

Pastoral Council St. Mildred Catholic Parish of Swansboro

Meeting Minutes

August 12, 2024

Opening

The regular meeting of the Pastoral Council of St. Mildred Catholic Parish of Swansboro was called to order by Bob Hedelund at 6:06pm on August 12, 2024 in the St. Mildred conference room. Fr. Dave Miller opened the meeting with a prayer.

Present

Bob Hedelund, John Mackowiak, Art Diani, Father Dave Miller, Deacon Jerry Fatica, Pastoral Associate Wojciech Chudziak, Mike Oehl, Marie Sheehan Boljen, Megan Dettle, Mike Giordano, Executive Assistant Marianne McCarty

Attendance by Phone

Donna Szeba

Excused Absence

None

Unexcused Absence

None

Approval of Agenda for August 12, 2024 SMPC Meeting

Bob Hedelund indicated that the agenda for the August 12, 2024 SMPC meeting is heavily focused on a review, discussion and potential revisions of the current SMPC Pastoral Parish Plan and Pastoral Council Constitution, discussion of addition of "From The Floor" to the monthly SMPC meeting agenda and discussion of a Plan of Action and Milestones to address the St.

Mildred Parish survey responses from parishioners. A motion to approve the agenda failed by one vote. Art Diani suggested that approval and acceptance of the June 10, 2024 SMPC meeting minutes be added to the August 12, 2024 SMPC meeting agenda. These minutes were not reviewed at the July 8, 2024 SMPC meeting due to lack of a Council member quorum. The revised agenda to include approval and acceptance of the June 10, 2024 SMPC meeting minutes was approved by the Pastoral Council members and approved and accepted by Fr. Dave Miller.

Approval of June 10, 2024 and July 8, 2024 SMPC Meeting Minutes

Art Diani reported that the draft minutes of the June 10, 2024 Pastoral Council meeting were sent to all Council members for review and editing. Marie Sheehan Boljen and Mike Oehl revised the 3rd paragraph of the Social Outreach Quarterly Ministry reports for the update of the Human Life and Dignity (HLD) Ministry. The revision provided a more detailed explanation and clarification of the issue of restricted versus unrestricted funds and tracking for the \$4000.00 donation made by Vanguard Investments to the HLD Ministry. Art incorporated these edits into the minutes and the Council members voted unanimously on a motion to approve the revised minutes. Fr. Dave Miller approved and accepted the revised minutes. Art stated that the draft minutes of the July 8, 2024 Pastoral Council meeting of the committee of non-quorum members were sent to all Council members for review and editing. Marie Sheehan Boljen identified a typographical error that Art corrected. The Council Members voted unanimously to approve the revised July 8, 2024 Pastoral Council meeting minutes of the selection committee of non-quorum members who reviewed and selected the best 5 out of 32 Parish decal designs. Fr. Dave approved and accepted the revised minutes. Art will send the revised and accepted minutes of the June 10, 2024 and July 8, 2024 Pastoral Council meetings to John Laursen for publication on the St. Mildred Parish website.

Committee/Ministry Reports

Time Sensitive

Marie Sheehan Boljen, Liaison for the Social Ministries, presented 2 time-sensitive Ministry reports. The Hospitality Ministry has scheduled the Parish Picnic for Sunday, September 22 with a 12 noon start time. The start of the 10:30 am Sunday Mass on September 22 will be delayed until 11:00 am to allow parishioners to attend the picnic immediately after conclusion of the Mass. If the September 22 Parish Picnic is cancelled due to rain, it will be re-scheduled for Sunday, September 29 at 12 noon. The start time of the 10:30 am Sunday Mass on the September 29 rain date will also be delayed until 11:00 am. The Knights of Columbus plan to reserve Friday, December 13 for the Christmas Dinner Dance. Helen Sheehan (Sheehan Consulting Group, LLC of Cleveland, Ohio) collaborated with Fr. Dave Miller and the St. Mildred Pastoral Council to develop the 2024 St. Mildred Parishioner Survey to better understand the needs of the Parish. The results of the Survey were summarized by Helen in a detailed, written report (Executive Summary, Charts and Graphs, Tabular Data Analysis, Analysis and Recommendation,

and Survey Tool) and sent to Fr. Dave Miller and Parish staff for review. Helen also traveled to Swansboro and gave an oral presentation of the Survey report to Fr. Dave, Pastoral Council members and Parish staff on August 6, 2024. Helen estimated that her analysis of the Survey data, preparation of the written report, and oral presentation of the Survey findings collectively cost at least \$5000.00. Helen asked if St. Mildred Parish would kindly prepare a letter acknowledging and accepting her donation of time and effort for the St. Mildred Parishioner Survey. Fr. Dave agreed and asked Pastoral Associate Wojciech Chudziak and Executive Assistant Marianne McCarty to draft a letter and send it to him for review and signature. Fr. Dave also asked for the name and address of the person that will receive the letter.

John Mackowiak, leader of the Building and Grounds Committee, provided an update on the 10-year capital replacement plan and budget proposed by the Committee. The heat pumps, parking lot replacement, and roof replacement were inventoried, and a plan was developed for a certain amount of money to be set aside for repairs or replacement of these items. The plan was approved by the Committee with some changes. The rectory was not included in the original inventory so it will be added to the list. Fr. Dave asked that the final, revised capital replacement plan and budget be reviewed by him and the Pastoral Council and recorded in the Council minutes. The Finance Council will also need to review and approve the capital replacement budget and, if it exceeds \$10,000.00, the budget will be assigned to the Finance Council. Fr. Dave suggested that John meet with Harold Yingling, chair of the Finance Council, to review the final 10-year capital replacement plan and budget.

Combination of 2 Old Business Agenda Items and 1 New Business Agenda Item

Review and Discussion of Current SMPC Pastoral Parish Plan

Review and Discussion of Current SMPC Pastoral Council Constitution

Discussion of Action Plan to Address St. Mildred Parish Survey Responses from Parishioners

Due to the considerable back and forth discussion by Fr. Dave Miller and several Council members with respect to the Pastoral Parish Plan and Pastoral Council Constitution documents and the potential impact of the Parish survey responses from parishioners on these documents, the 2 Old Business Agenda Items and 1 New Business Agenda Item were combined for a more accurate and meaningful presentation of the information. Fr. Dave opened the discussion with a review of the Pastoral Parish Plan which is a vision and mission statement. This is a 5-year document that is in its second year. Fr. Dave suggested that the Council should review and revise the document annually to insure that the vision and mission statements with proposed goals, priorities and objectives are up to date and support the 5 pillars of foundational Ministries: Sacraments and Worship, Education and Faith Formation, Governance, Finance and Stewardship, Evangelization and Vocations, and Social Services and Outreach Programs. The recent Parish Survey results provide an excellent framework for review and update of the

Pastoral Parish Plan. Since the Parish Survey showed a 25% dissatisfaction/need improvement for certain aspects of the 5 foundational Ministries, Fr. Dave focused on improvement in those areas. These include more focused homilies, improved communication with parishioners, enhanced evangelization and vocations with the addition of a seminarian, strong leadership for sacraments and worship, building youth education and faith formation, and creative approaches for social services and outreach programs. The bottom line for Fr. Dave is that he and the Pastoral Council should assess the priorities and objectives of the 5 foundational Ministries and address those that need attention and improvement.

With respect to the Pastoral Council Constitution, Fr. Dave pointed out that this document illustrates how St. Mildred Church conducts business. For review and revision of the document there are 4 key steps: review, inform, integrate, and implement. Based upon feedback from the parishioners regarding the business component of the Church, the Pastoral Council should convert negative parishioner comments into positive revisions. The Parishioner survey made a recommendation that professional development should be implemented for the Pastor and staff. Since the Diocese has a professional development program, Fr. Dave will contact the Diocese to initiate a professional development program for St. Mildred Parish. This professional development program will define and communicate a more transparent business operation of St. Mildred (Pastor, Pastoral Council and Finance Council) to the parishioners.

In response to Fr. Dave's suggestions regarding review and revision of the Pastoral Parish Plan and Pastoral Council Constitution documents through the use of the Parish survey feedback from parishioners, Bob Hedelund suggested that the Pastoral Council utilize the survey responses in conjunction with the 5 pillars to develop a Plan of Action and Milestones (POAM). Marie Sheehan Boljen agreed with the POAM but emphasized that it should be based on feedback from the survey and communicated to parishioners as soon as possible to show commitment by Fr. Dave and the Pastoral Council to the parishioners. A POAM subcommittee will be formed in the very near future and consist of parishioner volunteers and a Council member. It is intended that the POAM subcommittee will open a 2-way channel of immediate and transparent communication with the parishioners. To address the urgency of the response to the parishioner survey, Fr. Dave planned to write a brief letter that will briefly summarize the shortcomings (Church buildings and facilities, homilies and Mass, youth and family programs, transparency and communication, community, leadership and staff, liturgy and music and other suggestions) to be addressed in the near future. This letter will be given to parishioners after the Saturday evening and Sunday morning Masses in late August. When a formal POAM has been developed, it will be communicated to the parishioners via the same methods utilized for the Parish survey. These communication methods consist of the QR code, weekly bulletin, email, website and hard copy. Bob Hedelund mentioned that there was very positive parishioner feedback on the communication of the Parish Survey so the same communication platforms will be employed for the POAM. Fr. Dave also suggested that page 27 of the survey report should also be communicated to the parishioners. These are parishioner open-ended responses regarding building of the Church and facilities, homilies and Mass, as well as youth and family programs. Fr. Dave had some recent meetings with parishioners and provided an overview of the approach

to address their concerns in the Parish survey. After the meeting, Fr. Dave received very positive responses from the parishioners.

John Mackowiak mentioned that the Finance Council received some negative reviews in the Parish survey with parishioners claiming that they are in the dark about Church finances and do not know how the money is allocated and tracked. In an effort to address the financial issues concerning trust, transparency and confidence, Fr. Dave has asked the Diocese to perform an external audit of St. Mildred finances. Wojciech Chudziak indicated that the Diocese audit occurs once every 3 years. Even if the Diocesan auditor does not uncover any issues, John feels that parishioners will still feel that they are in the dark because allocation and tracking of money will not be evaluated in the audit.

During a recent meeting, there was a discussion between Fr. Dave and attendees about the operating procedure of the Council meetings. Fr. Dave started the use of a parliamentary procedure, Robert's Rules, at all St. Mildred Council meetings 2 years ago. If an item is brought to a Council meeting, it is subject to review by members followed by a motion to pass or reject. If the motion is passed by Council members, Fr. Dave can accept, delay or reject. If Fr. Dave rejects and the Council re-passes the motion, then it moves on to the Dean and Bishop for approval or rejection. The Bishop makes the final decision on approval, rejection or delay.

Fr. Dave suggested that the Pastoral and Finance Councils need to be accurate sources of correct information for the parishioners. He recommended a line block chart with mission and vision statements for each of the Councils that can easily be disseminated to the parishioners. He also recommended a floor banner stand for each Council with the decal, vision and mission statements and 5 foundational Ministries. The floor banner stand will be posted in the vestibule of the Church.

In response to inadequate transparency, communication, finances and budget planning expressed by parishioners on the Parish survey, Art Diani suggested that implementation of the Diocesan ParishSoft software platform by St. Mildred Parish will alleviate many of these issues. Wojciech Chudziak responded that ParishSoft contains 2 modules, one for tracking contribution statements that will start on January 1, 2025 and one for financial statements that is being introduced slowly because of the time-consuming training component for Parish personnel. Twenty Parishes in the Diocese have initiated the financial statement module of ParishSoft in the fiscal year beginning July 1, 2024. Wojciech's goal is to initiate ParishSoft for St. Mildred Parish on July 1, 2025 for fiscal year 2025. Wojciech mentioned that there are 2 shortcomings associated with the initiation of ParishSoft. The older financial data of the Parish will not be saved by ParishSoft so it may be necessary to keep the older ACS system in place for a while to maintain record keeping. The second shortfall of ParishSoft is the inaccurate processing of contributions from the old ACS system into ParishSoft. The Diocese is working on solutions for these 2 shortcomings. The ParishSoft financial data will be securely stored in the iCloud and the Diocese will have complete access to the data of each Parish. This will accelerate the process of the Diocesan audit of each Parish since the auditor will have remote access to the financial data and will not have to travel to each Parish for lengthy review of financial records. Wojciech stated that the education

and training of ParishSoft for St. Mildred staff will be conducted with an onsite visit from Diocesan software experts.

Bob Hedelund asked the Pastoral Council members to consider how to best move forward with the POAM. The POAM cannot be based solely on page 27 of the Parish survey report because that was only a summary of open-ended responses from parishioners regarding Church relations. A more comprehensive POAM based on the 5 pillars is required with input from the existing 10-member Pastoral Plan subcommittee chaired by Mark Savarese. Bob suggested that one of the Pastoral Council members could serve as an adjunct member of the subcommittee. Bob and John Mackowiak recommended that a few parishioners should be invited to join the subcommittee to develop a broad range of ideas and solutions. Marie Sheehan Boljen provided an example of a 1-page Diocese of Arlington Strategic Plan summary which lists their vision and mission and 6 strategic pillars on the front of the page and all strategic goals/action items on the back of the page. This 1-page summary could serve as a model/template for development of the St. Mildred POAM. A motion was made to move forward with the subcommittee plan for the POAM and was passed unanimously by the Pastoral Council members. Fr. Dave agreed to reach out to the existing 10-member Pastoral Plan subcommittee and determine which members would like to continue to serve and work on the POAM. Fr. Dave is willing to recruit/appoint more parishioners to serve on the subcommittee.

The Pastoral Council members entered into a lengthy discussion of the education issues for the youth of St. Mildred Parish. Fr. Dave said this was also a major item of concern raised by parishioners in the Parish survey. Since most of the youth education commences in September, there is a limited amount of time to address the issues. Fr. Dave proposed finding some rental classrooms in a local school or renting modules with separate classrooms. John Mackowiak pointed out that funding for these rental classrooms is another issue since the Diocesan financial plan started on July 1 and school begins in September. It was very disturbing to Fr. Dave that parents have been pulling their children out of St. Mildred Church and relocating them to other nearby Catholic Churches that have superior education facilities. Art Diani asked if the search for a St. Mildred Youth Minister was in progress. Wojciech Chudziak has identified an experienced educator and former director of Religious Education, Joan Taylor. Wojciech spoke recently with her, and they developed a plan for high school Youth Ministry, especially Confirmation. He thought Joan's extensive Religious Education experience and familiarity with the youth programs at St. Mildred Church make her an excellent candidate for leading the St. Mildred Youth Ministry. Fr. Dave asked about locations and the number of classrooms for education. Wojciech spoke with Barb Giordano and Joan about the plan for educating a group of 30 high school youth. The classes will be held in the main room of the Church or outside of the Church building. Parents do not like these options. John Mackowiak visited Swansboro High School and found large rooms that are rented by some Churches but would not be suitable for St. Mildred youth education. He also learned that Swansboro High School classrooms are not for rent. Fr. Dave recommended the option of placing modular buildings on Church property for youth education. The Council members had numerous questions and concerns about the modular approach including how many modules, how many classrooms, will the classrooms be combined or private, are there bathrooms for boys and girls? Through an online search, Fr. Dave found

some modules for lease or lease to own in Virginia and North Carolina. These modules have bathrooms for boys and girls, but adults/teachers will have to use the Church bathrooms. Other modular issues raised by Pastoral Council members were a child safe environment, foundational electrical and plumbing, where will the modulares be situated on the Church property, and how will modules affect parking and future building of the Church. With all of the listed issues, will it be possible to meet the September deadline for the start of classes? It was suggested that the classes could be delayed until October or even further out depending upon feedback from parents. Fr. Dave agreed to continue to pursue the modular option and will keep the Pastoral and Finance Councils informed of progress. Bob Hedelund asked if there was a motion to support the modular units for education. John suggested that the motion include both modular units and classrooms in Swansboro. The motion for modular units and classrooms was approved unanimously by the Pastoral Council and accepted by Fr. Dave. It was pointed out by Fr. Dave that the modular approach for classrooms will need approval by the Finance Council and the Diocese. Wojciech mentioned that there are other aspects of modular unit education that will need attention including environmental requirements, child safety and selection of volunteer teachers and supplies. Finally, Wojciech asked if Barb Giordano will be in charge of the modular education program?

Fr. Dave was recently approached by the town of Swansboro regarding the purchase of 5 acres of St. Mildred property. He could not agree to the purchase of the property without the approval of the St. Mildred Pastoral and Financial Councils as well as the parishioners. The Bishop will not approve any land purchase unless the St. Mildred Councils and parishioners render approval. Fr. Dave researched the 5-acre property which is zoned as residential and is worth about \$20,300.00 per acre. The Swansboro town hall would use the land to build an emergency operations center for the fire and police departments. The emergency operations center would be constructed on all of the 5 acres currently designated as a soccer field. Fr. Dave asked if the Pastoral Council members are in favor of the land sale and should send their feedback to Bob Hedelund who will interact with the town of Swansboro. Since St. Mildred is incorporated as a Limited Liability Corporation (LLC), the sale of the 5 acres will be added to the LLC incorporation records. Fr. Dave approached Mike Wendenroth, Director of Property, Construction and Risk Management for the Diocesan Finance Council and Mike was adamantly opposed to the sale of the 5-acre parcel. However, the Bishop will have final approval or denial of the sale. Fr. Dave had several questions about the sale of the 5-acre property. What will St. Mildred do with the extra revenue from the sale? Does St. Mildred Parish want to parcel out this land? How will St. Mildred utilize this 5-acre parcel in the future? There are numerous questions and issues that need due diligence by St. Mildred Parish before a sale of this land can be considered.

Bob Hedelund assumed that the discussion/revision of the Pastoral Plan and Pastoral Constitution will be on hold until the Parish survey results and POAM are finalized. The Pastoral Plan and Pastoral Constitution will undergo further deliberation at upcoming Pastoral Council meetings under Old Business.

Old Business

Discussion of Whether “From The Floor” Should be Added to the Monthly Agenda

Bob Hedelund opened the discussion of an Old Business item, “From The Floor”, and whether it should be added to the monthly meeting agenda items. “From The Floor” was brought up at an earlier Pastoral Council meeting but, due to time constraints, discussion was deferred to the current meeting. Bob stated that “From The Floor” will try to capture items that evolve between meetings or come up as items that need to be addressed from a parishioner or Council member but did not show up in the meeting agenda. It is important to point out that some parameters must be in place for “From The Floor” agenda items to validate the addition to the meeting agenda. Donna Szeba said that she favored the new agenda item because it may be the only option for parishioner comments or requests. Megan Dettle proposed that “From The Floor” topics could be presented by Council members at the beginning of each meeting and then subject to approval or rejection. If the meeting has a full agenda, “From The Floor” topics can be tabled until the next meeting. Bob indicated that some parishioners are unsure of the process for submitting their questions or concerns to be addressed by the Pastoral Council and “From The Floor” should help to resolve these issues. Art Diani expressed concern that some “From The Floor” agenda items may be complex and require due diligence by Pastoral Council members. This time-consuming due diligence may result in delaying the agenda items for 1 or 2 meetings. An example of delaying an agenda item for further due diligence by the Pastoral Council may be the 5-acre land purchase request from the town of Swansboro. A motion was made and unanimously approved by the Council members and accepted by Fr. Dave to add “From The Floor” to upcoming monthly Pastoral Council meeting agendas.

At the conclusion of the “From The Floor” agenda item, the St. Mildred Youth Education discussion was resurrected by Wojciech Chudziak. He was concerned that there were not enough teachers, especially if the classes will be grade specific. The grade specific approach will require 16 teachers, and this amount will be impossible to achieve for October classes. John Mackowiak responded that the grade specific approach was not broadly proposed and that 1st and 2nd grade children or 3rd, 4th and 5th grade children could be gathered in one room. However, these combinations are not acceptable to parents of these children. Megan Dettle indicated that the only acceptable combinations would be middle and high school students due to their smaller numbers. There was further discussion about the number and type of modules and the number of classrooms. John Mackowiak recommended 7 classrooms but there was still the problem of finding 7 teachers by October. Bob Hedelund concluded that the St. Mildred Youth Education program needs rapid evaluation and decisions to meet the October deadline.

Pastor’s Comments

Fr. Dave briefly updated our sister Church in Africa, St. James, under the direction of Fr. Jacob. To formalize a speaker for St. James as part of the St. Mildred Outreach program, Tom Bell met with Fr. Dave and Regina Campbell. Fr. Dave would like Regina to come to St. Mildred Church and present an update on St. James Church and how St. Mildred can partner with St. James through our Outreach program.

Deacon Jerry Fatica presented some very encouraging comments about St. Mildred Church. He wanted to acknowledge how the Church is reaching out to parishioners through the Parish survey and other events and how the parishioners are responding with positive feedback. The parishioners feel encouraged that they can communicate with Fr. Dave and Pastoral Council members and receive answers to their questions and concerns. As Deacon Jerry pointed out, 2-way communication is very important for the success of St. Mildred Church and especially for new parishioners entering our Church. Deacon Jerry emphasized that St. Mildred has been known for years as a friendly Church and we continue to build on that friendly recognition with liturgical and one on one communication. Marianne McCarty pointed out that Fr. Dave is building excellent communication through morning coffee with parishioners. There has been much positive feedback from parishioners who enjoy speaking one on one with Fr. Dave in a relaxing morning coffee atmosphere. Fr. Dave would like to build on the communication platform by offering a pancake breakfast after the first Saturday Mass. Fr. Dave has offered to make the pancakes.

Next Meeting

Quarterly Ministry Updates

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 7:45 pm by Bob Hedelund and Fr. Dave Miller offered a closing prayer. The next Pastoral Council meeting will be held in the St. Mildred conference room at 6:00 pm on Monday, September 9, 2024.

Minutes Submitted by: Art Diani

Minutes Approved by: Pastoral Council

Minutes Approved and Accepted by: Fr. Dave Miller