

January 2005

Minutes of the January 13, 2005 Leadership Council Meeting

This was our fifth Council meeting and we are clearly working well together to address parish issues. The meeting was attended by Fr. John Sandersfeld, Joe Swyt, Ginny Hinkle, Bill Callahan, Steve Baroni, John Toole, Ederlyn Suriaga, Pete Adams and Willy Agbayani.

The primary topic of discussion for this meeting was centered on the management and leadership succession at St. Francis. Approximately 25 lay leaders joined in a spirited discussion of the parish culture, the role of the Diocese in selecting a replacement Pastor and the possible options facing St. Francis at the eventual departure of Father John. There was an overwhelming consensus that lay leaders of this parish would like the opportunity to provide input to the Diocese regarding the replacement of Father John. It was agreed that lay leaders would share information relating to parish succession options with a broad cross section of the parish for their consideration and comment. With this input, the parish leadership will take the strategy favored by the parishioners to the Diocese and seek their support. Although the appointment of a Pastor is the prerogative of the Bishop, being proactive will positively help the decision making process.

The heads of Finance and Administration, EC's and Faith Formation presented a summary of their respective group discussions. The leadership team was advised:

Finance and Administration-

- The Finance team announced that it is hard to find anything wrong with the Parish in terms of our finances for the past six months. Parish net income is currently in excess of expenses and our cash reserves are building
- Our new ADA goal for this year has been raised by 22% to 136,000 and presents the parish with a significant challenge
- Facilities and Grounds announced that waste pump issues are being addressed and the city has refused a permit to allow solar panels on the property, which renders a proposal to incorporate solar panels unworkable. Other cost reduction proposals such as a programmable air conditioning system are under consideration
- The communications team has been reorganized and the newest release of the Vision Voice is scheduled
- The second collection for Tsunami fund victims raised approximately \$15,000, which is the highest second collection in our history

Ecclesial Communities-

- The EC stated that efforts aimed at coaching Dove Hill are beginning to pay dividends as mass attendance is averaging 45 adults and the people are demonstrating a spirit and vibrancy not seen previously
- Christmas and Advent celebrations were well attended and we were pleased with the efforts by so many to make these events special for those participating in them

- The ecclesial communities are soon to engage in a goal setting process for 2005

Faith Formation Commission-

- 25 stewardship forms have been received and all but four are now serving in the ministry
- We are complying with the diocese policy on fingerprinting those actively working with youth and vulnerable adults and expect to complete this process by February

Leadership Council Discussion-

•Lay community leaders gathered to discuss Pastoral management succession at St. Francis. This is a topic of wide interest to the parish and a decision that is central to preserving the culture, the growth and the small community feeling of St. Francis. It was agreed that lay leaders participating in this discussion would share information relating to parish succession options with their constituents and seek their feedback. Only after the Parish had time to coalesce around a favored strategy, would the leadership Counsel develop an approach to the Diocese for their support. One issue of importance for the parish is the choice of pastor versus DPL. There is no shortage of priests in this diocese but there is a significant shortage of Pastors, which complicates the decision for the Diocese and the parish. We have a narrow window of time to complete this exercise and need to meet with the Diocese in February.

•St. Francis and other deanery parishes have not completed a unified presentation to the Diocese regarding fund raising, debt service and ADA goals but are expecting to do this by February

•Budgeting for next year will commence soon. The leadership team will charter the EC's to develop their goals, strategies and key initiatives for the year and present them to the finance team for budgeting purposes. The new budget must address issues such as the slowing growth of the parish, debt service and ADA goals, which all compete for the same dollars from parishioners. The parish growth has stabilized and leadership desires to get back on a growth track, which aids our operating and capital budgets

MANAGEMENT SUCCESSION STRATEGIES FOR ST. FRANCIS

A small group of Parish leaders met with the Professional Lay staff of St. Francis to develop a series of succession strategies for the parish in a post Father John setting.

Father John is now highly engaged and excited about the future of St. Francis. This is a significant contrast to his feelings of just several months ago when John felt that he lacked sufficient energy to sustain the ministry of the parish and was overwhelmed by the prospects of a significant and permanent parish debt. Nonetheless, the parish is well served to anticipate a future without Father John as its spiritual leader.

This parish is committed to a management process that shares responsibility equally between a professional lay staff, the Clergy and lay leaders. The current management structure allows for a separation of administrative functions from community building and faith formation functions and there is a desire to sustain this division of responsibilities. The management of St. Francis is highly decentralized. This creates a significant communication burden on the clergy and professional staff but also creates significant opportunities for volunteer Lay participants to build strong communities as they develop their faith in small group settings.

Parish leaders have observed that St. Francis places significant demands on the time of its single priest/pastor. These demands are a reflection of a growing parish of 2300 families and it is clear that we must actively seek to lighten this burden. Failure to take corrective action can result in a parish that is under-served in its faith life, spirituality and Sacraments. As such, the parish will be well-served to seek an assistant Pastor or DPL that can provide strong spiritual leadership to compliment the community building talents and strengths of Father John.

A broad cross section of parish leaders was asked to comment on considerations for leadership succession at St. Francis. There was overwhelming interest to be involved with and provide input to the Diocese regarding the eventual pastor transition at St. Francis. The following considerations were raised as important by parish leaders:

- We desire a consistent Priest/Lay community interaction
- People want a relationship with their Priest as a spiritual leader of a diverse community of lay people
- Ethnic background of the Priest is less important than the ability to relate to the community and act as a spiritual leader
- Parish and staff leaders need to know the communities they serve
- Parish/Staff conflicts are less a function of leadership style than of skill level of Pastoral leader
- We seek to develop a model of pastoral leadership that is not priest/pastor dependent
- We like the way our parish makes room for individuals to contribute to the vision, empowerment and innovation of St Francis and we seek a pastor that can nurture these conditions
- We like homilies that speak the word of God to us as individuals that are insightful and delivered in a non-condescending manner
- We like our ecclesial communities and the close-knit feelings we have developed with one another
- We are pleased to be a diverse and English speaking parish

-We like our influence over Mass delivery and the way we can shape the culture of our ecclesial community

4 strategies for management succession were considered and developed for consideration by Parish lay leaders. A brief description of these strategies and the recommended approach are described below.

Strategy 1. In the recommended approach, Father John remains as Pastor with assistance from a Parochial Vicar mentored by Father John and Parish lay leaders. Fr. John will focus on addressing the spiritual and pastoral needs of the community together with the Parochial Vicar and be an advisor for facilities, recruitment and development of new lay leaders. This approach removes many of the administrative burdens from Father John and allows him to concentrate on those activities he truly enjoys.

Strategy 2. Assign a DPL (Director of Parish Life) with Father John as a 'mentor.' The Diocese may be reluctant to assign a DPL to St. Francis with the founding pastor as the mentor and some cultures within the parish may be uncomfortable without an ordained priest they can establish a relationship with. It would be difficult for the DPL to establish an independent presence with the founding pastor in place but with transition assistance from a broad cross section of the parish this remains a viable option.

Strategy 3. Father John acts as a 'mentor' to a new Pastor that could take over upon John's retirement. This commits the parish and the Diocese to a strategy that may not be viable long term for either party but it provides certainty over the eventual transition.

Strategy 4. The parish cannot reach a decision, Father John leaves and a new Pastor is installed by the Diocese. In a perfect world, this new pastor would assimilate easily and comfortably into the St. Francis culture.

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