



**Diocese of Green Bay**  
**DIOCESAN PASTORAL COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES**  
**April 13, 2019**

**Attendees:** Bishop David Ricken, Very Reverends Daniel Felton and Brad Vanden Branden, O. Praem., Mary Poch, Jeff Taylor, John Folk, Clare DuMontier, Sister Natalie Binversie, OSF, William Graf, Wally Thomson, James Fay, Steve Parent, Elizabeth Kostichka, Michael Witte, David Wheeler, and Deacon David Scheuer.

**Excused/Absent:** Dottie Borowski, Betty Hove, Reverend Nonito Barra, Paula Freimuth, Pat Ratajczak and Mark Merkatoris

**Opening Activities**

- Meeting opened at 9:03 a.m.
- Bishop Ricken led the assembled in the Liturgy of the Hours.
- Mission Statement was recited by Council members.
- A motion was made to approve and adopt the meeting minutes of January 12, 2019, as written. Motion was seconded and approved unanimously.
- A motion was made to approve the agenda as presented. Motion was seconded and approved unanimously.
- Introductions from each individually.

**Opening Comments—Bishop Ricken**

Bishop welcomed the attendees and thanked them for coming. Even though there are not many topics listed on the agenda, there will be a lot to discuss especially concerning clergy abuse and the substantial changes that we are making in response to it.

**Update and Discussion on Seven Steps of Accountability—Bishop Ricken & Deacon Dan Wagnitz**

Bishop Ricken introduced Deacon Dan Wagnitz, Safe Environment Coordinator. With John Flannery's (Victim's Assistant Coordinator), move to Madison the VAC job description has been reviewed and revised. Changes include making it full time, expanding its scope and responsibility and adding a component of community outreach. We are in the process of interviewing candidates and hope to have someone in place soon.

On January 17, 2019, the diocese published the list of clergy who had substantiated cases of abuse. We anticipated and hoped that it would meet our goal of transparency and to empower other victims to come forward. This occurred. This has since reduced to one or two calls per week.

We have worked with our diocesan attorney to review the new cases and which cases will be passed to the district attorney. In most cases, they are decades old and the priests are deceased. We reviewed the cases with the IRB.

Because April is child abuse awareness month, there are a number of activities planned including a healing service, a special Mass, and a day of reflection facilitated by Journey of Hope. This organization consists of people who have been abused or their family members of the abused. They reach out to victims and invite them to seek healing in the church.

Q: What will happen in the future, will we be having this same conversation 2-3 years from now? A: This is a human condition the issue will not go away. We plan to partner with other churches and focus on prevention and share what we have learned. We also need to focus on our schools, coaches, volunteers, vendors, etc.

Other points:

- If the State of Wisconsin makes the decision to review our files, we are ready.
- The seminarian process is very diligent about screening out poor candidates.
- A DPC member commented that when priests are moved, there is suspicion, lots of questions, people wonder why. Deacon Wagnitz said to review the charter for protection on the diocesan website. It clearly states that the church immediately contacts civil authorities if there is a suspicion of abuse. Also, any clergy who is accused is immediately taken out of ministry. They are not transferred to another parish.

#### **Discussion of Priority & Goals—Bishop Ricken & Fr. Dan**

Bishop Ricken reviewed some of his activities related to his 7 action steps to accountability:

- Pastoral care to accompany victims. We had listening sessions throughout the diocese. It was important for people to get the “poison” out. They were difficult meetings, people were frank and direct. The information was published in the Compass.
- Direct healing and awareness for priests and pastoral leaders. We sponsored a training session on handling the trauma of sexual abuse. Hundreds of people attended.
- Review of Priest files. We hired an independent firm who came in and reviewed our files which resulted in the release of names. People who in the past came forward can now say to their families and others that they were telling the truth. They are believed.
- We are working with the USCCB to develop a forum for bishops.

**“one by One” Campaign.** Fr. Dan Felton said that the one by One capital campaign had been on pause, but has now been reengaged. We evaluated when it would be an appropriate time to begin the campaign, and found most people said they were ready and that we need to do the campaign. This is due, in part, to the needs of parishes, many require extensive repairs to their buildings and this would be a source of funding. We are in the midst of parish planning.

Bishop Ricken and Fr. Dan Felton shared the following:

- There is a change of culture occurring at the diocese. We are trying to align with mission. This has impacted the hiring process. We focus on understanding why someone wants to work here. People need to be excited and motivated by the mission of the diocese.
- Fr. Felton reviewed the process of who and why vs. how and what. This process was used to develop a strategy to counter the decline in people coming to Mass. He spoke about the training program of leadership and missionary disciples and the radical change it is having on the way the diocese functions now and in the future.
- Bishop Ricken commented on the positive results he has seen with cross-functional leadership.

#### **Council Report Out: Each Council Member gives a “sense” of how things are going in your Vicariate/Religious Community—DPC Members comments**

Our organization (Schneider) went through a change similar to the diocese. We found there were some leaders who could not handle a matrix/cross functional organization since they were “wired” to control everything in their world. Another challenge is the people who work at the diocese are not motivated by money, they already have a mindset of mission. Therefore, they would be reluctant to push-back on their

bishop. Bishop said he uses every opportunity to tell people that the cross functional approach results in much better decision making, it takes the focus off the bishop always being the decision maker.

We must drive people to the ownership mentality, they need to “own this”. With cross functional teams, the bishop says “I am a team member and I want others to step forward, I am not the deciding vote.

Millennials would love to participate and provide input. Perhaps consider including millennials on this council. It would help to build a balanced team.

We need to build a strong church, our foundation is crumbling. Our church doesn’t have men involved, we need them. This was echoed by many of the DPC members. If the father takes his children to Mass, the children will continue to go to Mass. If he doesn’t, then they will not. Women are more spiritually inclined.

In the Hispanic community, men are very involved. The priest often personally asks men to attend to things. This approach also works with young adults.

Discussion of Alpha and other programs. Alpha has been successful in our parish, in part because it was preceded by *Christ Renews His Parish*, which got many men involved. Through it, men shared an experience of prayer and prayer life. Highly recommend looking at *That Man is You*, it was successful in attracting men at our parish. A one on one personal invitation is key to getting people to participate. CIA has been successful attracting men to attend talks at Xavier High School.

At St. John in Howard, we are experiencing a change in leadership. We view this as a chance for growth and change. Our parish mission planning has been completed, we will be fine. We are focused on executing.

Fr. Bradley Vanden Branden said the Spirituality Center has been receiving a lot of questions on what to do after Alpha. He is involved in a That Man is You group that meets at the abbey. A lot of members of the community are involved. More and more people are stopping by the Abbey to ask for a priest to talk with and to go to Confession. A room may be set up for Confession, which would be a good way for older priests to serve

### **Closing Comments**

Bishop Ricken thanked the DPC members for all that they are doing.

The meeting adjourned at 11:50 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Pat VonHaden  
Recording Secretary