

**PAX General Meeting Notes**  
**Sunday, April 18, 2021**  
**(The meeting was conducted on Zoom.)**

**Prayer** – Frank Distasio opened the meeting with a prayer.

**Agenda** – Stephanie Niedringhaus described the agenda for the meeting:

1. **Looking ahead: Considerations as we think about returning to in-person liturgies in the future**
2. **Community finances**
3. **PAX website redesign**
4. **Partnership with First Baptist Church Chesterbrook**

## **MEETING DISCUSSION**

### **Looking ahead: Considerations as we think about returning to in-person liturgies in the future**

Stephanie Niedringhaus opened the discussion, describing how the Steering Committee and various community members had begun conversations about what we need to think about before returning to in-person liturgies safely.

Discussions included the following:

- One of the major gifts of our virtual paraliturgies during this COVID year has been the widening of Sunday gatherings, with PAX members from the West Coast to Europe joining us each week. We don't want to lose them.
- We have also valued the extending of our fellowship time before and after our paraliturgies. (This was difficult previously as we rushed to clean up and reposition tables and chairs before St. Luke Orthodox began their 10:30 am celebrations.)
- Timing is also a consideration since we don't want to gather at times that are impossible for PAX members on the West Coast or in Europe.
- As our community ages, the physical demands of moving the heavy tables at St. Luke's have become a burden. This creates safety issues in addition to intruding on our limited fellowship mentioned above.
- A benefit of our Zoom celebrations is that community members with hearing issues are able to hear more of what is said.
- Financial considerations include the fact that we previously paid \$18,000/year (\$1,500/month) to use St. Luke's space on Sunday mornings. [Note: According to the April 2020 General Meeting notes, Shane MacCarthy and Charlie Hookey had negotiated with Fr. John to lower the rent in the future. From the meeting notes: "St. Luke Orthodox's board approved this request, along with a \$150/month rent reduction (from \$1,500 to \$1,350 per month) for a 12-month period once we do resume in-person liturgies. A further rent reduction will be negotiated at that time. It is not expected our rent would go below \$1,000/month over time." However, Shane MacCarthy stated during the current General Meeting that he understood the \$1,000 rate would take effect when we return to in-person liturgies.]

- Some members have tentatively explored other possible venues, and the search will continue. Fr. Joe Nangle has recommended we consider a place like Vinson Hall. There are various ways to do this – e.g., meeting sometimes in one venue, other times in another venue, etc.
- An important consideration is finding the right technology and equipment so that we can maintain our connections to the wider PAX community. Charlie Hookey and Mike Messenger recently visited St. Luke's to meet with Fr. John and his technical assistant. They reported that the Orthodox community is currently using the social hall where we met in the past, which enables them to socially distance. Father John uses a lavalier mic that is plugged into a laptop computer so the service can be broadcast on the internet. That single mic also picks up the choir so they don't need additional mics. They stream their services on *YouTube Live*, which is a 'one way' platform. Remote participants don't take part as we like to do during our Zoom celebrations, so we would need to add that capability to our preparations. They have increased their WIFI capacity. They don't amplify sound for those in the room, which we do, so that may add an additional layer of consideration (feedback, equipment to set up, etc.).
- Fr. John is anxious to return to the more sacred space of their chapel for Sunday liturgy, and hopefully that would coincide with our return to the social hall. It would not be possible for both of us to use the social hall on Sunday mornings. [Note: After the General Meeting, Shane MacCarthy spoke with Fr. John and reported: ""Fr. John again reiterated that the St. Luke Community is very much looking forward to having PAX back in their Social Hall. He says they would like at least three-to-four weeks advance notice to allow for the transition. As soon as PAX provides him with a tentative return date that process will begin."]
- A practice session (or two) will be necessary to 'figure out' all we need and/or want to do to maintain our global Sunday connections.
- Although there seemed to a consensus among community members that the best option was to include our wider community through Zoom each week when we returned to in-person celebrations, a few presented options such as Zoom on one, two or three weeks a month, alternating formats from week to week, etc. It was repeated several times that the Zoom (para)liturgies were much appreciated, including by those who live elsewhere and couldn't come in person. Another benefit was even local members and celebrants not having to travel. And people appreciated the level of intimacy it afforded. Can that continue when we meet again in person?
- Other comments: Katy DuGarm mentioned she meets with some Roman Catholic women priests in a Zoom Room and they do have Eucharist; Mary Linda Sara mentioned that Fr. Joe Nangle offered Eucharist when he celebrated a mass with the Assisi Community and people who Zoomed were able to participate in Eucharist as they were willing (although they could not add to Prayers of the Faithful).
- **The Steering Committee invites feedback about these and other issues. Please send your thoughts to one or more Steering Committee members.**

## **Community finances**

Marian Klymkowsky shared and described an onscreen report comparing finances from 2019, 2010 and the first quarter of 2021 (attached). Among the highlights:

- While the General Fund income decreased from 2019 to 2020 (\$52,700 to \$39,160, respectively), earmarked income increased from \$24,985 to \$36,600. This meant income was relatively stable – about \$78,000 and \$76,000. (Note: Earmarked funds are paid directly to specific beneficiaries – currently Benjamin Family Fund, Food for Others, PIN Cushion Fund, and Syrian Family Fund.
- Operating expenses decreased by \$10,500 in 2020 since we stopped paying rent to St. Luke's during the seven months we didn't meet there due to the pandemic.
- Total expenses were about the same for 2019 (\$66,605) and 2020 (\$64,020), with earmarked expenses increasing from \$30,395 to \$42,380.
- Social Needs Disbursement Committee allocations decreased from \$22,800 (2019) to \$11,400 (2020). While not an operating expense, SNDC disbursements are paid from general funds and reduce PAX's unallocated bank balance.
- The 2019 year-end bank balance was \$34,323, with \$23,293 earmarked. The 2020 year-end balance was \$36,177, with \$12,062 earmarked.
- Total income (both General Fund and earmarked) for the first quarters of the past three years: \$18,181 (2019), \$19,651 (2020), \$14,680 (2021).
- Total expenses for the first quarters: \$14,715 (2019), \$15,160 (2020), \$8,366 (2021).
- As of 3/31/21, PAX's bank balance is \$38,037 with about \$15,000 earmarked.

## **PAX website redesign**

Paula Hillery opened a discussion about the ongoing website redesign. Topics included:

- Since mid-February, redesign committee members (Stephanie Niedringhaus, Sylvia Diss, Mary Lou Melley and Paula) have met on Zoom every Friday with Anna Harding, our website consultant. In addition, a group (Patty Spaulding, Doug Spaulding and Charlie Hookey) are helping plan the archives section of the new website since they have most of those records.
- The new website, which should go live in August, will have a new look and be easier to navigate. It will include information that appears on the current website (e.g., member directories and mass planning resources) and new contents.
- The public part of the website will include:
  - About Us
  - Visit Us
  - Contact Us
  - Donate.
- The members-only section will include:
  - Announcements (weekly announcements, etc.)
  - Calendars (weekly celebrants, sacristans, and Zoom links for liturgies and paraliturgies, along with other events)

- Planning (planning resources such as readings, music, creeds, and special occasions)
- People (member directory, celebrant directory, ministry/committee lists, directory of friends of PAX, "In Memorium" list)
- Education (Adult, Youth, Spiritual Growth, Resources)
- Action (Community Outreach such as Food for Others, Church Issues such as LGBTQ, Justice and Peace, Care for Creation, Political resources such as how to contact your elected officials)
- Archives (General Meeting minutes, history, photos, list of former and current Steering Committees, important documents).
- The PAX statement from current Mass sheets will appear on the public homepage: *PAX (Pilgrims After Christ) is a Catholic Christian inclusive community committed to planning and celebrating meaningful liturgies, developing community, and responding to the needs of our world.*
- The public "About Us" page will include the following statement, which was approved by the community during the March 29, 2015 General Meeting:

*The PAX Community:*

*1. Draws strength from the belief that the Holy Spirit continually challenges our Community and infuses our desire to look outward and serve with purpose, direction and love.*

*2. Is the type of community Jesus asked us to be: a home and source for inspiration, sharing, and comfort for people of faith and those in need.*

*3. Appreciates the rich history of the 2,000-year-old Church and seeks to build on the reformations of Vatican II (which led to the formation of the PAX Community) in ways that challenge us to re-envision the relevance and application of Catholic traditions in our Community.*

*4. Is enriched and blessed by the counsel and engaging homilies of our Roman Catholic priests and recognizes the need to cultivate bonds to additional presiders as well as links to new opportunities with other communities and individuals who are sources of information, inspiration, growth, and comfort.*

- Mary Lou Melley spoke about how planning resources will enable planners to move more completely into our new digital world with easy access to inclusive language lectionaries, planning guidelines, Mass sheet and special occasion templates, audio music files, and more.
- Patty Spaulding spoke of a treasure trove of PAX archival information, much of which she has. Decisions are being made about what to digitize, what to put on the website, what to keep in digital form only, etc. There were several suggestions, including creating searchable PDF documents. Decisions about where/how to store any important paper records are also needed.
- It was also suggested that PAX consider posting occasional homilies on the public homepage.

## **Partnership with First Baptist Church Chesterbrook (FBCC)**

Bob Merrill and Marian Klymkowsky described our relationship and ongoing activities with Pastor Jim Gibson and the FBCC community.

- We are very fortunate to have this connection, which includes joint celebrations and community outreach activities such as tutoring.
- Marian thanked PAX members who have volunteered to be part of a tutoring program. Pastor Gibson originally connected our tutoring efforts to Alexandria City Public Schools (ACPS) and we are now more directly involved with the school system.
- Bob spoke about our joint celebrations, including invitations to join the FBCC community for Holy Thursday and Good Friday on Zoom. Our goal is to continue to celebrate jointly in the future, including opportunities for fellowship when our communities come together in person again.