

St Therese Faith Formation Committee
5-12-09 Meetings

Members Present: Pat Starr, Michelle Pellman, Bridget Dahlin, Kay Ballard, Barbara Lockwood, Eric Schmidt, Twyla Steinberger, Cathy Anderson, Sheila Conrads, John Faundeen, Tammy Badger

Not Present: Father Hal Barber, Mike McInerney, Bill Van Roe, Karen Heiling

Prayer – led by Pat Starr.

Minutes - Approved as amended (Children's Sub-Committee "registration" clarified).

Communication

The Pastoral Council Minutes of 4/28/09 documented the need for a bigger classroom/meeting room to address the incoming confirmation class and larger parish meetings. Twyla indicated that the Faith Formation Committee (FFC) would need a larger room if most of our members attended a meeting, which is expected. Barbara Lockwood relayed that she has information on the cost and contractor information building portable walls.

Social Outreach Fellowship Committee (SOFC) ministry report included examining the New Parishioner Welcome materials/approach and conducting a Parish survey. FFC members expressed interest in these two topics with Pat Starr having some specific ideas including what we provide to new parishioners. **Action:** Twyla will ask Shirley Donnelly to present/pass on what is currently provided newly registered parishioners. Related to the survey, Pat Starr suggested small focus groups. **Action:** Pat Starr agreed to be the point-of-contact/liaison with the SOFC.

Publishing FFC agendas and minutes on the website/calendar was discussed at length. The FFC agreed to provide our latest agenda and meeting minutes following a one-week review period for the minutes to allow for corrections to be made. **Action:** John Faundeen to forward previous and future reviewed minutes to Shirley Donnelly for posting on the St. Therese website.

Old Business

Information on the budget was passed to Twyla Steinberger from Ed Jakos. Not a lot to share other than we are still waiting for actual numbers. The FFC does need a point-of-contact or liaison to the Finance Committee. **Action:** FFC to assign a liaison to the Finance Committee.

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The Children's Ministries Sub-Committee met to discuss how to assemble. This group is intended to be an ideas and implementation assembly.

The reporting will be both St. Therese staff and sub-committee effort. St. Therese staff will do the communicating to the Parish while dialogue with other committees will be by sub-committee members.

Sub-Committee positions were discussed in relation to the Youth, Children, Adult, and Vocations Sub-Committees. FFC members already serving on any of those can be considered liaisons to/from the FFC. As an example Sheila Conrads serves on the RCIA group, which is part of the Adult Sub-Committee. From the members present, it was determined that FFC liaisons are needed for the Youth and Vocations Sub-Committees. **Action:** FFC to determine liaisons to Youth and Vocations Sub-Committees.

New Business

Eric Schmidt provided an extensive presentation on the plans for the Youth Ministries. His outline is provided below with some additional text added that came out of our discussion:

Current state

• **Religious Education:**

- Basic information and statistics
 - Sunday nights 7:15-8:30
 - 65-70 students in grades 6-10 attend regularly
 - Two classes for each grade level
 - 6th-8th grade co-ed
 - 9th-10th grade separated by gender
 - Limited to no interest in 11th & 12th grade classes in recent years
 - 13 catechists (Catechists are Sunday volunteers that have had safe environment training.)

Action: Eric Schmidt to find out the number of students registered in the parish, but not in Religious Education or Catholic Schools.

- Curriculum
 - 6th Grade – The Teen Timeline (T3)
 - 7th & 8th Grade – Journey of Faith for Teens (4-page booklets with 1/week addressed in class.)
 - 9th Grade – Theology of the Body for Teens
 - 10th grade (pre-Confirmation) – Send Out Your Spirit
 - Confirmation done in January
 - 10th grade (post-Confirmation) – No set curriculum
 - Attendance has plummeted from 16 to 4 after Confirmation
 - Topics covered included Pope Benedict XVI encyclicals, how to date, abortion, and life issues such as genocide.

• **Youth Group:**

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- Basic Information and statistics
 - Thursday nights 7:00-8:30
 - 10-24 students attending through November
 - 2-6 students attending through February
 - Difficult to engage and keep the attention of varied age groups.
 - Younger like activities while older enjoy discussions more.
- Youth Group Events
- Survey from Fall
 - Survey was done in Fall to gauge student's opinions regarding Youth Group
 - Showed that students were interested in events scheduled
 - Students relayed that they wanted to be entertained more
 - Sunday and Wednesday are nights students are most likely to attend
 - Thursday nights, students are least likely to attend

The plan for next year

• Youth Ministry Model

- Basic Information
 - Combines "Religious Education" and "Youth Group"
 - Creates fun and educational program
 - Allows students to experience faith in various ways through the year (educational, social, spiritual)
 - Cathy Anderson offered an idea to alternate weeks with one week focusing upon younger students and the following week on the older students.
- Youth Group
 - Sundays 7:15-8:30
 - Grades 6-12
 - Combination of Educational, Social and Spiritual classes
 - Confirmation is an independent program
 - Hopefully, by treating this as a separate program the 11th and 12th graders will continue past the Confirmation stage.
- Junior High
 - Grades 6-8
 - New Curriculum (Catholic Connections through Saint Mary's Press – <http://www.smp.org>)
 - One book for three years of curriculum will be a large expenditure the first year. The FFC discussed this a bit and was concerned about the start-up cost being excessive. Eric Schmidt and Bridget Dahlin felt that the costs always somewhat high when a program changes it's curriculum.
 - Students will continue be in classes that are separated by grade level
 - Each class will cover the same topic at the same time
- Senior High
 - Grades 9-12
 - Lessons based on Diocesan guidelines/Renewing the Vision
 - Students "randomly" placed into small groups
 - One lesson and presentation for all students
- Educational
 - Accomplish guidelines set out by Diocese
 - Structure
 - Opening Prayer

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- Ice Breaker
- Presentation of topic
- Small Group discussion
- Possible activity
- Wrap-up/Closing Prayer
- Social
 - Monthly Fun Nights
 - Some will have faith dimension to them
- Spiritual
 - Prayer Services
 - Exposure to prayer forms
 - Education on Liturgical seasons
- Catechist Core Team
 - Consist of Youth Minister and Catechists
 - Develop activities and events to enhance program
 - Enhanced training
 - Establish more of a team concept between members than in current program
- Confirmation
 - Will continue to be in 10th grade until further notice
 - Confirmation held separately from Youth Group
 - Wednesday nights
 - 7-9 “intense” weeks from mid-Sept to mid-Dec
 - Classes based on Diocesan Guidelines

Beyond next year

- Develop Service aspect of classes
 - Eventual summer service trip
- Promote attendance at regional and national youth gatherings
- Develop student leadership role
- Include more Youth Minister/Parent communication through meetings and mailings
 - Seeking a balance between parents who are very involved with their child’s religious education and those that feel it is the Catholic School’s or the Parish’s role to educate.

The FFC had several questions related to the presentation:

Pat Starr asked if the entire curriculum presented could be set up by this coming fall given that is only four months away. Eric believes there has been enough done plus pieces are available already that will help us. He feels that the overall schedule is close to being completed. Eric plans to meet with the Catechist Core Team before August. Sign-up Sunday also helped to identify those interested. An additional comment from the FFC was it might be worse if the new curriculum fails than if we had not changed anything.

Twyla Steinberger asked about how continuity through the grades can be accomplished. Eric Schmidt wants the Catechist to respond to this. Twyla also asked what would happen to the curriculum if something happened to Eric. He replied that within one month enough material would be documented that the curriculum could be picked up someone else. Twyla also asked if the FFC is a part of the Catechist Core Team. Eric stated that he is not sure of that yet, but is working with Father Hal on that subject.

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Barbara Lockwood expressed the importance of not watering down the curriculum and that would end up with a focus on entertainment. Our program needs to be more than a social element. We should consider doing fewer things, but do them well.

Michelle Pellman asked if there is room to pull some things back if we need to. Eric Schmidt feels the model is flexible enough to handle if we need to back up.

Relatedly, Twyla asked if a back-up plan existed. Michelle also asked if maybe we could phase the program because it is so big. Eric Schmidt responded that by July he'll know areas that can be changed if not everything is going to be in place.

Pat Starr asked if parents know that they should be looking at retreats this summer as confirmation requirements. Eric Schmidt stated that nothing has gone out, but they are planning to have a Mount Marty retreat next year that will hopefully address this need for many.

Barbara Lockwood relayed that many Catholic school students feel like they are already getting this knowledge and feel that these "extra" classes are not needed. Eric responded that the curriculum needs to change so that Catholic school students are interested.

Pat Starr stated that if the emphasis on Sunday nights work, hopefully the students will look at Sundays as more fun, including the Catholic School students. Pat also would like to see the Youth Group do Wednesday night meals, too. The emphasis would be on community building and not moneymaking. The group debated this quite a bit with pros and cons discussed.

Closing prayer was a Hail Mary said by all.

Next Meeting June 9th, 6:30 pm