

Finance Council Meeting Minutes  
Saint Katharine Drexel Parish  
October 4, 2023

Present:

Fr. Bob Ianelli, Susan Dennis, Victor Mekwunye, Ed Larkin, Deacon Bill Koniers (visiting guest from Our Lady of Peace parish), Deacon John Pileggi, Judy King, Janice Roberts.

Excused:

Evola Johnson

Father Bob opened the meeting with a prayer from Saint Francis of Assisi.

Fr. Bob asked Deacon Bill to introduce himself and give the group his background. Deacon Bill shared his story of working with finance councils in Bridgeport, CT. He also worked with a private company building up finance councils across the country for various dioceses. Deacon Bill is willing to share his wisdom with St. Katharine Drexel parish. He and his wife live in Springfield, PA.

Deacon Bill shared that the pastor has the responsibility for the finances of the parish; the finance council serves in an advisory role.

Fr. Bob emphasized the need for transparency, communication, and teamwork.

Fr. Bob asked Deacon Bill what the first step would be in developing a finance council.

In a previous parish, Deacon Bill hired a part-time accountant to do some of the analyses of the various financial statements. Also, Deacon Bill looked for people in the parish with transferable skills. The goal is to get a handle on both the costs associated with maintaining the buildings and grounds and to get an analysis of the finances.

Ed Larkin stated that the parish has 300-and-some active parishioners. SKD may not have the hoped-for lawyers and accountants that Deacon Bill spoke of. Deacon Bill shared how his experience revealed that a parish may have donors it isn't even aware of.

Father Bob mentioned the experience of several parishioners: Victor has a landscaping business; Judy manages the SKD food pantry; Ed has been the SKD business manager for the last 30 years.

Ed mentioned that many of the parishioners are elderly. Fr. Bob stated that the 11:30 am Sunday Mass has plenty of young people.

Deacon Bill offered that electronic giving accounts for about 20% increase in a church's offering over in-church giving. There is a science to e-giving that is an opportunity for SKD.

Father Bob wants to go from reactive to proactive while changing the narrative.

Victor cited the bible passage of Peter's catching many fish, and by doing so, convincing himself that Jesus is worthy of following. Regarding giving, he questioned how can the church convince people to donate more?

Deacon Bill gave a sports analogy of how people want to be on a winning team, doing everything it can do to be the best. Once SKD reaches the point of being the best it can be, people will want to contribute more.

Victor also spoke about a person's uniqueness and being true to themselves in doing what they do. He questioned how can SKD connect to the church members better. He suggested visiting the members at their homes. His point was that people need to be better connected.

Victor also questioned whether the finance council should only deal with finances, or should it also include fundraising opportunities?

Deacon Bill gave the example of Our Lady of Peace parish where the pastor and the deacon visit the parishioners in their homes with an eye towards evangelizing. Plus, a church management system (a database) should include some personal information on each parishioner such as their occupation. In effect, having a persuasive relationship is key.

Father Bob emphasized the need to build trust.

Susan spoke of the turnover of pastors at SKD, and parishioners being discouraged.

Deacon Bill suggested making the pastor successful and happy and being part of a winning parish. He also noted that there is a movement across the nation to rotate pastors and deacons.

Victor emphasized the need for continuity among lay leadership on the councils and committees when the pastors are changed.

Father Bob looked at the sponsorship letter and the responsibility of the members of the finance council.

Stewardship is dependent on having the right information. A pastor's letter to the parish is part of the process, showing appreciation for their generosity.

Deacon Bill offered to send Fr. Bob a copy of the Archdiocesan policy on finance councils.

Ed shared that SKD has a church management system. Ed next went into a detailed explanation of the 2023/2024 budget, showing a deficit of over \$200,000.

Ed explained the finances concerning the Immaculate Heart of Mary (IHM) site and the move of the food pantry to Catholic

Social Services on 7<sup>th</sup> Street. Deacon Bill recommended showing the IPCC (the committee of the archdiocese that handles subsidies to parishes) subsidy as an income item and not as an offset of expenses. IPCC offers SKD a subsidy of about \$150,000.

Fr. Bob detailed the process of relegating the IHM site and the eventual sale.

Victor commented about the possibility of preserving the site for renting it out for social functions such as weddings.

Deacon Bill responded that about 20% of Catholics go to church, leaving 80% of Catholics not attending. The potential users of a social hall are shrinking.

Ed summarized his report by saying that SKD is working to reduce its deficit.

Judy spoke about the new, smaller space for the food pantry.

Susan asked if more space is coming. Judy replied that the space is fixed as is. There will be no toy drive or clothing donations going forward.

Catholic Social Services may do Toys for Tots.

Victor asked if only Catholics receive donations. Judy answered that the only restriction to receiving a donation is that they register.

Victor questioned whether SKD can give out toys to the larger community in the name of SKD. Drexel Neumann Academy is receiving stuff from the food pantry. Judy emphasized the lack of space to do more than just food distribution.

Deacon John asked if the Finance Council meeting minutes can be posted on the SKD parish website. Fr. Bob said he would work with Jose Martin to get it done.

Deacon John asked that the Finance Council approve the minutes of the meeting in the next two weeks so that the minutes can be posted on the parish website instead of waiting for the next meeting in three months for the approval. The members present approved of the idea.

In general, donations should be shown with both this year's collection amount and last year's collection amount in the bulletin.

Father Bob handed out a document entitled "Implementation Ground Rules" giving some basic guidelines for running a finance council meeting.

Susan asked Deacon Bill if year-end statements showing a parishioner's contributions are recommended.

Deacon Bill responded that the church management database has a report showing donors and contributions for the year.

Janice spoke about tithing. She counts the weekly collections and notices the \$1 and \$5 bills. She noted that SKD can't support itself that way.

Deacon Bill mentioned the practice in the Jewish faith of tithing. He said that Catholics can increase the benefits of tithing as a goal. A lay person is the best witness to tithing.

Fr. Bob spoke of the upcoming Forty Hours devotion this weekend.

Fr. Bob thanked Deacon Bill for his time.

Next meeting is Wednesday, January 17, 2024, at 6 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Deacon John Pileggi  
October 6, 2023