



General Minutes from Lake/Geauga District Meeting

September 13, 2021

St. John Vianney was hosting parish

Prayer/Lunch/Welcome from Gina Rensi, District Chair

We had 61 members attend. 17/20 parishes were represented. First in-person meeting since Jan. 2020 and COVID-19 Pandemic Pause.

Special recognition given to Fr. Tom Sweany from St. Anselm Parish, Chesterland, who will be retiring Oct. 1, 2021 after 40+ years of service to the diocese. Fr. Tom will be a parishioner at St. Gabe's in Concord Twp.

Thank you to St. John Vianney for hosting today and for the fabulous meal.

Gina asked each person present to introduce him/herself and give parish/office affiliation. Recognized past Agenda Committee members- Anthony Camino, Kelly Davis and Laura McBride and introduced the current Agenda Committee members-Jason Lewis (Diocesan Office of Social Action Commission), Maureen Dowd (St. Gabriel), Michelle Baetzold (St. Noel), Fr. Dave Woost (Divine Word), Rachel Scott (Divine Word), and Gina Rensi (Divine Word). Asked for volunteers to join Agenda Committee that meets every other month to plan the District Meetings.

Lake/Geauga District Chair Update:

- Message received from the Bishop's office saying to continue to do what you're doing (district meetings). The Bishop is supporting it and they are still working on a new governance model, however, whatever they come up with it will have a portion of this District Model in it. So the gatherings will continue which is good news.
- Bishop is wanting to have a Mass with every District in the Diocese and St. Gabes will host the Mass with the Bishop for Lake/Geauga District on Sunday, Jan. 23, 2022 at 2pm.

Fr. Dave gives Presbyteral Council update:

- Governance Model decisions are still in committee and the next meeting is next week, and then in October and then not until February. Final decisions about what the governance model will look like in the diocese will probably not happen until next year.
- At the Presbyteral Council meeting next week there will be a discussion about the position of Tribunal Specialist. There is a course that will be required and training to be completed in order to submit annulments to the diocese. Also, at the meeting there will be a discussion about the Extraordinary Form of the Mass.
- Fr. Eric Garris, from St. Gabes is also on the Presbyteral Council.

Gina offers discussion questions that help us reflect on our experiences over the last 18 months. Three questions were handed out to each table to discuss as a group and a scribe and spokesperson was elected at each table to share their thoughts:

Question 1: What are some of the blessings that came out of the Pandemic at your parish over this past year?

- When people came back there was more appreciation and joy for Eucharist; Eagerness for Eucharist
- Learning how to adapt (esp. Funerals, weddings)
- Finding new ways to do things
- Learning how to livestream Masses
- Improving communication with parishioners
- Able to start placing phone calls to people to bring joy, just to connect with them
- Creative ways of adapting ministry that stay with us (youth online); forcing us to be creative
- Livestreaming: connection to people, more that just weekly Mass but also funerals and weddings
- Renewed sense of what we're doing; Ministry does matter and the people were so appreciative of anything we did provide for them
- Parishioners stepping up and helping with tons of stuff (cleaning, etc.)
- Some people having an increased desire for Christ and Church; not taking Faith or Eucharist for granted.
- Better communication with shut-ins, those far away from parishes can watch
- Broader reach for others to a part; greater ability to reach more people.
- Greater numbers able to participate in parish events online—reaching an audience that we normally would not be able to reach.
- People had more time and people wanted to be able to participate
- Creativity came about- had to rethink things during COVID and often they got better
- Faith Formation went into the home which got more parents/families involved.
- Blessing and a curse-gave people who have been doing things a long time a chance to quit- which allows new people to be apart/connect and get involved
- Personal outreach improved through outreach to the home bound and parishioners via phone calls.
- Having Mass outside
- Awareness of the value of spiritual communion
- Experiencing the absence of having Mass and increasing appreciation for Mass
- Reaching out to people via Podcasts/YouTube/FaceBook live experiences
- Personal Devotions and awareness/development of the domestic church
- Eucharistic Adoration when we couldn't gather for Mass
- More family time; slow down the pace of life
- RCIA is larger (one parish has 25-30 in their RCIA class)
- Families growing closer (also closer in geography)
- Faculty has grown closer; forced us to ask "why" and learned new & better ways to do things; faculty "making it work."

- Online presence
- Efficient growth
- Emphasized how important our staff is
- Technology improvements-website upgrade
- Appreciate being together in person
- Appreciate music ministry
- Opportunity to reset and reevaluate
- Increased sense of collaboration and spirit of working together
- Challenging old paradigms; renewed excitement and energy
- Outreach to shut in (phone calls and communion); “walking in their steps”
- Increased commitment to faith-pictures sent in from people’s homes of them setting up chairs and attending Mass via livestream
- Left parishioners looking for fellowship
- New recognition of financial support, despite not gathering- increase in E-Giving
- Saw an increase in social justice financial giving/Helping Hands Outreach
- Realization of taking things for granted

Question 2: What steps have you taken to bring people back to the church? What strategies have been successful?

- Hosting a parish picnic
- Staying connected via phone calls, email blasts helped bring them back
- Bringing PSR back in person will also bring more families back
- Livestream has been very successful
- Personal phone calls and cards have helped
- Weekly robocalls to parishioners
- Outdoor Mass- St. John Vianney has 500-600 people regularly at 10:30am Mass on Sundays; had 1,100 people at Easter Sunday Mass
- Continuing with traditions of pre-COVID (parish picnic, Oktoberfest)
- Making people feel safe with cleaning and masks
- Ministry leaders connecting with members of their groups
- Making an effort to really welcome people back
- Social media outreach
- Re-seed-Rebirth by reaching younger parents
- Did not push people to come back and make them feel guilty. Message was to come back when you feel ready.
- Online videos explaining what one would expect if/when they came back to church
- FaceBook- posting what was going on at the parish and posting positive messages
- Keeping a regular schedule of prayer and ministry groups
- Opening of the school and connecting with the parish
- Offering in person activities-youth are just happy to be together
- Community outreach with care packages/home outreach
- Virtual meetings
- Increase use of FlockNotes to keep in touch

- Growth of youth ministry and Young Adult Ministry
- Maintain mask and social distancing section at Mass
- Eucharistic Ministers and celebrant wear masks
- Inviting new people to get involved
- Using technology and new ways to communicate
- Assured our people of safety protocols
- Weekly email blasts and communication
- Increase social opportunities- Christmas ornament; parade for one year anniversary; Fish Fry in Banquet center
- Continued connection of relationships developed over Zoom

Question 3: Do you have any ideas/topics for future meetings? (perhaps a need your parish identified coming out of COVID)

- Gather together a list of counseling offices
- Hearing more from the Diocese-specific topic to speak on
- Updated parish database software systems (Divine Word is using Realm vs. ACS)
- Engaging the ones that haven't come back yet and those who are not engaged
- Who/What is going on in the Diocese—i.e. new positions -who are they and what do they do and how can they help us as a parish?
- Restructuring meeting at times to give time for break out groups according to ministry (DREs, BOMs, Pastoral Associates, Music Ministry, YM, etc.); Sit at meetings according to job/ministry/responsibility
- Mental Health Resources
- EANS (Emergency Assistance for Non-public Schools) funds—ideas on spending
- How to deal with polarization regarding sentiment of COVID vaccines
- Dealing with polar opposite views
- Welcoming the Stranger: Adoption of Afghanistan Refugee families
- How to re-engage people who are “comfortable” staying home
- Forming disciples out of the Pandemic-invite neighbors, knocking on doors
- Paradigm shifts due to pandemic
- How to minister at Assisted Living (different types and levels)
- Dignity of work
- Finding volunteers in decreasing pools
- Direction/Collaboration of Youth Ministry/Young Adult Ministry in the District
- Young Adult Ministry
- Young Family Ministry
- Dispensation from Sunday Obligation-seemed to tell people a dispensation means there are not any rules
- Vaccine-is it moral vs. not moral
- How to deal with the aging out of leaders and volunteers
- Difference between welcoming and inviting
- How to take survey results (DMI) and build on it in your parish and turn the results into positive action

Announcements:

Miquel Chavez, Office of Ministry Discipleship from Diocese of Cleveland:

-Lots of changes in Diocese of Cleveland and some exciting momentum as we continue to navigate this Pandemic Arena. Fr. Damien Ferance is the new Vicar of Evangelization.

-Miquel started in Jan 2020. He would like to work with the parishes and connect and work together to build God's Kingdom and form disciples that are in love with Jesus Christ.

Terry Yohman, Director of Marriage and Family Ministry from Diocese of Cleveland:

-Has requested from Fr. Damien to increase communication so they know who is doing what and how/where they are doing it.

Hosted the 9 Nights of Night Prayer around the Diocese and are already making plans for the future. Nine Nights of Prayer is planned out for the next 3 years and will be hosted at 9 new parishes each session.

Marriage and Family Office has seen lots of changes as well. Terry started in July 2020. Waiting for new Secretariate Leader as Sr. Mary Rita retired. They are interviewing now for this position. Marriage Policy is from 1999, so it really needs revamped.

Terry is taking a Catholic Mental Health Ministry Course right now from the University of San Diego. She has a background in Social Work and Mental Health. She was at a parish for 18 years and part of the Diocese for 30. She would be happy to come and talk to people about what that Mental Health Ministry looks like.

Nourish Program for Caregivers is going to be piloted throughout the diocese. The membership is lifetime \$500 and we bought 8 of them and she still has some left. The program is a complete package and it can be email, in person, Zoom, etc. Program is out of Chicago and Catholic. They will be addressing health care givers (doctors, nurses, nursing home workers) and how to help them and support them.

Office also has a bereavement training going on right now. Looking forward to serving everyone and increased communication from the Diocese.

Francine Costantini, Office of Parish Life, Youth Ministry from the Diocese of Cleveland:

-Started in September 2020

-Spent most of last year meeting with Youth Ministers, pastors and diocesan leaders across the country as to what does your office do and how do you serve your parishes and setting a new vision for this new office. Just before Archbishop Perez left he split the office of Youth and Young Adult Ministry into three offices: 1) CYO stayed under Catholic Charities 2) New office of Youth Ministry and 3) New office Young Adult Ministry. Currently YM office has 1.25 people working. So she is working to know how to support Youth Ministers best and serve the parishes best.

-Pastors or any priest and YM are invited this Wed., Sept 15th to a meeting at the Diocese. Meeting with Bishop Malesic to talk about Youth Ministry in our diocese and how we can do some collaboration. Dr. Josh Packard from Springtide Research Institute will be speaking about the findings of his survey

regarding young people and religion from this past year. They surveyed people from age 13-25 and asked them questions about their religion and how they interact with other people and what is important to them. This research will be published at the end of September but he is going to give us a sneak peak. In the evening, Dr. Josh will be at St. Barnabas at 7pm and will give a similar presentation to who ever would like to attend. The program is about an hour long and the topic is "How can we better minister to Gen Z: what are they looking for and what are their needs right now."

-Diocesan Youth Conference is Saturday, Jan. 8, 2022 at JCU titled CLE 21:6. All day conference and tickets are already on sale. Tickets can ONLY be purchased by youth ministers, campus ministers, or parish group leaders. Teens must attend with a parish or school group so that chaperones are present. Youth cannot buy tickets individually. Hoping to sell out.

Fr. Fred Pausche:

-Annulment Specialists will be the only ones able to petition for an annulment. Please sign up for the training that will be in March. There will be 6 sessions and you need to call the Tribunal to register.

-The Divorce and Separated Ministry continues to thrive after 25 years and is alive and well. It was the first collaborative act we did as a district. Always in need of Board Members and new ideas. We are down to 2 meetings a year so it is not very time intensive. We have a great administrative secretary who does all of the scheduling and planning of the support groups. But it's the idea of how do we better serve the Divorced and Separated. Please see Fr. Fred if you are willing to be Board Member. Over the last 25 years, we have served a large number of people and this ministry has really been a life saver for those struggling with divorce and separation.

Bob DeJohn, Catholic Cemeteries Association, Pre-planning Coordinator

-Thanks to the bulletin editors and secretaries for getting CCAs message out to the parishioners as the Catholic Cemeteries are an integral part of the diocese. Bob is an educator and tries to get people to pre-plan their cemetery services, so that decisions are not left up to younger generation.

Upcoming Events:

-National Day of Remembrance for Aborted Children at two Cemeteries:

a) 09/18/21 at Resurrection Cemetery

b) 09/25/21 at Holy Cross Cemetery in Akron

-Walk to Remember Rosary Walk at several cemeteries on Sunday, Oct 3rd from 1pm-2pm

-Ongoing Sunday Grief Support on the 3rd Sunday of the month at several cemeteries

-Cemetery Sunday on Sunday, November 7th at 3pm

All information on website at www.clecem.org.

Information is also posted on District webpage that can be linked via www.divinewordkirtland.org. Also, if you have any information you would like posted district-wide, just let Gina Rensi know and we can get it posted.

Emily Currie-Manring, Catholic Charities Lake County

-Michelle Bertman from Geauga County Catholic Charities does have a program for Financial Literacy to offer.

Lake and Geauga County Catholic Charities does have space to see Mental Health clients and offer counseling. These appointments are available now and clients can be seen within a week of initial referral. You can call the directors directly.

Lake County Catholic Charities is also offering a new evidence-based parenting program called Positive Parenting Program (Triple P) in conjunction with the program the addresses families affected by incarceration.

Mark Crowley, Lake Catholic High School

-Sign Up sheet available for time slots for priests to assist with Masses and confessions on Dec 1st and March 15th. The students do appreciate seeing their parish priests at their school.

-November 8th, Bishop Malesic will be saying Mass at Lake Catholic. Mass will be in the auditorium.

-Just a comment that Mark has been meeting regularly with the Superintendents in Lake and Geauga Counties since March 2020 and they have been working really well together just as the people in this District do.

Gina offered thank you all for being here today and getting together.

Fr. Marty Dober led closing prayer.

Next Lake/Geauga District Meeting is Monday, November 8th, 2021 11:45 am – St. Bede, Mentor