronically on Friday afternoon with brief parish newsletter; include links to YouTube, bulletin, homilies, etc. for each entry in newsletter
      - Strategies
        - Determine budget (Hire part-time someone with theology and computer science background)
        - Determine goals and priorities

### **Pastor's miscellaneous**

- Pleased with innovativeness of renovations
  - E.g., selling copper from roof when replaced
  - Used oak from large tree to make bowls
  - New entrance to parking lot from McDowell (will just be one); jointly paid by ASU and SMOTH (\$5000 each)
- BAA – at 90% of goal
- 2 parishioners are applying for seminary (Patrick May and Anthony Mercer)
- Expect 3 men to apply for diaconate

Fr. Jerry distributed *From Maintenance to Mission*; will discuss Part 1 at next Pastoral Council meeting.

The meeting adjourned at 6:42.

Next meeting 4/23/2012.

Respectfully submitted,

Rhee Fincher