

## **Minutes of St. Jerome Parish Council Meeting December 12, 2011**

### **In attendance:**

Father Dave, Regina Flaherty, John Turchick, Alex Sgoutas, Karen Christensen, Dan Loch, Beth Olson, Katie Corasaniti, Tom Wagner, Kathy Coyne, Bill Mottolese, John Davis, Dick Auwarter.

Kathy Coyne led the Council in Prayer before the meeting commenced. Dan Loch provided refreshments.

**Minutes of the November 14, 2011 meeting were reviewed and approved.**

### **PASTOR'S REPORT**

Father Dave advised that the focus of this meeting was to be a discussion of reactions to the CONECT founding meeting. He then first gave a brief update on the following activities:

- **Christmas Wreaths and Candles**

At Fr. Dave's request, Karen Christensen provided a final summary on this successful fund raising activity that she initiated and managed. It involved a lot of hard work and follow up and all present thanked and commended Karen for her efforts. 310 wreaths were sold, 281 were pre-ordered, and \$2,500 profit was made. About \$1,500 was made on sales of candles.

- **Buildings and Grounds - Proposed Addition**

A final rendition of proposed plan B with a larger outdoor area and planters are to be made available for viewing and comments by our parishioners in the main hall on two evenings and then posted on our hallway bulletin board. Next step would be to get the Bishop's approval. The approval process is lengthy and with many guidelines that need to be followed. In response to Dick Auwarter's question regarding funding and timing, Fr. Dave said that more details would be forthcoming. If all goes well, fund-raising would not start before next summer or fall.

- **Finances**

Fiscal year to date results are encouraging and positive so far and much better than for the same period of last fiscal year. About \$20,000 has been received via the special Debt Relief envelope included with the pastor's annual financial report to the parish. On October 31, 2010 the parish Profit and Loss Statement was at a negative \$41,000. This year on October 31 the parish is at a plus \$4,000.

- **Emmaus**

This year Emmaus will be later, on February 10,11, and 12. Upwards of 20 teens are expected to attend. Beth Olson is the rector and Diane Turchick is the vice-rector.

- **Giving Tree**

The parish Giving Tree again is a big success as anyone can notice from the many gifts for Julie's Kids and Christian Community Action children placed around the tree in the sanctuary.

### **CONECT (Congregations Organized for a New Connecticut)**

It was agreed that it was not necessary to have Pat Speer attend our meeting as originally intended. Fr. Dave and Dan gave a brief review of the CONECT Founding event that took place on November 30<sup>th</sup> at the Cathedral of The Holy Spirit in Bridgeport, CT. Sixty two St. Jerome parishioners attended in a packed auditorium (1,458

attended from some 24 Catholic, Protestant, Jewish congregations) with some of us having to sit on steps or stand.

Fr. Dave also referred to his "Random Thoughts" column that appeared in our Bulletin the first week of December addressed to all parishioners, which well explained CONECT, its background, purpose and results to date and the reasons and scope of our involvement. He also mentioned his December 8, 2011 letter to those attending the event that explained in more detail our participation and set up church hall evening meetings of Jan. 11 and 17 for parishioners who attended. In addition reference was made to a positive article in the December 1st edition of the *Connecticut Post* newspaper describing the event in detail that had been distributed to participants by Dan. Fr. Dave explained that due to the important Nov. 30 founding event, certain decisions and commitments regarding our participation had to be made sooner than expected.

Nine of the thirteen council members at this meeting attended the CONECT Founding Event. Fr. Dave asked each one in turn for their reactions and any other comments. Overall the reaction from those who had attended was positive. The meeting was well attended and well run with a number of prominent Connecticut politicians present including Governor Malloy. The financial pledges, the progress and results to date on the agreed to platform issues and the "witness talks" regarding some of these issues were impressive and so was the sought-after commitment and support from the politicians present. Getting each congregation to the podium to announce itself and pledge its membership fee was somewhat time consuming and laborious, but was required to show the degree of initial support each congregation has for CONECT.

While agreeing with most of the positive comments particularly regarding what CONECT seeks to accomplish, a council member stated that we should recognize that we are getting into "politics" that often involves extreme positions. This may be a concern for certain St. Jerome parishioners who are on the opposite "political" end of where CONECT's parent (IAF) appears to be coming from. He also asked if CONECT's strong organization and leadership recruiting "skills" could result in drawing in and requiring an inordinate amount of time and effort from some at St. Jerome who decide to become active leaders, possibly taking away from other important and closer-to-home "good works" that are also needed by these same people.

A spirited discussion followed addressing and answering the above and other CONECT-related reactions including the agreed-to membership fee. In summary and as Fr. Dave has already stated, we will be finding out more and carefully moving ahead with our involvement, for which there are many good reasons. We are still early in the process. Additional meetings will be planned and held in January to get additional reactions from as many of our parishioners as possible and to try to give further explanations about all that is involved.

#### **Other Committee Communications, Succession, Record Keeping and Formation Actions**

Time did not allow further discussion on this topic or on the power point presentations. At our prior meeting the Manna House team came up as an example where there is a leadership transition and where they may need some help. As Fr. Dave suggested, we will consider inviting some of the key people to our January meeting to discuss their needs and if we can assist.

The next Parish Council meeting will be held on January 9, 2012

Respectfully submitted,

*Alex Sgoutas*

Secretary