

1.0 Attendees

Council Members - Jack Urbanski, Kim Barnum, Bill Ryan, Stacey Ryan, Anne O'Connor, Veronica Hernandez, Larry Shepard, and Mary Dailey

Staff Members - Father Simmons, Lurine Kunschman, Sister Pat Glinka

Audience - There were approximately 60 Parish members in attendance. Sign in sheets were collected and are available for your review.

2.0 Summary

Bill Ryan opened the Town Hall meeting by discussing the presentation slides and notes from the presentation. He thanked all attendees for participating and attending the meeting. He invited attendees to provide feedback openly. Bill also thanked Father Simmons for all the hard work and stated that we would not be where we are without Father's dedication to his Parish.

3.0 Discussion Topics/Questions

The following topics and questions were raised at the Town Hall meeting:

1. Lack of a choir
2. Church bell tower
3. Financial report details
4. Loss of Parish members to St. Stephen and other nearby Parishes / Parent involvement
5. Youth Minister
6. General thoughts of the Parish by one member
7. Offertory
8. Using Youth Surveys to learn about the activities that would motivate youth to participate more

4.0 Discussion Details

1. Lack of a Choir

Pat Stilwell (Parish member) questioned the lack of a choir. Father explained there was a situation concerning payment for choir practice. Due to the situation, the person who led the choir decided not to pursue choir practices. Several parishioners expressed the need and their desire for a choir. They agreed it brings livelihood to masses. Parishioners agreed the Parish should consider funding a Cantor to lead the Parish and should increase the budget to afford choir practices. Father asked for volunteers to step up. Pat Stilwell was the only person who confirmed she would be interested in helping, but mentioned she will be unavailable for the next 6 weeks.

2. Church Bell Tower

Scott Spampinato mentioned that though the Church is located on a main road, it is hard to tell the building is a Catholic Church because it lacks the traditional Church Bell Tower. He suggested the Parish fund a tower to be built on top of the existing building. It was confirmed that the Church was initially designed with a bell tower. This part of the design was excluded during construction due to physical restraints. A few years ago, the idea of a bell tower was raised again and several members of the Parish investigated the possibility of construction of a bell tower. The Stewardship Committee still has copies of the plans that were created for the construction of a bell tower. This idea was not carried out due to the excessive cost (\$100,000). At that time, the Parish was not able to financially afford this cost. Many people agreed we should investigate the possibilities for constructing a bell tower further. Scott mentioned it may be more expensive since the Parish has been researching building an entirely separate entity. Perhaps the bell tower can be constructed on top of the existing building.

3. Financial Report Details

David Strittmatter discussed the Financial Report which is release every year in July. He stated that approximately 1/3 of collection funds have been lost over the last few years. It may appear as though we have a lot of money, but this is not necessarily accurate. There are many expenses. The financial report, which will be presented in July, includes costs for things that have to be done in the future. The financial report will provide a better idea of the money the Parish has in reserves.

4. Loss of Parish members to St. Stephen and other nearby Parishes

A Parish member asked if anyone has investigated why our Parish is losing people to other Parishes, such as St. Stephen. Many Parishioners agreed that the school may have some influence in the fact that our parish is losing members to St. Stephen. Members of the St. Stephen Parish are eligible for tuition discounts for children that attend the school. Lurine Kunschman stated that our Parish is trying to do as much as possible to retain youth involvement and to keep Parish members here at Holy Spirit. We are trying to hold more activities to encourage people to stay at this Parish. Unfortunately, the fact that St. Stephen has a school is not something we can easily compete with. We can only do the best with what we have at our Parish. Brian McCarthy confirmed that our Parish could use larger facilities, but there is a cost involved with using the local high school's gym and other facilities. Lurine also confirmed that she has had discussions with the Youth Director at St. Stephen and we are participating in more activities with that Parish. We are working together with St. Stephen to become a working unit. Sister Glinka is also on the mailing list at St. Stephen to obtain updates about events taking place at St. Stephen. Another Parish member mentioned that perhaps parents are more involved in Parishes like St. Stephen with a school presence because they stay involved in their children's' educations. Sister Glinka mentioned she is focusing on getting parents of CCD students more involved by holding events like the Family Dinner Dance, which is sponsored by the students' parents.

Several people did not think the presence of a school at St. Stephen was a barrier for us. He stated that St. Francis De Sales in Abingdon does not have a school, but has a great youth program so parishioners stay involved and active in that Parish.

One parent (Beth Kropez) stated that as a parent, she is overextended. She said many parents are just simply overextended. They don't participate in church activities because they are so busy with so many other activities and other children. She asked the Parish to avoid being discouraged by non-involved parents and suggested the Parish continue to offer activities for the youth as much as possible.

5. Youth Minister

Barbara Gillich expressed her positive experience at Holy Spirit. She has moved to Havre de Grace and will therefore not be as involved in the Holy Spirit Parish. She recommended the Parish consider hiring a Youth Minister (separate from Religious Education) that will focus on the vision of the Youth Ministry and will focus on our youth. As much as volunteers are appreciated, she feels that volunteers can only devote spare time. Volunteers cannot always devote a lot of time. She really urged our Parish to hire a Youth Minister.

6. General thoughts of the Parish by one member

One member of the Parish used the final slide of the presentation to share her thoughts of the Parish with other attendees. She likes the fact that the Parish is so friendly. She knows a lot of members on a first-name basis. She has worked with many of the Parish members on many projects and she enjoys that friendliness within the Parish. Her suggestion for an improvement was for Parishioners to be more open and continue to welcome new members. She thinks our

welcoming spirit is what will make people want to continue coming.

7. Offertory

Lawrence Hicks mentioned that it was not until his wife joined the Parish Council that he learned about the Maintenance envelopes. He thinks we need to educate people concerning the mass collections and what those funds are used for. He thinks the collections may have decreased in the last few months because people are not aware of the different ways they can donate.

8. Using Youth Surveys to learn about the activities that would motivate youth to participate

Gail Wilson suggested we create surveys for the youth to fill out. This way we can learn about the types of activities in which our youth are interested. Brian McCarthy mentioned that they have tried to obtain ideas from the youth, but a survey would be helpful.

4.0 Closing Comments

1. Bill Ryan, President of the Council, thanked everyone for sharing their thoughts and suggestions with the Parish.
2. Father Simmons closed the Town Hall meeting by thanking everyone for attending. He also asked all attendees to tell their neighbors and other Parishioners about the meeting and to encourage those they know to be more active in the Parish.

5.0 Comments after the Town Hall Meeting

The following comments/suggestions were mentioned after the Town Hall meeting to the Secretary, Veronica Hernandez:

1. One Parishioner suggested the Parish expand the facilities. He mentioned the kitchen is too small and does not facilitate cooking for large groups (over 30 people). If the facilities (hall) were expanded, we could rent the hall out and help fund other activities.
2. One Parishioner suggested we consider allowing music to be played during mass. She suggested we allow music that attract the youth (younger music).
3. One Parishioner suggested we consider having a meeting (perhaps another Town Hall meeting) without Father Simmons in attendance. He suggested people may feel intimidated to speak up if Father Simmons is present.