

Minutes from Our First Meeting
Holy Redeemer
College Park
Disabilities Inquiry Meeting
October 15, 2018

Attending: Fr. Mark Smith; Terry Gorman, Rob & Monique Bourque; Mary O'Meara; Sheila Kast; Beth McAllister; Carol Lisa Hom; Valerie Bleau; Noreen Keane; Eileen Walters; Larry Hilliard; Paul Fontaine

A group of interested parishioners met for an inquiry session to discuss how Holy Redeemer Parish can become more accessible to persons living with disability, their families, and persons who are Deaf.

This was a first session to gauge the interest and needs within the parish, and to determine the best way to support persons/families living with various experiences of disability.

Those attending this initial gathering stated the following as experiences they are living:

Hearing Loss. Progressive hearing loss which would not require an Interpreter – rather a better sound system/working FM loop

Intellectual and Developmental Disability (IDD) - Access for Religious Education for children, Social Recreational opportunities for teens/adults, Spiritual Formation opportunities for late teens/adults. Supports for families with aging parents and adult children living with IDD.

Networking for Faith Based Housing opportunities (such as Rosaria Homes-
<http://rosariacommunitiesinc.org/>)

Mental Illness- Supports and resources (such as NAMI PG- National Alliance for Mental Illness of Prince Georges County) not only for persons living with Mental Illness themselves, but also to support care providers/family members.

Physical Access- Providing access to each space of the Holy Redeemer property (Four Seasons Room, Library, school, Mezzanine, BATHROOMS, Church - to include Sanctuary and accessible bathroom)

There was much discussion around how welcoming Holy Redeemer Parish is and the many examples of how Holy Redeemer has created access for persons who are Deaf, or who have a disability to participate in Religious Education, Liturgy (Interpreters), and the wooden ramps already built. It was clear that to be an accessible Church, there is still much work to be done. However, the welcoming hearts of the people of the parish, and all past efforts to include persons with disabilities, has always been a part of our parish culture, and we are all most appreciative.

Our discussion also made clear that disability ministry is not just ramps and Interpreters or access to adaptive Religious Education, but also recognizing the many hidden disabilities within our parish. There were self-advocates at this meeting to remind of this imperative aspect of the ministry (Carol, Sheila, Val).

There are things we have traditionally done well, yet have not created parish wide awareness around that ministry - such as access to adaptive religious education.

A few goals that were mentioned during our discussion:

Creating a more global awareness among the Holy Redeemer Parish Community around the experience of disability which touches many of our families in various ways. This greater awareness of disability will encourage and affirm other families who may not know their child can receive the Sacraments, to come forward. Additionally, this awareness may provide families living with like living situations to gather as community for fellowship, support and networking to access local disability services and supports (such as the Down Syndrome Network)

Highlighting the 40th Anniversary of the USCCB's Pastoral Statement on Disability. Create a "poster/flyer" to create awareness around the existence of this document- and to celebrate all the Church has done over the last 40 years - and dream where we as a HR Community might wish to go in the next 40 years. <http://www.usccb.org/beliefs-and-teachings/what-we-believe/catholic-social-teaching/upload/Pastoral-Statement-of-U-S-Catholic-Bishops-on-Persons-with-Disabilities.pdf> The Department of Special Needs Ministries will also be offering a webinar on this topic on November 9th at 12:00 noon- 1:00 p.m.. To join that webinar register for free with this link- [https://www.facebook.com/events/561983227589360/Come lunch and learn along with us!](https://www.facebook.com/events/561983227589360/Come+lunch+and+learn+along+with+us!)

Gather again in November to discuss the Pastoral Statement. Have our next Disability Inquiry Session in November to discuss the history and dream the future of what the Church, and HR Parish can do to support families. Date to be determined. Include the HRS in this discussion with all they have done to support students in a Catholic School setting.

White Mass. October 28th, 2018 at 11:30 a.m., The Cathedral of St. Matthew the Apostle The White Mass will be celebrated by Cardinal Wuerl next Sunday. This is an annual Mass which celebrates the giftedness of all the people of God, hosted by the Department of Special Needs Ministries. All participants in this Mass are persons living with disability. We encourage all HR families living with Disability, or are Deaf, to join us for this celebration of the GIFTS persons with Disabilities bring to the Church- and how they are not only recipients of the the Gospel message, they are also (by their Baptism) agents of Evangelization.

Holy Redeemer to host its own White Mass. The group discussed the possibility of hosting our own "White Mass" as a parish. It was suggested that this not be done at a "separate" Mass, but be held during one of the regularly scheduled Masses. One example of a parish celebration is the choice of one of the Epiphany Masses as is done at St. Francis Derwood. Many parishes in the ADW do host their own Community "White Mass" (with various names) which include persons with disabilities, or those who are Deaf, as readers, petition readers, altar servers, SMEs and gift bearers. This goal would require a great deal of planning and take time to ensure we have created enough awareness in the parish that all who wish to participate are able.

NEXT MEETING: November 2018- Date to be determined. Mary (O'Meara) will send out a "Doodle Poll" to find the best date for all who attended the October 15th Meeting. All are encouraged to "tell a friend" and bring a friend to the next gathering.