

Advisory Council Notes
Jan. 7, 2009

Members Present: Fran, Karen, David, Mark, Peg, Kathleen, Debbie, Tony, Richard, Suzanne, and Doug

Special Guest Speaker: Jim Crosby, Dir. Of Religious Education

Doug started with prayer, followed by everyone sharing responses to the discussion question, "Where do you hope to see the light of Christ in the coming year?"

Jim's Presentation.

Jim presented to the council a list of his responsibilities as Dir. Of Religious Education. He provided us with a handout, enumerating his tasks and what they entail. I will list each responsibility on the handout, followed by any additional points made in the meeting.

1. RCIA. Of the 11 participants, 3 are Xavier students.
2. Children's Liturgy of the word.
3. Tuesday evening rel. education. Program sees smaller numbers these days, due to fewer churches involved.
4. Summer rel. education program. 2 weeks long, 4 hrs a day. Alt. to Tues. night program. Both #3 and #4 conducted off site. As a tradeoff for facility use, Jim and his volunteers do most of the administrative work.
5. Baptism program. Jim commented that this has been a happy surprise to him. His 2 hour meetings with the parents have become a great opportunity for Jim to get to know the families on a more intimate level.
6. First Eucharist program. Includes Tues. night kids, Summer program kids and take home rel. ed. Kids.
7. First Reconciliation program. New opportunity for the kids in the program: have their first reconciliation incorporated into the mass celebration.
8. Vacation Bible School. Very time consuming. Kathy Kohl integral to preparation. Loads of volunteers involved.
9. Family Mass. Felt process and result improved each time it was done.
10. Intergenerational Gatherings. Offshoot of 2 wk. summer program. Aim was to take what was learned in 2 wks. and keep it present throughout the year. Has not been as intergenerational as hoped. Added Advent wreath making to list, with great turnout.
11. *Confirmation
12. *Take home rel. ed. Program. #11 and #12 added to Jim's list during the meeting.

Jim also listed on his handout the number of volunteers involved in each program.

Questions put to Jim from the agenda:

1. What is going well?

- A. Process of information gathering on new ideas. Jim feels that new ideas are welcomed in the parish. People are eager to offer insights and develop ideas into programs that are beneficial to the parish.
 - B. Volunteer Response. Always plenty of help. Ex. Of RCIA: Asked a number of people to be speakers for Thurs. night meetings, almost all have responded positively.
 - C. Family Masses. New idea that many have taken responsibility for and contributed their time and talents.
 - D. RCIA. Numbers of people involved, both candidates and volunteers, are good. Depth of the conversation is very good.
2. What would Jim like to see happen?
- A. Work more with parents on their own faith journey. Would like to see the idea of parents being the primary educators be pushed more. Children benefit the most when they witness their parents living a faith filled life. When parents nurture their own faith journey, kids see this and are inspired to do the same. Must be careful not to present this as a burden to parents, but as a faith building opportunity for their family.
 - B. Kathy Kohl. Jim mentioned how valuable she is to him and the religious ed. program. Would love to have more of her time for the rel. ed. program, realizing ½ of her time is spent in other administrative areas.
 - C. Facility Space. Would like to have additional space available to programs. Realizes there would be a tradeoff between the ease and convenience of having our own facilities, and the relationships with other parishes that may end if their facilities are no longer needed.
3. What are some obstacles or limitations?
- A. Amount of evening time dedicated to job. A lot of programs involve evenings; sometimes hard to manage.
 - B. Physical Work Space. Using other facilities can be a blessing and a burden.

Other questions or points raised with Jim:

-Does not have a general template or format for operation of all programs. Each program may call for a different approach. Ex. Of rel. ed. and the use of the Spiral method of teaching; same topics every year, more depth added each year.

-RCIA broken into 4 major areas:

1. Catechism
2. Liturgical. Symbols and ritual.
3. Community. Encourage involvement.
4. Social Justice/Outreach. Get involved with Social Justice activities.

The point was made that this breakdown can be a good fit any programs running in the parish. Addresses the struggle for balance between information and formation.

-Jim is coming to appreciate his role as a mentor to all in the parish: kids, parents, volunteers.

-2 or 3 members of Advisory have gone thru RCIA. All good things to say about it.

-How to better explain particulars of mass to kids? How to teach parents to teach kids about mass?

-Practicing Catholics are welcome to RCIA.

-Bellarmine has handled new people in staff positions very well. Jim, Sue, and Jeff have all had big shoes to fill, high expectations. Transitions have gone very well with new ideas welcomed. Is a strength of the parish.

-Jim would like to see the phrase "Faith Formation" used instead of "Religious Education."

Communication Audit. Richard still waiting for information from Tom Schick. No new info to report.

Lenten Series Handout. Richard presented a handout detailing three nights of Christian Spirituality. Everyone very happy with the speakers and the topics.

- A fourth evening is also planned, although it is not a direct part of the Lenten Series. A Labyrinth Walking Meditation is planned for March 30th, in the Cintas Center ballroom. It is planned as a meditative, introspective ending to winter and Lenten seasons.

Other points raised:

-Should Bellarmine offer more directed programming for married couples and parents?

-Should Bellarmine ask for volunteer help in offices? People may have time and talent to offer in administration of parish. Find a balance bet. Benefit of available help and the cost of teaching volunteers the workings of the parish.

-Website help. Phil Roberto is very interested in donating his talents to the parish where the website is concerned. He is proposing a system that would be very user friendly. It would allow a number of people (access will be limited to certain people) to update the site as new info comes available. Presently, everything has to be funneled thru Liz, placing impossible time requirements on her. The new system would spread around responsibilities, therefore keeping the site more up to date. Mark is experienced with the proposed system and very much in favor of it. Mark is willing to bring in an example of the system to better explain to advisory. We could also have Phil come to a meeting and explain his ideas. David will look to set up lunch with Richard and Phil.

-Staff member responsibilities. Would also like to have Sue and Jeff come to a meeting and talk as Jim did today.

-Next meeting is Feb. 4th, and Debbie will be scribe.