



General Minutes from Lake/Geauga District Meeting

January 22, 2024

Prayer/Lunch/Welcome from Fr. Fred Pausche (We had 35 members attend)

Robert Koonce, Brand New Director of Deanery Operations and Planning for the Diocese of Cleveland introduced himself. Per his report he is “midwifing” the new Deanery Model for the diocese. He plans to communicate information regarding a timeline for rolling out the new deanery model. New deans will be supported. He encourages us to continue what we are doing as a district.

Fr. Fred introduced Fr. Joshua Trefney who started last week at St. Gabriels as Parochial Vicar.

Brian Strauchon, Pre-planning Coordinator from the Catholic Cemeteries Association introduced himself. He took Bob DeJohn’s position as Bob retired to TX. Brian worked for 15 years in secondary education in the diocese. Will be visiting parishes to spread news about Catholic Burial Rite.

Deacon Bob Grgic introduced Susan Lettieri from St. Mary, Hudson to give presentation regarding their new ministry entitled “Walking with Moms in Need.”

Susan brought two members of her Core Team to assist with the presentation, Sandy and Marcy.

Sandy assists with the marketing of the Walking with Moms in Need Ministry. She got involved in the summer of 2022 after seeing a blurb in the bulletin asking for volunteers for the Core Team Members. Encouraged us to ask the Holy Spirit for direction and guidance in starting a ministry.

Background: March 25, 2020 was 25th Anniversary of the Solemnity of the Annunciation of the Lord and The Gospel of Life papal encyclical. Launch delayed by COVID and started again in 2022.

The goal of the group is to build relationships with the women in need and enhance the referrals to agencies in the community that can offer assistance to pregnant, parenting women. Goal is to provide a woman somewhere to turn instead of Planned Parenthood.

Low-income women are actually more against abortion than higher income women. In 2005- 73% of women having abortions state that finances are a major obstacle to carrying the pregnancy to term. Some don’t want to speak to family/friends about the pregnancy so it is easier to get an abortion if they have no one to talk with. With this ministry they are never alone.

Susan is head of the Respect Life Ministry at St. Mary, Hudson. She reports that the Walking with Moms in Need Ministry will depend on the needs of the local community. She also stated that 40% of those having abortions have attended a church service within the month of their abortion. So, this means churches are a perfect place to offer this service and need to be more welcoming and helpful and less judgmental.

In her program, they are Companions with the moms. Call their counselors “Companions.”

They began their ministry by following the USCCB guidelines for Walking with Moms in Need Ministry. The guidelines walk through every step of the process. They received 60 volunteers the first weekend they advertised.

Had 4 subcommittees for volunteers

- a. Counselors & Referrals (Companions)
- b. Marketing/Social Media/Communications
- c. Fundraising
- d. Baby Shower/Meal Trains/Crafters- she shared examples of baby items her crafting parishioner made

Developed website and email address. Established phone number/message and Intake form

Decided on 3 Pregnancy Resource Centers- Akron Pregnancy Services, Oasis of Hope Pregnancy and parenting in Medina, Embrace Clinic and Care Center in Barberton to partner with. These centers provide clothing, diapers, baby equipment and parenting classes.

They received 60 volunteers the first weekend they advertised. Less intimidating for people to volunteer to help women who need help.

Once volunteers were identified they participated in a three-hour training session with Mary Dugan Wood of the Gabriel Project from St. Mary of the Immaculate Conception in Wooster. She has been running her program for more than 15 years and has much experience to share. Core idea- is to be a human, and be someone who can listen and be a safe place.

Also did Mom Companion Training (3 months) using video training series from Sisters for Life entitled "Into Life: Love Changes Everything: a 12-part original series on accompanying a woman into life." Series comes with discussion questions and helps you to come to the understanding that this is a woman that is hurting. Goal to create a relationship with her and help her to come to her own conclusions and decisions by identifying and naming her fears.

Training included: catholic teaching on sexuality; scenarios by experienced companions from Embrace Clinic; social services-govt programs and Catholic Charities

Developed a 12-page database of resources available in Akron/Cleveland area for the moms. Developed an information card for the moms and gave them a card for tasks to be completed (call to set up appt, etc.). This card provides structure for the moms. Card given to the moms after each meeting. Link mom's current needs with the correct Pregnancy Center. Some moms may need child care for older children and some may be contemplating abortion so would need an ultrasound soon.

Created gift bags for the first meeting for the moms which include lotion, onesies, dry soup mix, pre-natal vitamins, information packet and etc. Also includes a "Love Box" which includes a onesie, a journal, and a story about a single woman facing an unintended pregnancy and an invitation for Bible Study for single/pregnant women,

Advertising Committee - developed yard signs, trifold brochures, business card and QR code for more resources. Created Press Releases which are free vs paying for an ad, press release went to 8 newspapers. Also developed social media campaign - Facebook, Twitter/X, Instagram. Set up interview

with reporter from The Kent Stater (university newspaper). Created a distribution list - churches, OB/GYN offices, Colleges and High Schools, Libraries, Coffee Shops, Hair Salons, Goodwill, Hunger Centers and Food pantries, other Catholic Churches and non-Catholic Churches. Continue monthly bulletin blurbs, pulpit announcements, passed out brochures to interested parishioners.

Goal of the program is to accompany the moms emotionally as the other agencies provide the physical materials and education piece. Core Team meets monthly to discuss progress with Moms, marketing strategies, specific needs/improvements. Companions meet more regularly to discuss how mom is doing and her spiritual needs, Brain-storming/shared success stories, issues that come up.

Susan recommends that if we decide to pursue this ministry we should start as a large group (across parishes) to share resources including space to store materials, meeting rooms, volunteers, finances. Sharing across parishes would also allow moms to attend a neighboring parish if they would feel more comfortable. Larger group could share a unified marketing approach. Take a look at what each parish is blessed with and use those resources.

To get started:

- 1) Select a leader
- 2) Assemble a core team
- 3) Inventory the current resources in the area using the Inventory Tool from the USCCB materials.
- Cleveland Diocese Respect Life Office has a list of resources can also use Google Search for this step.
- 4) Know the church's teachings on abortion, contraception and chastity.

Then consider the gaps in services - The Hudson Team found that the greatest gap was in the area of emotional support so that is where they are focusing. Providing someone to talk to and who will listen.

When gathering, volunteers have simple tasks that many can participate in - assembling gift bags, meals, crafts of crocheting booties, etc.

For marketing - St. Mary, Hudson modeled their brochure after St. Mary, Wooster media material. Had 7 people distribute to over 100 places in 4 communities.

Establish a parish support network - pray for the moms, recruit volunteers via the bulletin. Provide training sessions and leadership assignments. Advertise in local community and then implement. USCCB guidebook is very helpful.

Fund Raising - the St. Mary, Hudson group has not done any fundraising yet as they were gifted seed money from the parish and one golf outing from the Men's Group. Pastor wanted them to not worry about funds the first year or two and to get their programs started prior to attempting fund raising.

Group has helped 4 moms so far since their inception in Sept 2023. Two women only needed momentary help with utilities. Another woman came to them at 6 weeks pregnant and gets support every two weeks. St. Mary, Wooster has had a similar program for 15 years and have helped over 800 families but they are a more rural area and provide Pregnancy Support Center services.

Table Discussion followed and results will be tabulated and shared with the district.

Fr. Dave gave update from Presbyteral Council:

Last meeting was November 2023. Spoke a lot about Issue 1 Amendment passing and what the next steps should be as a diocese. The Diocese is looking at a new model for distributing parish subsidies. Old model is close to 30 years old. The next Presbyteral Council meeting will be at the end of February 2024.

Priest Meeting this Wed 01/24/24 at St. Mary, Chardon at 4:45pm. Hoping to have more priests attend from Geauga County.

Deacon Bob Grgic -

- A) Please send Eucharistic Congress delegate nomination forms to Gina. Gina will collect the forms and tabulate the information. There is a new pricing structure available on the website that outlines cheaper rates for just attending weekend events or one day passes.
<https://www.eucharisticcongress.org/>
- B) Attempting to get Jail Ministry up and running again after COVID especially in the Juvenile Detention Center. They have some time slots to fill for Bible Study and there are not enough people at St. Gabriel so they are looking for more help. Several attendees attested to this being a life-changing experience and a positive experience ministering to an attentive group of teens. Teens are extremely open and just looking for time to talk. Contact Deacon Bob Grgic for more information. Suggestion that seminarians may be interested in helping to support this ministry.
- C) Attempting to collect data about Working with Young Families. A questionnaire was available and will be sent out to all District members prior to our March meeting in order to collect ideas for ministering to this group. St. Gabriel has done some listening sessions to try to get to the needs of young families. They got a lot of feedback but not much participation.

Reminder for priests to look over our Reconciliation Sign-up Database on our District website to offer this sacrament at various parishes. New Lenten services have recently been added.

<https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1tA-dEqH51DmvUJnF0GVr99GfWdTJcKQ9MvX4P40sczE/edit#gid=0>

Allison Capella - Divorced and Separated Ministry is conducting a survey to see what the needs are in the district for this ministry. The Board is meeting next week and would like feedback. Survey to be re-sent out to the district to gather feedback.

Maureen Dowd concluded the meeting with prayer.

Next Lake/Geauga District Meeting is Monday, March 11, 2024 11:45 am – St. Cyprian