

REPORT OF THE OPEN MEETING AT ST. PIUS X PARISH HALL

Thirty four people participated in the open meeting held on Tuesday, June 28th, 2016. The meeting was called to order and led in an opening prayer by Fr. Earl Smith, SJ. The session was facilitated by Doreen Neville.

The opening exercise consisted of participants breaking into pairs to tell each other about a time when they felt connected to the parish in a meaningful way and what it was about the experience which was important to them. Several pairs shared their stories with the full group.

Common themes across the stories were:

- feelings of being welcomed, accepted and included;
- the experience of support, both pastoral and from fellow parishioners;
- the opportunity to be included and become involved in parish life.

Participants then broke into small groups to consider the future of our parish. The question posed was: "*What is your vision for a strong and vibrant parish and what kinds of things have to happen to realize that vision?*". The small groups selected a spokesperson to report on their discussions to the larger group. There was a fair degree of overlap in issues raised across the small groups. The most common points are summarized below:

Vision for a strong and vibrant parish includes a parish which:

- is financially viable/sustainable;
- is a supportive community, focussed on God, faith, fulfilment and fun;
- engages persons of all ages but especially the young;
- is inclusive; all persons are welcomed;
- encourages dialogue!
- consists of members who are prayerful and know their Christian Faith;
- reaches out to the sick and others in need;
- supports lay persons to carry responsibility for its management but it is administered by Jesuits;
- supports a strong pool of volunteers who are involved in parish activities;
- has a succession plan regarding leadership of parish activities.

Things that need to happen to realize the vision include:

- embrace change- we cannot survive the status quo;
- introduce sustainable practices that reduce costs and are "green" where possible;
- find out more about our parishioners - who they are , why they are or not participating in the parish life;
- reach out to those who are not regulars at mass or other parish activities;
- ensure people are welcomed with acceptance, especially those who have not always felt welcomed (LGBTQ, divorced/separated/non traditional families);
- organize support groups for vulnerable populations, including those with mental health issues;
- introduce and support other forms of prayer and faith based support, including the Ignatian Spiritual Exercises and interfaith celebrations;
- make our liturgies more upbeat and joyful;
- help people to explore their faith and deepen the value of a personal relationship with Christ. This includes participation in the sacraments;

- preserve and revitalize organizational memory (and our current ministries);
- focus on families of various configurations; provide supportive activities that engage children like arts and craft, involvement at Mass, music at 11:00 am Mass requires a broader selection; have a music program;
- offer social events after (outside) of Mass, some on-site (such as socials) and some off-site (such as hiking...)
- support the development of leadership skills in lay persons, especially women;
- improve communications and marketing activities. Channels of social media need to be explored, especially those that reach young people; develop our internet presence, update the website, podcast important homilies;
- explore how to make our building become more 'accessible'

The evening ended with a preliminary full group discussion of what it means to be a Jesuit parish - the characteristics of a Jesuit parish that are important and the things that must continue or need to start happening to make our parish more distinctively Jesuit. Some of the main points raised included:

A Jesuit parish is one which:

- is a faith COMMUNITY
- has a palpable energy around spirituality and the many ways that spirituality can be fostered and expressed in the daily mass and in everyday life;
- is committed to supporting faith development across a person's lifetime
- is flexible and responsive to the changing needs of the people in their community
- reaches out to and provides support to vulnerable populations (MacMoran Place, St. Anne Parish in Jamaica , Syrian refugee family).

In order to make our parish more demonstrably Jesuit, we need to:

- build on our already strong traditions around supporting vulnerable populations
- increase our focus on adult faith formation (such as the spiritual exercises workshop planned for this fall)
- engage youth in spirituality and regain their trust. The traditional avenue for this was the Catholic schools system (Gonzaga was a Jesuit high school) but new avenues will need to be developed as only one school in our archdiocese is a Catholic school in the Jesuit tradition of education (St. Bonaventure's College).

The evening ended with the facilitator indicating that a brief report of the meeting would be made available to the parish in the early fall. Father Earl noted that similar meetings with parish committees and other groups are planned for the fall in order to engage more members of the parish in the discussion of the future of our parish.