

**Parish Council Meeting Minutes**  
**January 2023**  
**(Approved March 7, 2023)**

**Roll Call**

*Present:* Rocky Marsh, Noah DeMoss (virtual), Grace DeMoss (virtual), Fred Chandler, Tim Nation, Andy Pike\*, Sharon Horvath\*, Patrick Price, Charles Williams, Janine Berkowitz, Geoff Ziegler, Karla Hudecek, Jose Samperio

*Absent:* Fr. Varghese, Matt Hayes, Jackson Herrera, Kate Erdel

**Approval of minutes from November 8, 2022 Meeting**

- Tim Nation moves to approve the minutes. Minutes are approved.

**New Business (planning)**

*i. Feedback from parishioners on plan:*

What was affirmed?

- The Parish Council seems to have a grasp as to what the parish wants and needs at this point.
- We need more community
- See page 3 for more affirmations

What is missing?

- More cohesion and communication between the different Masses
- Increasing Mass vibrancy (music, prayers of the faithful from the community, etc.) to draw in people and add in feelings of community
- See page 3 for more missing items

*ii. Input from Sharon Horvath\* and Andy Pike\* on integration of Laudato Si' into plan*

- Context: In 2015, Pope Francis released the Laudato Si'. It's about social crises, lack of dignity, poverty, ecological crisis, etc—he claims that they are all 1 crisis, and that integrating ecology and care of our neighbors is what we need to do to make things better.
- Context: In 2021, a group focused on Laudato Si' came up with a program of *how* to follow Laudato Si'
- Context: STA committed to that program.
- Laudato Si' goals are on pages 4-5
  - Overarching goal: Everyone asks/considers “how can sustainability be baked into every part of our school and parish?”
  - Sustainability and response to the cry of the earth
  - Response to the cry of the poor
    - Various ministries already do this, as well. Could we integrate this in with Laudato Si' intentionally?
  - Ecological Economics
    - Stewardship—how are we taking care of the building and resources that we already have—could this be a part of that official goal?
    - Intentional tracking energy use
    - By switching out the fluorescent lights to LED in the school, we save \$2,000 a year.
  - Adoption of Sustainable Lifestyles (primarily aimed at families)
  - Ecological Education (what and why are we doing what we do?)
  - Ecological Spirituality (wonder and awe of creation)
    - Goes along with spiritual growth goal about effective faith formation resources
      - We can/should include Laudato Si' in those resources
  - Community resilience and engagement (getting others on board, civic engagement)
    - Community engagement—promoting different ministries (offer ideas with an ecological slant)
    - School has also enrolled in the Laudato Si' program, so this could be a good opportunity for cohesion between parish and school

*iii. Review of Next Steps with the plan*

- Feb. 15— the goals and actions steps are to be completed by the task force using the common document

- \*There should be a shift of “open night” FROM to Stewardship TO Community Engagement on all planning documents henceforth
- Motion by Patrick Price: Every group should write a “why” statement on the planning document to make sure our action steps are aligned to our mission
  - No opposed– “why” statement should be added by February 15.

## **Noah DeMoss: Finance Committee**

### *i. Recent Financial report*

#### *ii. Follow-up on Archdiocesan audit report/recommendations*

- Conducted every 3 years
- Archdiocese has a list of procedures that they contact with an outside CPA firm to go into parishes to evaluate how the parishes are doing in terms of following the procedures
- Yay, Ithram–she did a great job!
- Main takeaway: There are things we need to improve, but none of them are giant red flags...many of them are common to many parishes. The meeting was not punitive, but rather a “here’s a list of things that can be tightened up.”
- We seem pretty understaffed in the parish center. We are asking *a lot* from Ithram and Cheryl, so we may need to add another parish staff member to try not to have these same findings each time. That being said, it’s not an urgent need.
- School also seems to need administrative help on day-to-day administrative tasks.

### **Other Pillar Reports and Additional Items of Interest.**

- How can we have more financial reporting to the parish council, as a whole?
  - Quarterly?
- Spiritual Life is doing a research study (survey) with IUPUI about the pandemic’s impact on our parish, what we learned from it, and how we’re still experiencing the pandemic. We will get \$1,500 over 2 years for it.

## **H. Ending Prayer: Tim Nation**

Future meetings 7-8:30 pm (unless otherwise noted) typically on the first Tuesday of the month, every other month.

March 7

May 2

August 1

\*guest speakers

## Missing/Affirmation Comments from the Parish

- Missing: Would like for parishioners to offer petitions during Mass. This was a unique aspect of St. Thomas that was very appreciated and helped to build a sense of community by letting you know what was happening in the lives of other parishioners.
- Missing: Did not see any discussion / highlighting of the DEI work done by parish / parishioners.
- Missing: Liturgy should be a vibrant part of parish.
- Missing: Would like to see effort to revive music ministry / draw in new participants.
- Missing: Update religious curriculum to be like other archdiocesan schools
- Would like to make other archdiocese schools like STA
- Clarifying prior comment, archdiocese has instituted religious testing in various grades and want to make sure that STA students are prepared and able to pass.
- Missing: Should have a more concerted effort to draw teenagers in and make them part of the church / activities aimed at that age group.
- Affirming: Inclusion of stewardship and community engagement
- Missing: Get more younger people involved
- Missing: Wealth of knowledge and experience in older members of parish. Would like to see effort to draw and draw that experience out / help us to understand what made the parish what it is. Not necessarily because we want to go back to that / replicate it, but it is important to understand and inform where we are and also to help draw those members back to the church.
- Affirming: Really liked the December 4 inclusion Mass. Great to see a full church with lots of energy and like the parish used to be. Want to try to bring everyone back and fill the church again
- Missing: Used to be a Vatican II church and we are losing some of those roots. Did not hear any discussion of Synodality and that approach. There is a lot of value there. This listening session is kind of like that. Pope Francis has spoken a lot on Synodality and it is a great way to engage the laity. We should do more with Synodality.
- Missing: Background on this document and effort. No discussion of why we are doing this and what prompted this to be done. What problem are we trying to address and why are we examining ourselves in this way. Seems to suggest more communication from Parish Council about what happening.
- Missing: Get more school parents involved in the parish. Lots of young school families and other young families invited by school families at the Gala. Would love to get them involved in the Parish.
- So many young school parents and their friends attended the Gala, we need to involve these parents, great resource (Bill Paradise)
- STA is a Vatican II parish, Synodality, 'listening' changes hearts, we need more connection (Donna Proctor)
- Liturgy and music ministry should be revived and more vibrant
- Keep the energy at the 'restart mass', need more calling outs to try to achieve this (Jane Watson)
- How does diversity fit into our parish?
- Gathering long time parishioners to share their history, this would be powerful. (Joe Connely)
- Religious testing in schools exists to make sure students are prepared for archdiocesan exam
- STA makes religion personal and special to students. Other schools should align with the way STA teaches religion (Bernie Paradise and another parishioner?)
- Getting teenagers and young families involved in ministries (Dottie Weidekamp)
- Sharing of petitions and intentions at start of mass like we used to (Pat Coffey)

January 3, 2023 Parish Council meeting  
Laudato Si' and STA Parish Plan

Laudato Si'

- Encyclical written in 2015 that addresses the inter-related ecological and social crises and calls on everyone to respond to the “Cry of the Earth” and the “Cry of the Poor”
- In Laudato Si', Pope Francis stresses “integral ecology” – the idea that caring for our neighbors and for our world must be integrated into all aspects of our lives.
- Urgent call to action: “Not an optional or secondary aspect of our Christian experience.”

Laudato Si' Action Platform (LSAP)

- An initiative developed in 2021 to enable all aspects of the church to put the principles of Laudato Si' into action
- STA enrolled in LSAP in February, 2022 and has committed to developing an action plan around the 7 Laudato Si' goals

Laudato Si' Goals (with a few illustrative examples)

1. The **Response to the Cry of the Earth** is a call to protect our common home for the wellbeing of all, as we equitably address the climate crisis, biodiversity loss, and ecological sustainability.
  - Protect the climate by assessing our parish use of resources (energy, water, waste management). Set up a system to monitor and track parish energy use and use the “Energy Star for Congregations” workbook to determine what actions would need to happen to reduce parish energy use by a measurable amount.
  - Protect biodiversity by planting native plants and protecting pollinators.
2. The **Response to the Cry of the Poor** is a call to promote eco-justice, aware that we are called to defend human life from conception to death, and all forms of life on Earth.
  - Provide support to our local and global community through the MLK Center, Boulevard Place Food Pantry, St. Vincent de Paul, Haiti ministry, Advent giving tree, and Socktober.
  - Raise awareness of racial and ecological justice issues in our community.
3. **Ecological Economics** acknowledges that the economy is a sub-system of human society and relies on the natural resources of our common home.
  - Practice good stewardship by maintaining buildings and monitoring for waste; encourage the purchase and use of sustainable materials.
  - Consider using the “Green Power” option on the electricity bill for part or all of our electricity use.
4. The **Adoption of Sustainable Lifestyles** promotes lifestyles of sufficiency rather than excess in the use of natural resources and energy.
  - Install programmable thermostats and light sensors in parish buildings so that spaces are heated, cooled and lit only when needed.
  - Encourage families to adopt simpler lifestyles by clearing out unwanted clothes, books, household goods. Let families or community members “shop” (at no cost) what is donated and work with community partners (St. Vincent de Paul, Indy Reads, Thrifty Threads) to take what is left.
5. **Ecological Education** fosters ecological awareness and transformative action.
  - Do a parish survey to find out where people are in their ecological conversion journey and what they would like to know more about. Set up workshops on topics such as home composting, solar energy, native plant gardening, lawn care alternatives, ethical investing, and green burials.
  - Combine educational events such as showing films or having a workshop with pitch-in dinners or lunches to promote parish community.
6. **Ecological Spirituality** recovers a religious vision of God’s creation and encourages greater contact with the natural world in a spirit of wonder, praise, joy and gratitude.
  - Celebrate the Season of Creation with prayer services and liturgies.
  - Provide resources or set up adult education opportunities to help people learn more about Laudato Si' and Franciscan theology.
7. **Community Resilience and Engagement** encourages community engagement and participatory action in ecological and social justice issues.
  - Share information about local, state and national environmental and social justice issues and opportunities for engagement such as signing letters to legislators, participating in Indiana Catholics for Creation (IC4C), and Bread for the World.
  - Set up opportunities for community actions such as tree plantings and clean-ups.

Overlap between identified STA priority issues and Laudato Si' goals

STA priority issues	Laudato Si' goals
Spiritual Growth	Ecological Spirituality
Stewardship (being good stewards of the resources and buildings we already have; consider sustainability when planning programs/events)	Response to the Cry of the Earth Adoption of Simpler Lifestyles Ecological Economics
Community Engagement (opportunity to connect with parishioners on topics of everyday relevance)	Adoption of Simpler Lifestyles Ecological Education Community Resilience/Engagement
STA School (opportunities to collaborate on shared goals)	(separate enrollment in LSAP)
Dialogue, Truth and Faith	Response to the Cry of the Poor Community Resilience/Engagement