

St. Francis of Assisi Parish – Triangle, VA

Pastoral Council Meeting Minutes

September 18, 2021, from 9:30 – 10:30 AM

I. Call to Order & Attendance – Zoom meeting.

- a. Members Present – Fr. John O’Connor (Pastor), Terry Danner (Chair), Jean Allen, Dr. Tricia Barber (Principal), John Hales, Maggie Eaves, Iván Nazario, Shelia Noble (Religious Education), Angelica Silva (Francis House), Pequitte Schwerin, Dan Sullivan.
- a. Members not Present – Phil Bongiorno, Clarence Neason, Ulli Vaerst.

II. Opening Prayer – Fr. John

III. Approval of Minutes – The minutes of the 23 July 2021 Pastoral Council were motioned for approval, seconded, and adopted as approved.

IV. Aid for Afghan Settlement – Francia Salguero

- a. The attached presentation was presented. There was considerable discussion.
- b. Francis House will be the liaison with the Quantico Base on the Afghan Refugee resettlement, working with DHS, Catholic Charities, and others.
- c. There is going to be a total of 5,000 housed at Quantico for the short term, at Camp Upshur.
- d. Among the many challenges are
 - Housing: Limited affordable housing in the area, particularly for large family groups, which include many of the Afghan families.
 - Resources: Transition is typically a 1–2-year process but depending on the circumstances of refugee admission, government funds can be rather limited. There is talk in Congress of adding funding for this crisis, but it is mired in the Congressional budget process.
 - Base access requires a CAC card, which most do not have, plus any volunteers on the base for the relief efforts require a background check. If you have base access and are willing to help, please drop a line to Francia at St. Francis House francias@stfrncis.org or 703 221 6344.
 - Translators: There is critical need for language speakers including Pashto, Urdu, Farsi (and relate Afghan Dari). There is a dire need for female translators

because of cultural norms. One other language is in demand, but she could not recall the language. While Dari/Farsi is the most common Afghan language there are over 40 languages across the country.

- Catholic Charities requested material donations, but now is unable to accept any more as they have exceeded storage capacity for them.
 - There will be needs for things such as Halal meat, clothing, etc. Lists for items may come from the base on short notice – However we need volunteers to be able to deliver items to the base, compliant with the standards above.
 - In addition to the Afghan refugees there is the normal processing of refugees via the US border with Mexico, and these will continue along with new clients post Covid and previous requirements still requiring help.
- e. Fr. John was contacted by the US Council of Catholic Bishops to help coordinate support for this effort.

V. Francis House Update – Francia Salguero

- a. Other than end of war Afghan Refugees, there is also a current surge of Haitians at the border.
- b. Clients are experiencing utility shutoffs along with housing evictions. Donations to help fund these requests are needed.
- c. ACTS and Salvation Army are overwhelmed with support requests.
- d. Many families are eligible to pick up morning and noon meals from schools at no charge, which has reduced the number of families collecting food from a normal of 110 down to about 30 to 40 per week.
- e. There is critical need for hands on volunteers to support breakfast on Saturdays at the Shelter on Potomac Mills Rd in Woodbridge. Currently Francia is personally carrying a lot of this load. Please contact her if you are willing to help.
- f. Requests for monetary donations may come on short notice and gift cards are not as practical to meet the needs. Also, many businesses have discontinued issuing them during the pandemic.

VI. Hispanic Ministry Update – Iván Nazario

- a. Fr. George added a button to the Parish website that converts the entire website to Spanish (some of the film clips or attached items are not translated). This is a “big win” for the Spanish speaking community.

- b. He met with Sheila Noble on RCIA and is putting the finishing touches to the schedule, they have 5 or 6 interested already, and announcements will be made to encourage others.
- c. RCIA will be virtual for both English and Spanish speaking students, with classes beginning 7 and 8 October respectively
- d. Plans are still being made for bi-lingual Mass on 31 October

VII. Pastor's Remarks – Fr. John

- a. Mass attendance is still low, hopes are that it may improve as RE starts.
- b. Collections have not returned to pre-pandemic levels, and a reminder may need to be announced to parishioners to continue parish support.
- c. Given the weekly cash flow needs, plans are under way for a fall appeal.
- d. Security concerns were expressed regarding the upcoming local protests near the Capitol in DC on 18 September.
- e. In the Diocese over 100 employees need to be tested for Covid every week or get vaccinated.
- f. Most all St. Francis staff is vaccinated
- g. Fr. John will meet with the bishop regarding his resignation from the John Paul II School Board.
- h. The merger of the US OFM Provinces is slated to take place in 2023, but there is no update on progress at the present time.

VIII. Finance Council Report – Marv Floom

- a. Facilities.
 - Delvis Ramirez is now working at the school exclusively for Dr Barber. Shared parish/school duties such as snow removal; Christmas/Easter set-up and grounds tasks etc., will be handled by Julian Brooks, parish facilities manager.
 - Julian Brooks will remain as parish facilities manager and as staff expert in mechanical; plumbing; electrical; etc.
- b. The St. Francis of Assisi Annual Appeal will take place and is scheduled for Oct/Nov. Goal is established at \$200,000 vs 2019 goal of \$183,000.

- c. The Diocese Annual Mass Attendance count will take place again in October. Ushers will be counting parishioners as they enter church during the weekend Masses.
- d. We withdrew \$50,000 in DIAL operating savings in September to support cash flow deficit and cover cumulative shortfalls in weekly collections over the past few months. The parish had hoped to preserve the DIAL funds (much of which was conversion of the Payroll Protection Plan funds to a grant) for capital expenses, vs weekly operating costs. Based on present information, our cash flows should stabilize in October and increase in the second fiscal quarter.
- e. The new maintenance tractor that was purchased has arrived.

IX. School Report – Dr. Barber

- a. While there have been a few changes Enrollment for the Fall term stands the same at 266.
- b. Parent visits are by appointment only and only after school hours.
- c. All staff are vaccinated, except one, who will be required to test weekly.
- d. All students as well as the teachers will be required to continue wearing. Three-foot social distancing will be the norm. Students that are old enough will be vaccinated.
- e. During the first four weeks of the school year, four students had to be quarantined. Two others may be quarantined based on contact tracing.
- f. Parent Teacher conferences will likely be virtual.
- g. The new school team name will be “The Friars”
- h. The parish will not issue any religious exemption to Covid Vaccination

X. Parish Grotto / Labyrinth – Terry Danner

- a. An October date will be set for a clean-up of the area.
- b. Trimming in the grotto area may be added to the present maintenance contract. The secular Franciscans have also discussed this upkeep as part of their ministry.

XI. Pastoral Council update – Terry Danner

- There will be new officer elections in November, this affords new officers a one year overlap before the existing officers’ terms expire.

XII. New Business –

- a. Sheila Noble noted 381 were registered for RE, the vast majority on Sundays.
- b. Pequitte noted that there will be an Interfaith International Day of Prayer for Peace video on You Tube which is linked to the Parish Website. Click on it at 3 PM on Sunday.
- c. There will be a voter registration drive on 25/26 September at the Parish.
- d. The news from Fr. Tony in Lima about the Sister Parish has been dire as the pandemic crisis increases. There will be special collection on 16-17 October. Fr. Tony will prepare and send a video indicating the great need. The video will be included on the parish website.

X. Old Business – None

XI. Next Meeting – The next meeting will be 16 October at 9:30 AM on Zoom.

XII. Closing Prayer – Offered by Dan Sullivan

XII. Adjournment –10:30 am.

Attachments:

Aid for Afghan Resettlement Presentation