

AOD Community Board
Meeting Minutes, January 16, 2021

Meeting Called to order 8:10 am with prayer led by Deacon Russ Ortisi

Attendees: Jim Berch, Carol Berch, Dave Fleming, Kelly Fleming, Bob Gadja, Alan Gwozdz, Dennis Loffreda, Brigid Loffreda, Steve Morello, Russ Ortisi, Trish Ortisi, Rick Rhein, Anne Rhein, Marc Rybinski, Skip Rodger

Dennis has reached out to Erin regarding the couples retreat February 19 – 21 is still a go, or is cancelled because of COVID restrictions. Manresa has postponed all of their January retreats, not sure if Capuchin Retreat House is the same. Dennis said as soon as he hears back from Erin, he will pass the information along.

Marc Gemellaro was invited to this meeting to talk about the formation team. They are looking at 16 applicants to interview. Jim noted that he and Carol had just received their information this past week for the interview they have been assigned. Alan and Dennis both indicated they have not yet received their information. Jim noted that all interviews are to be conducted via Zoom, no face-to-face meetings. All interviews should be completed by Ash Wednesday (February 17, 2021) Some of the 16 are repeats, dropped out for various reasons.

The rest of the meeting we will give over to Deacon Steve Morello. Steve asked that if everyone was ok with it, he would quickly go over the five points what he explained last meeting, respond to any questions afterwards. Dave Fleming asked about the “playbook” and it says nothing about the role of Deacons. Steve replies this is being addressed by the Deacon Mission formation Team, which is part of the mission of the planning department. The playbook was designed specifically for the moderators. He believes that it is appropriate for there to be a playbook for the deacons specifically, that will be part of the discussion over the weekend, we should have some type of understanding of our roles and Steve will work for that.

Steve will quickly reiterate the five propositions then give us the high points of the action plan, noting that eventually the team will be looking to rapidly increase the number of members working on this project. They will be asking for volunteers, especially from the Community Board to help in certain aspects.

Steve realizes there is some confusion about the Diaconate Office, currently Fr. Spezia is running the office and any questions should be directed to him, then we can act according to his response. It is important for deacons to complete the survey in preparation for the January 27 meeting with Bishop Battersby.

This is a preview of the presentation that will be presented on January 27th.

1. Deacon are called to mission. Evangelization and Charity, these two points come from the most recent Vatican documents of the church release last June. It doesn't mean that the threefold ministry that we have always been involved with in is no longer the case,

that's not it all, The Vatican has asked us to focus on evangelization and charity as the two high points.

2. Second, deacons are always in service to the Bishop, sometimes it doesn't feel that way as we mostly work in parishes with priest, but we are in service to the Bishop.
3. The first prong of the mission is to the family of parishes. We deacons are going to have our assignments stabilized for a least a year. I believe that deacons in wave one will sooner or later get a letter from the bishop that their assignment is stabilized and they now report to the moderator or lead pastor of that particular family. The second prong is under Unleash the Gospel will call to the highways and byways of the Archdiocese to reach out in many different ways to bring them into the Church.
4. Something that will be developed as times goes on for accountability. We're always accountable to the Archbishop and then we're accountable to those in who parishes or agencies that we minister. The accountability means we are co-workers in the vineyard, but, we will report to either our pastors or the agency head our activities so that understand what we're doing and they can affirm us in what we are doing and direct us. Jesus sent his disciples out two by two, then they reported back to Him.
5. We always minister as a team. We may be working with two, three or four other deacons in the family, the deacons could figure out different things to do in the family but look for ways to them together. Laster, while we are going to the highways and byways, we deacons should look to bring as many lay people along as possible especially those men who may have a diaconal vocation so we can bring them along and have the minister with, side by side, so they can see the ministry and further discern if this was for them.

Survey has gone out for all Deacons that is very in depth, much more detailed than anything else we may have sent out in the past. Reason is we really want to get to know our deacon a lot better, we don't know all the gifts that our deacons are to us, so if there is a need somewhere in the Archdiocese, we can see that we have deacon that a good skills match for that. We can talk to that particular deacon about filling that particular need.

Deacon Steve talked about the action high points that are going to accomplish in 2021.

We're looking at Deacon Mission, Deacon Formation and Deacon Vocation.

Under Deacon Mission, we're going to deal with communications. We're going to look for ways to increase and enhance the communications the archdiocese has with the deacon throughout the diocese. For example, there will be a quarterly communication with Bishop Battersby. We're going to look for at least two opportunities to meet with the Archbishop during the year. One will be the annual Jubilee Mass and Dinner, the second will be in the commissioning ceremony. That is a ceremony where all deacons will be sent on mission, we're no longer going to call assignment.

Accompany, we want to spend more time accompanying of Deacon in their daily mission, one way of doing that is convocation. Convocations will still be planned and much more fully developed. We are going to have more interaction with the bishops because our goal is to be accountable to and sent out on mission by the bishop, maybe this won't happen this year, but we're going to begin looking at a deacon assistance program, where situations our deacons get into difficulties on one

sort or another and they need help. We don't want to say you're on your own, we say, we will accompany you.

Spirituality. We're going to look at Deacon spirituality. We want to encourage on a great level the spiritual directors for each and every one of our deacons. We want to provide frequent opportunities for deacons to meet as a community as a region and as members of family. How we do that depends upon how quickly the COVID issue is resolved.

Missioning to the highways and byways, we want to develop opportunities for the deacons to be in service outside of the family as well. That will be on us to develop all those different opportunities and present them to the Deacon community.

Accountability, part of that will be each Deacon will be giving a report to the Archbishop as to the success and high points of their ministry in each calendar year. They will be one page or less, just highlighting the things that we have done, the ministry we have accomplished and the way we have unleashed the gospel in southeastern Michigan. We're to bundle those up and present to the Archbishop on an annual basis

Deacon formation, this is formation for the guys who are already ordained, is to give everybody a common footing a common understanding with regards to new Evangelization, Unleash the Gospel. We will provide opportunities for formation, initially there will be a lot of online content, eventually we want to do this in seminars, small group, classroom situation. However, over a period of a year we want to give several opportunities for guys to get updated in various areas. The formation will also include ministry within families of parishes, how we work in family environments, cooperative environments where everybody's viewed as on mission together.

We are going to do the Called and Gifted Program, which is a Sherry Waddell program for each Deacon in the Archdiocese that is in active ministry.

Steve asked that anyone with questions or comments, please give him a call.

It is an opportunity for us to discern our charisms so we can understand what we're best at then focus our ministry on doing the things that we're really good at.

Vocation, as our demographic gets older, we aren't going to be able to put as much time or effort into what we are doing, so we have to make sure there are guys coming behind us who can pick up the load. One way the community board can be a big help is giving ideas and suggestions and working with the term on how we might increase the vocations to the diaconate.

Dave brought up the fact some senior Deacons who are no longer in active service, feel as if they are forgotten. Steve acknowledged that is an issue with senior priests as well and needs to be addressed. We're going to figure out how to accompany our senior deacon now. There are intercessory prayer groups all over the Archdiocese praying for different intentions, this could be an area where, if they wanted, senior deacons could be involved. For example, a Senior Deacon does annulments, does a good job, he can still do that for a family

We can be the most active group of ministers in the Archdiocese and that when the Archbishop looks around and sees what's going on with Unleash the Gospel and who is making that happen, I want them to say, yes, deacons are in the lead of all these things, even my priests can't keep up with them, because the deacons are on fire with the Holy Spirit.

We will be learning as the Deacons go through wave one, we will need to keep up better communications. One of things Steve tried with mixed success was the Encounter and Grow witness website, there's a room set up just for deacons, however, he thinks the last entry was in August. This will be one of the main ways to communicate in the future.

There was much discussion about the direction of Kevin's office, vision of what that could look like in future. What we as a community can do to help with whatever projects Kevin may have been working on, a direct connect to Erin. At this time Fr. Spezia is directing the office.

There is a go fund me account and meal train on Facebook to help the Breen family, Trish and Russ are going to reach out to Shelia and see if visits are appropriate at this time and anything we as a community can help. Dennis will reach out to Erin and Fr. Spezia

Jim motioned to adjourn; Dave seconded

Meeting adjourned at 9:40am.

Next meeting will be Saturday March 20th, 2021 via Zoom.