

Advisory Committee Meeting 12/3/08

Present: Peg, Richard, Tom Schick, Doug, Debbie, Mark, Kathleen, Fran, Tony, David, and Suzanne

**Tom Schick came to answer our questions about having Bellarmine do a communications audit.**

It would take approx. three months once we start the process. First would be interviews of Richard and the staff, then additional interviews, and then four focus groups of 6-10 people. The following people would need to be represented in each group: 1 older individual or from a couple with grown children, 1 person raising a family, 1 young single, 1 more mature single (incl. religious). The last phase would be to use the info gained from the process to do a broad survey of the congregation disseminated to 700 families, 1000 adults. Before it would be presented to the congregation, the staff could review it and give input. The survey would be qualitative, not quantitative, meaning there would be no “hard data” to analyze mathematically.

Also, someone experienced would need to do “direct eyeballing” of the current modes of communication to conclude how they can be more effective.

The Finance Ctte. would like to have this audit done in plenty of time to take it into consideration while planning the budget for next fiscal year (by April or May), in case any significant needs surface that would require money to be budgeted.

Tom Schick and Karen Hurley both have PR backgrounds, and could recommend someone to do this and to oversee the whole process. Since Debbie Weber has experience doing similar types of audits, Tom will enlist Debbie’s help to come up with someone to oversee the audit; another name of a parishioner with PR experience is Karen RingswaldEgan (this is the correct spelling!) Tom’s contact info is: ph.# xxx-xxxx, email [schick@xavier.edu](mailto:schick@xavier.edu), if we think of any other parishioners who might help. Tom will report back to Richard when someone is found to oversee the audit.

It would be very much worth the investment to get outside people to do it. Tom projects that the materials cost would certainly be less than \$1500. In terms of saving money, perhaps some grad students can do part of this on a volunteer basis. Tom is going to have access to XU math grad students this coming semester

Possibly other churches have done audits of this type and we could find out from them what worked and what didn’t so we don’t reinvent the wheel. Dan Andriaco is the director of communication for the diocese; he might have some info on this.

In order to make this survey as constructive as possible, we could phrase it as “how can we deepen our relationship with each other?” It could survey not just satisfaction, but growth, too. What we are trying to do is surface our assumptions that drive our communication patterns.

We could choose to share the findings with the parish, at large, in two ways. One way would be not to give the raw data, in total, to the parish, but to analyze it and share the primary findings with the parish. The other way would be to share all the raw data so people who are in the minority on an issue could see that their concerns are confined to them, only. The latter might prevent people from thinking we are going to “fix” all their problems. We may find that some people are feeding off of blaming “the parish” or the staff. The staff has a fiduciary duty to make sure that they are leading the parish well. The audit may not “improve” things according to anybody’s standards, but it is just an attempt to help the staff lead as well as possible

It might be helpful to have a mission statement for this process, pointing out that this is a spiritual process not a list of things that need to be “fixed”. We would be going from a “rules-based” process to a “principals-based” process.

Possibly, there could be a follow-up next year to track our progress.

**David gave a report about a visit by Fr. Grammer**, the American Assistant to the Jesuit Superior in Rome. He came because there is going to be a new Provincial Superior here and he wanted to find out about our parish in order to help focus the new Superior’s duties.

**We discussed Tom Zanzig’s bullet points from his talk “Adult Faith Formation: If It *IS* Broke, Let’s Fix It!”**

The old paradigm was Adult courses, but what people really want is a web of connections, to foster a sense of covenant and embrace the gift of God.

If people go to another parish, that is *their* “larger life”.

A strong congregation flows from a rich liturgical life.

One sees some people being very committed and engaged, but some are not. We want to engage them, reach them. Some are negatively engaged and take pleasure in criticizing. They do not try to be proactive and take part in a process to address their concerns.

How do we retain individual disciples? Community-based spiritual direction. This is largely why Richard was hired. The rest of the staff agrees this is how people get engaged.

### Practical principles

#5 – spiritual direction, not education. We are very good at this, as a parish. The priests do not wag their fingers at the congregation, they tell their stories. The staff and, generally, the parishoners are good at this, too.

#6 – we do have many seasonal and short-term opportunities for spiritual growth, such as Richard’s current Ignatian prayer retreat, Joan Gates and Susan Claussen’s winter retreat on

outside world/inner world, and Ken Czillinger's group on transitions. The latter might continue, but it was left open for the group to decide; it came out of the conversations after mass when people voiced a need for fellowship around the transitions that come with aging.

#7 – the Racism and Environmental Cttes are examples of ongoing programs that are self-directed and self-sustaining

#8 – Encouraging seekers to “private study” – like in Richard's Ignatian retreat, participants are receiving support and instruction about how to pray with scripture. We also have the advent and lent booklets available. And when someone comes to Richard or to other staff, they are directing them to resources. We may need a person to take this on as their main job. It is the parishoner's responsibility to maintain their own prayer life, but how does Home Depot handle it?

**The following is a summary (from Richard) of a discussion among the staff on the subject of staff development which was prompted by our discussion of #8 above:**

Zanzig's material continues to grip the members as we talk, and the discussion, which began late, went overtime. We arrived back at something that came up this past summer in our hiring of a person for “Faith Formation” and social justice. What is our staff operational mode as “spiritual companions” in the parish? What is the nature of our presence to people? Operational? Professional services? Or something deeper and a bit different? On the model of Home Depot (You can do it, we can help), are we all on the same page when we walk the aisles of our home depot plant here, expecting people to be looking for something, intent on what it might be, and able to assist in a variety of ways and levels as a kind of home depot team?

**The next meeting will be January 7<sup>th</sup>. Doug will prepare a prayer and be the scribe.**

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