

Q Group Minutes

December 11, 2017

6:30 P.M. - 8:30 P.M., Room 101

In attendance: Bradley Barnes, Kevin Carter, Jason Claes, Christian Cone-Lombarte, Mike Dunn, Katie Durstock, Mary Ann Ey, Tate Hilgefert, Greg Nicolai, Irene Schmidt, Jennifer Stoehr, Tiffany Strah

The meeting began with prayer.

Each member of the group introduced themselves briefly.

Mike Dunn introduced himself. Mike is a new member of the Parish Pastoral Council (PPC) and the PPC's liaison with the Q Group. Mike joined the parish several years ago after he and his family returned to the Cincinnati area from Baltimore. He has 20 years of experience with P&G and is also on the business advisory board at Xavier University. Having a liaison with the Q Group will enable the PPC to take prompt action on the Q Group's recommendations once the Q Group completes its work.

The group voted to approve the minutes of the October 9, 2017 meeting.

As a follow-up to discussion at the last meeting, the group exchanged ideas about its purpose. To some extent, the group's purpose will be dictated by the results of the parishioner survey planned for early 2018. The goal for the Q Group when it was created was for it to formulate a long-term vision for the parish (i.e., to review "where we've been, where we're going"). The demographics of the parishioner base and the surrounding community have changed significantly over the last 30 years, so keeping the current and expected future culture of the parish in mind will be important.

Mike Dunn summarized his meeting with the president of the PPC when Mike was asked to serve as liaison. The PPC's goal for the Q Group is to create a list of strategic priorities that, if fulfilled, will enable the church to grow and thrive for many years. The PPC will task its committees with implementing initiatives to fulfill these priorities. The PPC believes the Q Group can help the PPC be more forward-looking.

After discussion, the group identified the following four possible strategic "pillars":

- Continue to seek improvement and more efficiency in existing church programs/ministries
- Help practicing Catholics become better Catholics
- Bring non-practicing Catholics home to the church
- Bring non-Catholics into the fullness of the faith

Another important consideration for the Q Group is how to make the parish more open and welcoming to members of the surrounding community (Mt. Washington and Anderson Township). There are many opportunities to be ecumenical. There are many local families whose children are home-schooled or not yet school-age and who may be deciding, for example, whether to send their children to GA or IHM. There is a general concern that families bring children to GA just for the quality of education at the school and not for the purpose of faith formation. The parish loses contact with many families after their children graduate from eighth grade.

It was suggested that the group use the same method to identify strategic priorities that was used when the parish recently hired its youth minister. That process required the hiring committee to specifically define the qualities it sought in a youth minister (i.e., “measurable deliverables”).

The group discussed whether to start the planned “open forum” portions of its meetings in February 2018 and what format the open forums should take. Also discussed was how best to announce the open forums to the parish. Options for publicizing the open forums include regular mail, the Herald (school newsletter), weekly church bulletins, and having a Q Group member speak at an upcoming Mass. Email addresses are also available for some parishioners. It was noted that some parishioners live elsewhere during the winter, so it may be best to use multiple ways of publicizing the open forums. Shut-ins need to be given a voice as well. The open forums are meant to give parishioners an opportunity to voice concerns about their parish experience, with the Q Group simply available to listen and incorporate concerns into the group’s recommendations to the PPC. A member of the Q Group will likely need to lead discussion at or otherwise guide the open forums.

The group discussed whether to meet monthly instead of bi-monthly. Some members will have conflicts and cannot meet monthly. There are also potentially logistical problems with meeting monthly (e.g., having a room available).

The group further discussed the four proposed strategic “pillars.” The first has many sub-parts since the parish has a wide variety of programs and ministries. It was suggested that the group needs to be selective in choosing which programs to review. One option is to send surveys to each parish program to capture information. A list of all programs/ministries is in the parish Guide Book and Directory. Copies were offered to group members who do not have one.

The group considered whether a review of specific programs/ministries was too “granular” given the Q Group’s purpose. Although many of the programs are “foundational” and very important to parish life, it was suggested that the Q Group needs to be able to make specific, concrete recommendations to the PPC on a broad scale, and not conduct a micro-review of all parish programs. However, the PPC does expect the Q Group to identify what the parish does well and the areas/programs where the parish could improve. The group needs to identify the parish’s “unmet needs.”

The group settled on the following overall objective: Bring the GA community closer to the Catholic faith so the church and school thrive for years to come. The group will be guided by these principles:

- The group should not deviate from foundational Catholic practices and values;
- The group should be focused on long-term, big-picture priorities, not on the “how to” of implementing these priorities; and
- The group should be inclusive of people who actively practice their faith as well as individuals and families who are less engaged.

The group agreed to postpone circulation of the parish survey until it can explore the “pillars” in more depth. Once the group reaches consensus on the strategic pillars, it can consider making the theme of each open forum specific to one of the pillars.

The group decided to form subgroups to research and delve deeper into discrete topics related to each of the four pillars. The subgroups will create lists of strategic questions related to each pillar by the February 2018 meeting.

It was decided that the first of the four “pillars” (improvement in existing programs) be subsumed within the other three, since the parish’s individual programs/ministries implicate all the other pillars. The agreed-on three pillars are:

1. Help practicing Catholics become better Catholics
2. Bring non-practicing Catholics back to the faith
3. Welcoming non-Catholics into the fullness of the faith

At the February 2018 meeting, Greg, Tiffany, and Brad will present to the group about what each of the parish’s key programs/ministries does. The group will then decide together what strategic questions need to be answered with respect to those programs. Before the February 2018 meeting, the other subgroups will also develop strategic questions related to their pillars, and at the February meeting the full group will hone in on sets of final questions for each pillar. After that, the subgroups will conduct research as needed to answer the strategic questions. The other subgroups are:

Tate, Jennifer, Christian - pillar one
Irene, Mary Ann, Katie - pillar two
Jason, Kevin - pillar three

Each subgroup will meet at least once before the February 2018 meeting. The subgroups will inform the full group when their meetings will take place in case others want to participate. The group will decide at its February 2018 meeting whether to start open forums in March or later in 2018. The survey will be distributed in March 2018.

Brad Barnes encouraged group members to attend the upcoming reconciliation service.

Jason Claes will lead discussion at the February meeting. Katie Durstock will keep minutes.

With no further business, the meeting was adjourned.