

## **Minutes of St. Jerome Pastoral Council Meeting for November 8, 2010**

### **In attendance:**

#### **Pastoral Council**

Father Dave, Father Joe, Regina Flaherty, Tom Reitano, Bob Desimone, Alex Sgoutas, Dick Maiberger John Davis, Florence Loch, Pat Olson, Beth Olson, Katie Corasaniti, Tom Wagner, Greg Vetter, Moira Barber, and John Turchick

#### **Social Concerns Committee**

Annette Maiberger, Sheila Reitano, Francine Mansanger, Bill Halstead, Barbara Bagnato, Georgia Smith, Sandy Billings, and Dan Loch

Katie Corasaniti led the council in Prayer.

### **Connecticut Sponsoring Committee**

Forgoing the proposed agenda, the meeting was immediately introduced to Pat Spear and Father Reggie Norman, Pastor of Blessed Sacrament Church in Bridgeport. The entire meeting was spent introducing and discussing the Connecticut Sponsoring Committee and St. Jerome's forthcoming role in the organization.

Mr. Spear began with a general introduction of himself. He spent seven years with the Catholic Campaign for Human Development in Appalachia and the South before deciding to take the training to become an organizer of groups himself. Now he is a community organizer for 29 Connecticut churches from Milford to Norwalk in a group called the Connecticut Sponsoring Committee consisting of clergy from the 29 churches and about 200 laypeople. He invited St. Jerome's to participate in this group.

The Connecticut Sponsoring Committee began as a New Haven organization and won several significant neighborhood successes which Mr. Spear detailed for us (e.g., banning liquor sales near a local school).

Mr. Spear asserted that the two principles of Catholic social action are

1. charity to the needy and
2. power and politics.

With these principles in mind, the Connecticut Sponsoring Committee hopes to give birth to a new political group of 40 churches to exercise power (i.e., the ability to act) in a union that goes public in conjunction with government and political leaders.

The process the Connecticut Sponsoring Committee uses at first in a series of 10- to 20-person "house meetings" to listen to people's concerns, identify issues, and bring them to the attention of their congregations. If there is a commonality of issues, the communities work together on a wider, broader level. "What's bothering you?" and "What's on your mind?" are the questions asked at these house meetings, about 260 of which have been conducted thus far.

The Connecticut Sponsoring Committee has three goals:

1. build leadership
2. build capacity / power / clout
3. build self-interest

Mr. Spear explained that the Connecticut Sponsoring Committee was now in its pledging phase and that churches were making pledges of \$500 to \$5,000 to the organization. Annual dues would be 1% of a church's operating budget.

After Pat Spear introduced the organization, Father Reggie spoke briefly on his commitment to the Committee and the positive effect on his Parish. He also further tied in the importance and strength of growing together in a Faith based community. He enforced that the Committee will train Parishes to unite and trust each other and how to utilize their skills within a Parish. Father Reggie's Church has grown in strength and momentum as they work to build their community. He stressed that when an issue is approach from a united front, the effect is more substantial.

At the encouragement of Pat Spear, the council broke into a ten-minute, hands-on "house meeting" where each person paired with another member and discussed who directly influenced their Faith. After reconvening, Pat stated this activity was similar to the initial stage of joining the Committee and house meetings are simply an open conversation of Faith and the needs of the community.

After Father Reggie and Pat Spear completed their open discussion of the Connecticut Sponsoring Committee, Father Dave asked Pastoral Council members to voice their opinion on joining as a Parish. There were positive feelings as well as hesitation. Father Dave rallied for a core group of 10 individuals to volunteer to serve as the initial level of volunteers to begin the house meetings and attend planning meetings with Pat Spear. Father Dave was able to acquire 10 volunteers.

Tom Wagner raised a notion that we move forward with the initial process with Pat Spear, but that we reconvene in six months' time to discuss progress and feelings. A vote was taken to accept this notion and majority ruled in favor of "yes".

The next Pastoral Council Meeting will be held on Monday, Dec. 13, 2010.

Father Dave concluded the meeting with Prayer.

Respectfully Submitted,  
*Katie Corasaniti*  
Secretary

### **Update**

On behalf of Dan Loch, following the meeting: Father David found out that St. Jerome's Parish would be asked to contribute about \$5,000, and, in fact only \$2,500 at first until the organization is founded officially.