

Bellarmino Chapel Advisory Committee
Wednesday, October 8, 2008
Meeting Minutes

In Attendance: Fran Harmon, Karen Brandstetter, Suzanne Kammer, Mark Stockman, Kathleen Pfahl, David Kitchings, Peg Dillon, Debbie Weber, Richard Bollman, Doug Brausch, Tony Dardy

Absent: None

Reflection Time

Each member spoke of his or her “grace” experience from the weekend retreat of the Advisory Committee, Social Justice Committee and Finance Committee, as well as any gifts, visions, encouragements or hopes that arose for the next year from the retreat. I feel the richness of the comments warranted sharing them in the minutes. However, due to the personal nature of the sharing, I will not provide names next to the comments.

- Gratitude for being a member of a catholic community that focuses on social justice, is open to others, has wonderful homilies and liturgical expression, and has a strong communal sacrament.
- The unity of spirit, community and mission.
- The sense of acceptance and joy that is at the core of the community.
- Gratitude that Bellarmine is a welcoming community. A sense of hope. The nourishment of community, and people are voicing the need for more spirituality.
- The commitment to faith in our community and learning to live it daily.
- Feeling welcomed and belonged. A room full of opportunities.
- The vulnerability that people are willing to share with each other in the community. The seeking of faith development.
- Amazed at the difference of the liturgies between now and 15 years ago. The focus on justice. The community is seeking more faith development, but it is important to remember that the community is starting from a position of faith - this is a blessing.
- Touched by the amount of desire in the community and the deep places it came from. A “spirit of desire” - this felt like a pivotal moment. A gospel-centered spirituality and ministry. The liberated, inward journey we are learning in the community.
- The presence of the people and the intensity of this presence was impressive. The commitment to social justice. The growth of the social justice core team. We may be on the verge of something different.
- Enjoyed the opportunity to be involved and to get refocused after the summer. The talk of the need for adult formation raised some new awareness.

Adult Faith Formation Meetings

Richard and Karen led a series of meetings and dinner with parishioners to gain an understanding of what the parish may be seeking in regards to faith formation. From the meetings, Richard came away with these key areas:

1. Appreciation of meeting together about our losses and changes as a result of aging in the light of faith formation.
2. A new desire for a life of prayer.
3. A deeper study of the Bible.
4. A core team to pay attention to adult faith formation
5. A structure to carry “Sunday” thru the rest of the week - the discipline of discipleship.

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6. Ignatius procedure for appreciating grace.

Based on this list, the group discussed several of the items under the following pretense, "What do we claim for ourselves in reading this and what do we see in fellow parishioners."

1. Appreciation of meeting together about our losses and changes as a result of aging in the light of faith formation.

- Suzanne spoke of how her past experience with prayer meetings had been helpful.
- David stated that in his opinion, people were clearly requesting fellowship around the issues related to aging. People wanted to share in a safe place. We do not need to step lightly around the issue of aging. Those aging know they are aging and want to talk about it. We could start this type of support immediately.
- Mark said it is about sharing with others through the common experience. Some could be concerned about putting others out. But when you are with others who share a common experience, you are more willing to share.
- Peg spoke of how there is a lot of change and a lot of loss. However, everyone experiences that a little differently. It can be difficult to talk about. There is loss related to retirement and losing a job. Workshops on retirement within a religious community could be helpful.
- Richard stated that there is a meeting on November 22nd to discuss this issue. The meeting will be held by Ken CZillenger and it will be a starting point for a group to begin discussing the issues around aging and the expected and unexpected changes that occur during the aging process. Richard also encouraged the parish to look at doing things with other parishes in this area.

2. A new desire for a life of prayer.

The group had a lengthy discussion around the dichotomy of "head vs. heart" that can occur in faith and prayer. Further, as a group, we tried to gain a better understanding of the challenges that occur when trying to pray.

- Suzanne again talked about the past prayer groups she had been a part of and how these groups seemed to be more heart based. The groups were less structured and people shared about what was going on with them at that moment.
- Fran questioned how well catholics can pray from their heart. She referenced her own small faith community that was personal and intimate, but still seemed to be based on intellectual discussion. She is seeking more heart talk.
- Richard mentioned trying story telling and dialogue as an impetus to heart-based prayer instead of being topic focused. He also stated that the issue of a deeper prayer life came up in three different meetings so there is a need to be addressed.
- Kathleen spoke of a newly formed prayer group that was started based on shared issues. This was more conducive to "heart-based" sharing versus her small faith group that felt more intellectual.
- Tony stated that the desire for prayer is present in the parish, but the participants must feel comfortable or the sharing will not occur. People must feel safe to be vulnerable.
- David stated that in his opinion, true prayer involves removing your armor in front of God - being truly vulnerable - then you can start to experience the grace and relief that comes from prayer. This can be very difficult to do in a group environment. As such, we can resort to a heady, intellectual spirituality.

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- Karen talked about that when you practice a life of vulnerable prayer, you become more comfortable with experience. Also, at times, we learn that the Spirit will pray for us when we do not know how.
- Doug spoke of his own prayer life being more intellectual, but he has experienced times of vulnerability in his personal prayer group.
- Debbie spoke of praying through action and prayer by seeing the suffering Christ. However, she is also capable of sitting quietly and praying in a contemplative manner.
- Karen gave a wonderful analogy from the "Secret Life of the Unborn Child." Parents learn to communicate with their children in utero. Prayer can also be like this. When other people are praying for you - people you do not know or have not met - you can develop an awareness that you are connected with another person to God through prayer.

In the end of this discussion, the group was left with the question of "how do we get past the 'head' part of praying and into the heart."

3. A deeper study of the Bible.

We did not discuss this issue.

4. A core team to pay attention to adult faith formation

We did not discuss this issue. However, Richard is collecting names of people who may be interested in being on this committee.

5. A structure to carry Sunday thru the rest of the week - the discipline of discipleship.

We did not discuss this issue. However, Richard asked committee members to ask other parishioners at the services how they might do this.

6. Ignatius procedure for appreciating grace.

Richard is considering an 8-week retreat titled "Praying with St. Ignatius." He has been reviewing the material and feels this would be a provocative series to do first with a small group of parishioners. He provided a handout of the series for the group to review.

Richard also handed out a sheet providing details of an adult faith formation workshop with Tom Zanzig for the committee to review and consider.

Lenten Series

Richard provided a draft overview of the Lenten series for 2009 in the form of a handout. The focus of the Lenten series would be prayer. The speakers would have two objectives: speak from personal experience, and lead the group in prayer.

Mark suggested that we offer childcare during the lenten series to help increase turnout. We can contact Xavier students and older high school students whose families attend Bellarmine.

Several names were recommended for speakers.

- Paul Nitter may be willing to come back for a weekend to speak. His focus is on the eastern approach of prayer - praying with the Bhudda.

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- Franjesca Thompson
- Jesuit Martin - praying with the saints
- Brennan Hill - praying with the saints
- Mike Grahams is too busy
- Mark Friedman regarding prayer and music
- John Trokien

Communication Audit

Karen handed out an email from Tom Schick that provided an overview of a communication audit. The committee members were asked to read this and provide feedback at our next meeting.

November 5, 2008 Meeting

- Fran provided an overview to new members about taking minutes and providing an opening prayer.
- Peg Dillon volunteered to take minutes and provide the opening prayer at the next meeting.