

## Minutes of the February 3, 2005 Leadership Council Meeting

This was our sixth Council meeting. The meeting was attended by Fr. John Sandersfeld, Joe Swyt, Ginny Hinkle, Bill Callahan, Will Sousae, John Toole, Pattie Cortese, Pete Adams and Willy Agbayani.

Members of the council are becoming comfortable with each other and the task of addressing parish issues is becoming easier. However, one council member commented that as a group, we are good at researching problems and reporting on issues but we fall short when it comes to implementing fresh ideas and generating innovative solutions to chronic problems.

The question asked most frequently is what role can the leadership team take to attract new members, build the financial health of the parish and extend the reach of St. Francis into the community.

It was in this context that the council considered the budget process for 2005. The leadership team was presented with some observations and challenges facing St. Francis. Some of the significant challenges facing the community of St. Francis are the following:

- Managing costs in a low growth environment
- Flat mass attendance
- Growing EC leadership and sustaining the multiple communities
- Pastor succession
- Debt service and ADA goals are limiting our ability to help parishioners develop their faith and extend our reach into the community

These and other equally challenging issues will require the parish to develop new strategies for growth and leadership. These strategies must be developed into a coherent plan before we can propose and recommend a budget for this next fiscal year.

The leadership team was challenged to take a fresh look at new approaches to build parish identity, increase participation in the financial support of the parish and extend our reach into the community. To accomplish this, it was suggested that the parish develop 3 key growth strategies with specific supporting actions and performance measures before the new budget is submitted. These actions were to be discussed at future sessions of the leadership council. After developing a series of new strategies for growth, the leadership team will charter the EC's to develop measurable goals and key initiatives for the year and present them to the finance team for budgeting purposes.

Leadership succession at St. Francis was the second major topic of discussion. There is 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. Parish leaders shared information relating to parish succession options with a broad cross section of the parish for their consideration and comment. After reviewing feedback from these parish leaders, it was agreed that the best interests of the parish are served with a parochial vicar who can be mentored by Father John as the Pastor and other community leaders.

A letter was prepared, reviewed by community leaders and sent to the diocese recommending a parochial vicar for St. Francis. A copy of the letter that went to the diocese is attached as a reference.

**St. Francis of Assisi**  
**Faith Formation Commission**  
**Minutes for February 3, 2005**

**Present:** Peggy Bariteau, Liz Munoz, Pattie Cortese, Will Sousae, Barbara Gould, John Basanese

**Summary:**

1. The large group continued its discussion of the succession plan for the parish. In our small group we identified our major concerns about the plan to bring in a parochial vicar vs. a DPL (director of parish life).
  - Our preference was to have Fr. John stay, if that it his wish. We were concerned that the Diocese might not bring in a DPL with a former pastor still present.
  - We are concerned about turnover...our preference would be to bring in someone with the longest possible term. (A parochial vicar who could remain as pastor once Fr. John retires would be ideal.)
  - Most important is the fit...we want someone who embraces the vision and the uniqueness of the parish. In that way, the group was unanimously open to having a DPL or a pastor.
2. Lenten prayer support
  - We discussed the opportunity that Lent presents to support people in growing in their faith, particularly through participation in small Christian communities. We are collecting information about existing groups and plan to include it in the bulletin the first Sunday of Lent.
3. Goals and Measures
  - We agreed to each work on this over the next month and bring in our ideas for the next meeting.
4. Ministry training and development
  - Due to time constraints, this topic was also tabled until Mar.
5. Ensuring the safety of children
  - Due to time constraints, further discussion of this topic was also tabled until Mar.

**Items for Parish Council:** We shared our concerns about the succession plan to the larger group..

**Actions:** (All) Review goals and measures documents and email your comments to Pattie.

**Next meeting:** Thursday, Mar 3, 2005, 6:45 – 8:30 pm

February 11, 2005

Rev. Fr. Willie Manrique, JCL  
Episcopal Vicar for Clergy  
Diocese of San Jose

Dear Fr. Willie,

For several months now the parish leadership council, in concert with the pastor, clergy, lay leaders and professional staff of St. Francis of Assisi Catholic Community developed a leadership (clergy) succession plan that anticipates the eventual retirement of Msgr. John Sandersfeld as pastor.

The parish considered multiple succession strategies and through consultative process involving significant parish participation, has determined that the best interests of the parish are served with Msgr. John remaining as Pastor until he retires and the assignment of a parochial vicar who can be mentored by Msgr. John and the community leaders.

The key to St. Francis's growth and development has been collaboration between the clergy, a professional staff and engaged lay leaders working together to develop and implement plans, ministry and the liturgy which serve our parish, the community and the Diocese. This model has worked well at St. Francis, where the parish has been recognized on a diocesan and national level for its leadership contributions. For example, Marcos Herrera and Stan Fitzgerald serve on national Catholic boards and four of the five leaders of the Pastoral Plan work groups for the diocese, came from St. Francis.

As representatives of the parish, it is our observation that this successful, collaborative approach grows from the ecclesial communities of St. Francis, where plans and programs have been implemented to meet the pastoral needs of our community. It is our stated desire to maintain the culture and collaboration as St. Francis grows and enriches Christian life.

The parish has overwhelming interest to be involved with and provide input to the Diocese regarding the appointment of a parochial vicar and the eventual pastor transition at St. Francis.

The key leadership requirements we seek in a parochial vicar include the following:

- The ability to help parishioners advance their faith through prayer, worship and example on terms that relate to the life experiences of the parish members
- The capacity to act as an integral contributing member of the staff and leadership council
- The expertise and capability of organizing and building communities within and across a diverse multicultural environment
- The capability of building self-sustaining teams to implement parish plans and programs

Other important characteristics and considerations of our clergy include the following:

- Embrace the continuation and growth of small ecclesial communities of St. Francis. Parishioners like the close-knit relationships we have developed with one another both inside and among these communities.

- Achieve a consistent priest/lay community interaction
- Easily create and foster relationships as spiritual leaders among a diverse community of lay people.
- Openness to ideas and ethnic origins, but the ethnic backgrounds of priests are less important than the ability to serve the community as its spiritual leader. The parish is pleased to be a diverse yet an English speaking parish.
- A passion for clergy and staff leaders to know the communities they serve
- A desire to develop and sustain a model of pastoral leadership that is not solely pastor dependent
- To encourage and facilitate the way our parish makes room for individuals to contribute to the vision, empowerment and innovation of St. Francis
- To be able to deliver homilies that speak the word of God to us as individuals that are insightful and delivered in an adult, non-condescending manner
- To encourage the communities to continue to express influence over adapting liturgical delivery and shaping the culture of our ecclesial community

It is our desire to actively participate and engage with you in a discernment process that will lead to the identification of a suitable candidate for this important position, and who will help us in our journey to reach our joint vision with the Diocese. We seek your decisive leadership and responsiveness to this issue before April 15, 2005. Our timetable for action is driven by a desire to complete our staffing decisions, minimize the disruption to parish plans and programs and our passion and urgency to focus our joint energies on delivering a Catholic experience to the individuals in our communities.

Finally, we are committed individually and as a group to support the new priest. We believe the creative, collaborative, challenging and supportive environment at St. Francis is the best possible environment for developing and honing leadership skills which will serve as a fertile training ground for future priests.

We look forward to your earliest reply before April 15<sup>th</sup>.

Sincerely,

Willy Agbayani

Parish Council Chairman  
St. Francis of Assisi Parish

cc: Bishop Patrick J. McGrath