

Parish Pastoral Commission Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, September 13, 2023
7-8:30 pm

Present at the meeting: Fr. John Chen, Lynn Jacobs, Monica LaFond, Tom Lucci, Kate Mason, Claire Ramsbottom, Jim Spoto, James Spoto

The Status of PPC Membership and the PPC's Role at OLOS

We discussed the current membership of the PPC. Everyone who was a member of the PPC the last time it met (during August 2022) was invited to tonight's meeting. We noted that the PPC has not met regularly since some time during the last year of Fr. Frank Daly's tenure at OLOS, and that the PPC met only once (in August 2022) during Fr. Bob Cullen's time as pastor at OLOS. We discussed the need to recruit new members to the PPC.

We agreed that the PPC usually consists of 6-8 members not including liaisons from the Faith Formation Commission, the Christian Services Commission, the Parish Finance Council, and the Youth Commission. We agreed that the PPC should include a representative from the Liturgy Commission.

Jim Spoto noted that he usually only attends PPC meetings on a quarterly basis to give financial reports to the PPC. Jim will try to see if another PFC member will attend PPC meetings more regularly.

Lynn attended tonight's meeting at Fr. John's invitation and she is happy to attend future PPC meetings when invited, but she does not plan to attend PPC meetings on a regular basis. Monica will attend regularly as a representative of the parish staff.

We discussed the role of the PPC. Fr. John shared portions of the Archdiocese of Boston's [guidelines for parish pastoral councils](#). We discussed how, in the past, the OLOS PPC has debated whether its role is merely advisory to the pastor or whether its members implement programs as well. Fr. John expressed his desire to consult with the PPC about parish matters and the direction of the parish going forward. We agreed that the membership of the PPC should reflect the demographics of the parish (for example, including younger parishioners, etc.) We considered the question whether the people who attend PPC meetings as liaisons from the various parish commissions are technically PPC members, and Fr. John expressed his opinion that they are.

Fr. John asked everyone in attendance at tonight's meeting if they would like to continue as members of the PPC, and they said yes (with the caveats that Jim Spoto, as chair of the PFC, will attend PPC meetings on a quarterly basis to give financial reports and Lynn Jacobs, as office manager, will attend if needed/when invited.) Fr. John said that he would reach out to those people who were on the PPC the last time it met and invite them to continue as PPC

members. We also discussed potential new members of the PPC, and Fr. John said that he would reach out to those people as well.

We discussed the PPC's desire to revisit the parish plan that was developed and approved by the Archdiocese shortly before the pandemic, and we noted that serving on parish commissions and in parish ministries is a form of faith formation and an integral part of OLOS' commitment to lifelong faith formation. We talked about the need to preserve and carry forward the "intentionality" with which OLOS has traditionally operated.

Social and Service Activities at OLOS

We discussed the importance of social activities and community building at OLOS. We noted the need for a social commission. Claire Ramsbottom pointed out that OLOS used to have a social commission, but its members became discouraged when they were not allowed to put money they raised at programs towards other social events. Jim Spoto expressed his opinion as PFC chair that money raised at social events could be earmarked for use at future social events, and Fr. John and the other PPC members agreed with this view.

We discussed the difficulty of finding people interested in and able to commit to volunteering more than the minimum of one hour a month required to attend commission meetings. This is a barrier to finding PPC members who are willing and able to implement programs as well as serve in an advisory capacity.

As the Youth Commission representative, James Spoto shared the Youth Commission's plans to host an Ice Cream Social in September and a Halloween party in October. The Youth Commission is OLOS' service organization for high school students. We discussed the need to rebuild the Youth Commission, whose membership dwindled during the pandemic. The Youth Commission is focusing this year on rebuilding community through social events, but it still plans to engage in service as well.

We also discussed the fact that Middle School Social Nights are returning one Friday a month beginning in October. We discussed the effect of the pandemic on service opportunities for teens, and PPC members suggested investigating service organizations such as Catholic Heart Work Camp and Mir Pace International.

We discussed specific ideas for social activities at OLOS, including

- The possibility of reviving "parties with a purpose," which were neighborhood-based potluck dinners hosted by PPC members during Fr. Scott Euvrard's tenure, at least in part as a way to help Fr. Scott get to know parishioners and vice versa. We agreed that, given the current public health situation, people might be more comfortable hosting these dinners when they can be held outdoors (i.e., during the spring, summer, and next early fall).

- Dinners at OLOS such as the jambalaya, turkey and pasta dinners that have been held in the past as fundraisers for the teens' summer mission trips. These dinners were very popular and well-attended.

Upcoming Offertory Campaign

We discussed the upcoming offertory campaign at OLOS. Volunteers are still needed to be witnesses at the Masses during the opening weekend of the campaign (9/30-10/1). Fr. John will talk about the campaign in his homilies during the weekend of 9/23-24, and communications will go out to parishioners via phone calls, emails and letters during the week between 9/24 and 10/1.

We discussed specific issues relating to the tracking and reporting of donations, including the fact that the WeShare system is not integrated with the parish's ConnectNow system for tracking donations. Lynn will check with the Archdiocese to see if anyone can help her figure out how to import the data from WeShare more easily so that we can track the trend in number of people donating to OLOS over the years.

Need for a Facilities Commission and a Proactive Plan for Maintenance and Improvement

We discussed the need for a facilities commission and a proactive plan for the maintenance and improvement of the OLOS site and buildings. It was noted that the Archdiocese funded a comprehensive review of OLOS' facilities and grounds a few years ago, and that the plan that was developed from this review can still be used. We noted that although many of our recent actions regarding our facilities have been reactive (such as fixing the heat in the Bullock Center and replacing the boiler in O'Connell Hall), we have still taken some proactive measures as well (such as replacing the carpet in the church and lining the basement of the church). We noted that when we have run campaigns to raise money for specific projects (such as the new sound system for the church), the response from parishioners has been good.

Going Forward

We discussed future actions, including a proposal that PPC members initiate conversations with fellow parishioners with the goal of asking them what they like about OLOS and what they are looking for from their parish. We agreed we should "build on our successes" by determining what we have done well in the past and building on those things going forward.