

**St. Nicholas Parish Pastoral Council**  
**Minutes for the November 17<sup>th</sup>, 2015 Meeting**

**Present:** Kevin Axe, Damian Barta, Theresa Buckman-Gilbert, Deb Evans, Cynthia Judge, Jose Juan Moreno, Sheila Hebein, Betsy Quinn and Fr. Mike Ahlstrom.

**Absent:** Blanca Lule, Derrick Blakley, Torrick Ward, Dan Vicencio

**Marion Flynn** distributed Holiday Festival raffle tickets.

**Meeting was called to order** at 7:10pm

**Opening Prayer:** Kevin Axe offered the opening prayer.

**Minutes** of the September 22<sup>nd</sup> meeting were reviewed. A motion to accept the minutes was made by Cynthia Judge and seconded by Jose Luis Moreno. The minutes were approved unanimously.

**Parish Update:**

Fr. Mike gave a report on parish activities. He reported that one priest considering becoming Saint Nicholas' pastor already gave him a call.

The coming weeks will be very busy with the Holiday Festival, Saint Nicholas and Tree Lighting, followed by the Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe and Mananitas on December 12, the celebration of Simbang Gabi on December 19<sup>th</sup>, Christmas and Kwanzaa on December 26<sup>th</sup>.

Fr. Mike will be having a welcomed vacation January 6<sup>th</sup> to the 15<sup>th</sup> and then traveling to the Holy Land.

**Pastor Transition Update**

**October 26<sup>th</sup> Summation** Cynthia Judge reported that between 150-170 people attended the Town Hall meeting and that Fr. Knotek, of the Priests' Placement Board, had a very positive response to the meeting. Parishioners have also been positive in their responses. Not all the elements of the agenda were given equal time, but people were able to express their views and be heard.

The discussion of the translation at the meeting branched out into a broader discussion of the parish and Archdiocesan dynamics involving Hispanic members. In the pastor selection process it might be good to have meetings in Spanish and meetings in English. Fr. Mike suggested that it could be helpful to have an Hispanic Leadership council in the parish. It was agreed that we need to pay more attention to this dynamic in the future.

**January Pastor Selection Meeting** There is a plan for members of the Pastor Transition Team to go to the Parish Information Night on January 12<sup>th</sup> to represent the Parish. Priests who are prospective pastor candidates and parishioners from all the parishes seeking new pastors will be attending this meeting. A DVD presentation about Saint Nicholas using current video material is being prepared.

**Parish Transformation Updates:**

**Mass Survey:** Sheila Hebein reported that there was another survey presented in church during the 1pm Mass recently in order to clarify the sentiments in the Hispanic community. There is going to be another

meeting of the Mass Schedule work group and they will consider results from that survey. The overall results of the survey will be reported in December.

In the Mass schedule discussion, members of the Council expressed support of the mass schedule evaluation process and saw it as an extension of perspectives raised in the Parish Transformation process.

**The Role of PPC Members** Sheila Hebein opened up a general discussion of the role of Parish Pastoral Council members in the parish. It was felt that the PPC generally brings forward the viewpoints of the broad and diverse membership in the parish and has provided a good advisory role during some difficult periods in the parish's recent history.

It was pointed out that parish councils vary from parish to parish, usually due to the inclinations of pastors: some are elected, many are not; some call for open meetings, some do not. The bottom line is that a parish council is to serve in support of the pastor's leadership role in the parish.

**Question From A Parishioner** Sheila reported on a comment by a parishioner who responded to Fr. Mike's appeal for young men to consider a vocation as a priest. This parishioner felt that the St. Nick's community can be judgmental. While Saint Nicholas emphasizes that it is a parish that embraces diversity and we say "All Are Welcome", but there are still some people who feel unwelcome. We need to embrace Pope Francis' approach to full and open dialogue in the church. As a PPC we need to promote a culture of gentle language where contradictory opinions are really welcomed, where we really listen to each other with respect. And we should not be silent when we think those lines are being crossed. There was a suggestion that we promote having this discussion in our next Lenten groups.

### **New Business**

**Gun Control** Fr. Mike said he brought the petition campaign to help pass legislation for statewide gun dealer licensing and regulation of gun dealers to the attention of Archbishop Cupich and urged him to speak to other Illinois bishops about this issue. He urged the parish to make the issue of gun control a priority.

Fr Mike reported on the second meeting of Archdiocesan priests on the future of the Archdiocese. There is a tremendous amount of change in parishes in the Archdiocese and the reality that there will be a 50% reduction in the number of priests in the archdiocese in the next 15 years. The good news is that the priests in the archdiocese are open to a flexible approach that includes the increased leadership of lay people. Our deanery is not facing as big an immediate problem as do other parts of the Archdiocese.

**Closing prayer** offered by Fr. Mike

