

St. John Fisher Pastoral Council Meeting December 6, 2023

Present: Msgr. David A. Sork, Joe McGuinness (chair), Namele Baker (vice chair), Stephanie Bezner, Rosemarie Diehl, Ron Homer, Antonia Lavender, Steve Ludwick, Ryan McCormick, Jennifer Ryan, Mikaela Ventura, Tim Niemann (youth rep.) and Charlotte Hargrove (youth alt.), Gayle Plecha, Chris Acherman (recording secretary), and Colleen Guenther as the staff representative

Absent: Tom Magee

Guests: None

Msgr. Sork opened the meeting at 7:00 PM. The Council prayed the First 15 led by Stephanie Bezner. Msgr. Sork recognized the staff representative. He also thanked Namele Baker for her suggestion to reorganize the agenda to make the meeting more efficient.

Chair/Vice-Chair

2023-2024 Pastoral Plan Objectives Review: team progress

- Obj. (1) Channels to Publicize Parish Life: *The Pastoral Council will assist the parish in adopting engagement channels such as Flocknote to publicize the abundance of our parish life.* Ron Homer reported they have focused on the Flocknote newsletter. The third monthly newsletter was issued last Friday with very similar results as the first two. They have a 70% open rate and less than 1% have unsubscribed. Each newsletter has a headline link and shows the different events and ministries with their contact information. They have 35 new subscribers since the November newsletter. The metrics looks great. Their next step is to analyze the data from the December newsletter. They recommend that Religious Education use Flocknote instead of School Speak. The School is already using it. They also recommend that the ministries start using it. It is a graphically rich newsletter and can be integrated with the SJF Instagram page. They would like to include actual photos from the events. These can be emailed to info@sjf.org. The new Advent parking lot banners went up in December.
- Obj. (2) Eucharistic Revival & Faith Formation: *The Pastoral Council will support inviting the community to the Eucharistic Revival and the deepening of our faith through faith formation.* Stephanie Bezner reported that the link for RE Congress was sent a week ago. She encouraged people to sign up. They would like to have a table after the Masses to get parishioners to register and to get a headcount for the reception at Morton's as well as coordinate carpooling and meeting for a no-host lunch on Saturday. The Men's Cornerstone Retreat is February 2-3, 2024. They would like to expand the Cornerstone retreats to include one for women. She said Eric Cardenas told them it is critical to get people to participate in the retreat before planning one at SJF. American Martyrs is having a women's retreat on February 2-3, 2024. They are receptive to inviting 3-4 women from SJF to participate. Registration opens December 11 and they expect it to sell out. They talked to Msgr. Sork about a Eucharistic procession led by the Liturgical Committee. They will support it and feel it will be a positive event. Msgr. Sork said there is a Eucharistic

procession on Holy Thursday, so it would be good to promote that. He explained that after this service, they proceed to the PAC where the Blessed Sacrament will be exposed until midnight. Stephanie Bezner added that they also want to promote Misty Jesse's workshop on the Eucharist. They need to confirm the date with her. They would like to have a table at one of the Ministry Weekends to recruit more Eucharistic Ministers. Msgr. Sork reminded everyone that they cannot offer communion by both species until they have enough EMHC's at Mass. He hopes to be able to offer another training. Namele Baker suggested promoting the EMHC ministry in the January Flocknote and include a link to the application on the website. Msgr. Sork said all applicants must be fully initiated and approved to attend a training. Jennifer Ryan said the theme for Simbang Gabi is Eucharistic Revival so she will promote EMHC's at the event.

- Obj. (3) Welcoming Parish Events: *The Pastoral Council will host 4-6 events for the parish over the year to welcome new parishioners and engage the existing community.* Ryan McCormick reported that the Santa's Cookie Workshop is this Sunday. Everything is coming together quite nicely. It will take place in Barrett Hall with Santa and Mrs. Claus. So far 125 people have registered and they estimate about 160-180 to be there. They've had a lot of volunteers donate cookies. They will serve pizza and salad. Each child will receive a prayer card and candy cane. They have 20 volunteers, but more are welcome. Please tell people about it. Gayle Plecha said Msgr. Sork could put it in the announcements at the 9:00am and 11:00am Masses that day.
- Obj. (4) Catholic Fellowship and Youth Support: *The Pastoral Council will create opportunities for Catholic fellowship and provide support to Edge, Life Teen, and our maturing young adults, while encouraging parental involvement.* Namele Baker reported that LifeTeen had a Life Night on November 10th. Ricardo Mata offers a good program and it's slowly growing. On November 20th Steve Ludwick began his outreach to parishioners for a volleyball group for young adults, but it is also open to anyone who is interested. Edge had an Escape Room adventure on December 1st. Many junior high kids returned for this event. She can see this program translating into LifeTeen. There will be another Life Night on December 17th and an XLT (Adoration) on December 22nd.

Pastor - Parish Life (Msgr. Sork):

Witness Talks, November 4-5

Ron Homer thought the talks were great, from the heart and family oriented. Both couples had a lot to say, and it was inspiring. Stephanie Bezner said she and her husband were honored to be asked to speak and share their story. It was very special to them. They received nice messages from people they know as well as from those they don't who said they could identify with the things she and her husband spoke about. Rosemarie Diehl said it was very special for her and her husband as they reflected on how they've grown and evolved. It was nice to be able to share this with the parish. Msgr. Sork expressed his appreciation for their willingness to do it.

Sunday Family Fun & Fellowship after 9am Mass, November 11

Colleen Guenther said they initiated Fun & Fellowship this past month. In an effort to engage more school families and spread the word about the school, they invited all school families to wear school uniforms, read the Prayers of the Faithful and hand out the donuts

at hospitality. They opened the PAC with parent volunteers facilitating games and crafts. It was very well attended with over 30 school families and 5 non-school parish families. They will do another one on December 17th. Msgr. Sork said this was Colleen Guenther's initiative. He added that he saw someone at Mass he hadn't seen in a long time and they've been back every Sunday since.

Stewardship Commitment, November 11-12

Msgr. Sork said he works with Gayle Plecha each year to make it as efficient as possible and get everything they need. He hopes people filled out their cards. When they are done sorting the cards, he will send out letters. Stephanie Bezner said it's good to make people think about this each year and feels it went well. Gayle Plecha said it was an opportunity to get current email addresses from parishioners.

Together in Mission Update (Gayle Plecha)

Gayle Plecha received the data from the Archdiocese for SJF as of December 1st. Some people make their payments directly to the Archdiocese. The goal is 10% of the prior year's total income which is \$201,833.00. So far \$123,087.56 has been pledged, which is 61% of the goal. There is one month to go. \$115,322.64 has been paid. They have a gap of over \$75,000. They usually receive end-of-year gifts from people and every little bit helps. They've only missed their goal one year. 100% of the money received goes to the needy parishes and schools to help pay their bills and other costs.

Building Committee Update (Monsignor/Gayle Plecha)

Msgr. Sork said Committee hasn't met for a while. He met with the architect and the Archdiocese knows the committee is moving forward with the plan. The architect is working with the City on the CUP, but it is not confirmed yet. Msgr. hopes to start construction at the end of the school year. Gayle Plecha shared that they signed another contract with the architect to get detailed design drawings, which includes electrical, plumbing and other layers which they need in order to go out to bid. There is work being done, and the Archdiocese did approve and sign the contract for the architect to do the designs. They know that SJF still has a fundraising gap. The original architect retired and Bennett Lord is the architect now. The drawings on the website are the initial concept drawings so they are not up to date since some things had to be removed due to cost. Msgr. Sork added that they are looking at the possibility of installing solar panels. The committee considered installing panels on the old church, but it wasn't possible due to the ceiling design. Now they hope to put them on top of Barrett Hall. It won't generate as much electricity, but it will still save money. Gayle Plecha said the Inflation Reduction Act that was passed allows non-profit organizations to get a direct cash rebate of 40% if they implement solar energy. As a non-profit, the parish cannot use a tax credit.

Looking Ahead - Upcoming Events

- **Installation of Altar Servers, December 8; Holiday, The Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception**
 - Fr. Al Enriquez will do the installation of the newly trained SJF altar servers at the 11:00 AM school Mass and make it special for them.

- **Santa's Cookie Workshop December 10, at 12 noon**
 - Already discussed.

- **Advent Concert, December 10 at 2:30 pm**
 - Joe McGuinness said the usual crew of Pastoral Council members will help with hospitality at the concert.

- **Simbang Gabi, December 16 at the 5:00 PM Mass**
 - Msgr. Sork looks forward to this annual celebration every year. The Filipino community is so well organized. It's a free event, but you need a "ticket" to attend. It's a beautiful experience. When he first arrived at SJF, they did not have Simbang Gabi so he encouraged the community to do it. Gayle Plecha added that they have been meeting weekly for dance and choir rehearsals. Jennifer Ryan learned that they've been together for 17 years and it is a very close group.

- **Advent Penance Service, December 18, 7:30 PM**
 - Msgr. Sork said he has 13 confessors helping out. He encourages people to attend this Sacrament of Reconciliation. They will add extra times for confession on December 23rd: 10:00am-11:30am and 3:30pm-4:30pm. Please take advantage of it.

- **Christmas Masses**
 - **12/24: 4pm (w/PAC overflow), 6pm, 8pm, Midnight**
 - December 24th is the 4th Sunday of Advent so there will be regular Sunday Masses at 7:30am, 9:00am and 11:00pm but not 5:00pm. Christmas Eve Masses begin at 4:00pm, which is the largest Mass with livestream in the PAC for overflow. 6:00pm is the Ara Coeli Mass with Fr. Al Enriquez. Colleen Guenther said the 2nd grade is ready. 8:00pm is the youth Mass. The choir begins singing at 11:30pm and Mass begins at midnight. Joe McGuinness said that Pastoral Staff has everything under control but asked Pastoral Council to help where needed and be cheerful. Gayle Plecha said the help is much appreciated especially with so many visitors. Please step up to be an usher. This is the biggest collection of the year so they will pass the baskets in the pews. Ten ushers per Mass would be ideal, so jump in and be one. Please help hand out the bulletins. Msgr. Sork said he wants people to feel welcome.
 - **12/25: 7:30am, 9am, 11am**
[Wear Badges; Be Ambassadors]

Chair/Vice-Chair

Approval of November Minutes

Joe McGuinness asked for corrections to the November minutes. Hearing none, Stephanie Bezner moved to approve the November minutes as presented. Namele Baker seconded. The minutes were approved.

Staff Representative Briefing: Colleen Guenther, St. John Fisher School Principal

Colleen Guenther said it is an honor to be at the meeting. This is her first year as principal. She taught for 20 years at SJF when Mrs. Hudani was the principal, and she put her two kids through school here too. The vision and the mission of the school – Believe, Learn,

Care – drive everything they do. They are off to a really good start and morale is very high with the parents, teachers and families. The engagement level is higher than it's been in a long time. They want to build a robust program and increase enrollment. They went through the WASC accreditation process last year. They have three new teachers and reassigned some of the teachers. They received a grant through LA Challenge, and they have a new reading curriculum. To increase enrollment they are reaching out to parish families through the bulletin, Faith & Fellowship and pre-school outreach. There will be an open house on January 28th with Mass at 11:00 AM and the open house from 12:00 PM-2:00 PM. They would like to get families on the campus during the school day for tours. Times have changed and sporting events happen on Sundays now so it is a challenge to get families to come to church. But she feels people have noticed that families are together at Mass, helping with the donuts, and they are connecting around the faith. Rosemarie Diehl suggested inviting alums of the school to these monthly Masses. Ryan McCormick said he has two kids in the local schools, but if SJF had a preschool he would have enrolled them and stayed for kindergarten. Msgr. Sork said it wasn't feasible to have pre-school because of the requirements of the state such as separate bathrooms and gathering areas for the kids. They do have Transitional Kindergarten for four-year-olds. Rosemarie Diehl suggested a MOPS ministry which would act as a feeder to kindergarten. Gayle Plecha said they had a community mom's group, but not enough people attended. Msgr. Sork said he sends out letters when kids are baptized and continues every six months until they are three years old and he references the Transitional Kindergarten at SJF. Ryan McCormick said the summer camp that Justin Fontenot organized helps bring in families. Gayle Plecha shared that it will be a two-week camp next summer. Stephanie Bezner added that she can see the difference in the school this year and the communication is more dynamic. The school is fortunate to have Mrs. Guenther come in as a breath of fresh air. Mrs. Hudani was a great leader for 20 years, and it's good to have new leadership. Colleen Guenther added that the parish installed a new gate between the parish library and Room 109 this week. She expressed gratitude to Msgr. Sork and Gayle Plecha for their willingness to make this campus improvement which will increase security of the campus during the school day. She is blessed to be at SJF. Msgr. Sork added that she doesn't live in Palos Verdes, but has chosen to be a part of this community and taught here for 20 years. It was not a difficult decision to select her as the new principal.

Next Meeting:

Joe McGuinness said there is a proposal to move the next meeting to Wednesday, January 10 at 7:00 PM, which is the second Wednesday of the month. The Pastoral Council agreed to change the meeting date since many school families will still be on Christmas break.

Other

Namele Baker read the guidelines for Pastoral Council members to bring concerns and affirmations to the attention of the pastor.

- Stephanie Bezner expressed her appreciation for moving the objectives to the beginning of the meeting.

The meeting was concluded at 8:15 PM with the prayer of St. John Fisher Parish.