St. Raphael Parish Council Meeting Minutes

July 30, 2022

Present: Fr. Ignatius, Alli, Michael, Austin, Becky, Brian, Julia, Lori, Rene

Father read a passage from a book derived from the works of St. Ephrem the Syrian “A Song of Praise to the Redeemer.”

Lori provided an update as Education and Spiritual Growth Coordinator -

3 Pillars of Spiritual Growth/Educational Outreach:

1. Father’s Intro to Orthodoxy Class - Father has taught this twice in the last year with attendance being 5-7.
2. Sunday School - We have 12-14 children who regularly attend. Our teachers are Lizzy (elementary), Sanjoy (junior high), and Hannah (high school). Sunday School was not active for 1.5 years due to the pandemic and restarted in January 2022. The time of Sunday School classes was moved to Matins and this time change has been successful at increasing adult attendance at Matins. This year we have been following the Archdiocese curriculum on the Book of Matthew. The teachers had positive feedback about the curriculum, although there is some concern about the advanced language that is used in the elementary curriculum. This year we will use the Archdiocese Genesis curriculum. We need to recruit 3-4 additional Sunday School teachers. We need to increase the number of children attending Sunday School. Lori suggested that it could be beneficial for the teachers to send home a brief handout explaining what the week’s lesson is for the whole family to review together during the week. We need to approach the parents individually to increase attendance for the next school year.
3. Adult Book Group - 6 -12 people regularly attend

We discussed the need for an updated Parish Directory. Alli has the updated information sent in by survey last year and continues to work on this. She plans to bring a printed copy to church with pens for people to update their information.

Charitable giving: we will give our July donation to OCMC in support of Hannah’s mission work, in addition to the $500 donation to OCMC we previously sent.

We are committing $300 per month to the food pantry, but Alli suggested that if we are able to secure grant funding for the food pantry, we reconsider committing $185 per month to OCMC to support Hannah’s mission work.

Alli is submitting a grant application to the Community Foundation of Johnson County for $10,000 - with 9 months given to spend the money ($750 per month for the pantry, and $2250 for a Holiday meal drive, and $1000 for advertising).

Rene is in contact with HACAP about opportunities for food pantry support.

Becky has also found grant opportunities for food pantries through the Food Bank of Iowa, Alliant Energy, Iowa DNR, or we could partner with the Food Bank of Iowa as a distribution center.

Father also brought up working with Table to Table, which rescues edible perishable food to distribute to food banks in the area. We don’t currently have the equipment needed to store perishable items (like an extra refrigerator or deep freezer), but if we were to procure these items, it would be a possibility. We currently have about 5 visitors each week on average. If visitors increase, Father will need help operating the pantry from other parishioners. Rene is available on Wednesdays and Sundays to run the pantry.

Wellmark update from the Capital Campaign - there is a 2nd funding cycle coming up in September. We asked how to improve our grant application for the next funding cycle, since we were not selected for the first cycle. We would be applying under the Access to Healthy Foods category. Gina (our Wellmark contact) recommended that we focus on just the kitchen this cycle (without asking for lift funding) - and specifically recommended that we focus on how we could use the kitchen to offer cooking classes. Karen had good ideas for free/outreach cooking classes as an additional outreach connected to the Food Pantry - Cooking seasonally with food from the Farmer’s Market (just a couple blocks away); buying and cooking in bulk (field trip to Stringtown Grocery).

If Wellmark funds the kitchen project, we could plan to approach the National Fund for Sacred Places for the accessibility project next year.

Alli recommends launching the Public Phase of the Capital Campaign later this fall - we do have pledges up to $21,000 from parishioners and friends of St. Raphael to move forward with, even if we do not secure any grant funding. All pledges were designated as “flexible,” meaning the money could be allocated to the kitchen, mortgage, or lift projects.

Becky gave the Treasurer’s Report:

We are in the black through June 30, 2022.

We are operating under the “Keep the Doors Open” Budget.

Regular Sunday Money donations are a key reason we are in the black.

The tithe to the Archdiocese for the year has already been fulfilled.   
Mortgage is down to $169,000.

Becky recommends that if any of the grant funds are secured, we should allocate more Sunday Money monthly to paying down the mortgage principal.

Alli discussed her meeting with Bill Marianes and the question of whether to pursue the FSA and EPA assessments he offers. These assessments could allow us to learn valuable information about how best to continue to grow financially and spiritually as a parish. The council unanimously agreed to move forward with these assessments.

Next meeting will be September 17, 2022, 2-4pm via Zoom.