

MINUTES – Draft
Voice of the Faithful, Inc.
Board of Trustees Face-to-Face Meeting
April 16 and 17, 2015

April 16, 2015

Present: Mark Mullaney, Larry Mulligan, Margaret Roylance, Phil Megna, Mary Freeman, Pat Gomez, Anne Southwood, Donna Doucette

Absent: Mike Ryan, Mary Pat Fox

The meeting began after dinner at about 6:30 pm with a prayer.

Financial Report: Anne Southwood reported that February was not a strong month financially. She stated that monthly donors are declining and that we need someone to be in charge of the monthly online members. These members need to be treated as an important part of VOTF. She also suggested that we reach out to other non-profits for fund raising ideas.

Discussion of Financial Report: Our goal is to have 5-6 months of financial backup, but we have not been able to reach that goal. Mark Mullaney noted (as he has in the past) that we shouldn't be surprised about getting the same results by doing the same thing. We need to increase focus on fund raising, since the Assemblies are a wonderful opportunity to re-energize ourselves and rededicate ourselves to our initiatives, but they are only secondarily (if at all) fund raisers. Impact of the Assembly on cash flow was discussed; we are within \$2,000 of breakeven and expect to reach it. Pat asked about the \$9,100 loan and how it is shown in our financial report. Anne concluded that we need to get back on financial track to weather the summer months, but the group noted that we also need to devote time to our initiatives.

Communicating with media: Nick Ingala spoke to the trustees about how to respond to media questions and make sure that our message is conveyed in any discussion with them.

COR meeting: Pat Gomez said that she was the only one at the meeting who wasn't a director/officer and suggested that the next VOTF representation at COR be one of our officers or Donna. The sense of the COR meeting seemed to be that every group should continue doing its own thing, but it was unclear what actions the group would take as a whole. VOTF was asked to contact Cardinal O'Malley about the Family Synod. The Board also approved trustees Phil Megna and Larry Mulligan as the new COR representatives.

Mark reported that we have been working with Michael Mack ("Conversations with my Molester") about an event when the Pope is in NYC. There is also a possibility of a Healing Circle there in the same time frame. The group agreed that this could be our COR event, but more discussion followed concerning what VOTF might wish to do to recognize the Pope's visit. The Board agreed that we need to brainstorm ideas or events/projects related to the visit. How should VOTF recognize the Pope's Jubilee Year of Mercy?

The meeting closed with a prayer.

Board Meeting reconvened April 17, 2015

Present: Mark Mullaney, Larry Mulligan, Margaret Roylance, Phil Megna, Mary Freeman, Pat Gomez, Anne Southwood, Mary Pat Fox, Donna Doucette

Absent: Michael Ryan

We began the meeting at 9:32 AM with a prayer by Phil Megna.

Director's Report: Donna discussed the help she had provided to the Association of United States Catholic Priests (AUSCP) with their survey on the Synod, and the relationship with them that has developed as a result. They have moved from their initial concern about working with us and are now grateful for all the assistance Donna has provided. AUSCP sent the survey to their priest members and received survey results from 572 priests. While Donna cannot share the survey results with us until they are released by AUSCP, she gave an overview of the priests' comments, and mentioned that some expressed frustration that "they will do what they want anyway"; another complaint was that the Vatican questionnaire included some biased questions.

Donna also provided an update on the matter of the seminarian from India who was brought to our attention for sexual misbehavior. Phil Megna expressed an opinion that we should not expend our resources on the situation and Donna agreed.

Our new VOTF website is up and looking very good. We did lose some documents, including some board minutes, in the transition and had some trouble with web posting but things are settling down.

On capital equipment, she reported that our current servers are past their lifetimes and will no longer be supported by Microsoft or by our IT vendor. Given the costs of new servers versus operation with a "cloud server," we will transition to the "cloud" instead of getting a new server.

The Board then reviewed all our ongoing initiatives and committee activities.

Ongoing Initiatives/Committees

Survivor Support/Healing Circle: VOTF was contacted by St. Anthony's Shrine (Arch Street Chapel) as a site for Healing Center. Tom Conway, OFM is the Executive Director and a close friend of Cardinal O'Malley. This might be an opportunity to showcase what we are doing with Healing Circles and to share the goals of the initiative with Vivian Soper, Director of the Office of Pastoral Support and Child Protection at the RCAB. There is also a parish in Methuen that is a possibility for a Healing Circle. Mark stressed the need not to publicize too much about Healing Circles before we have more experience conducting them. Mary Freeman understood that, but said the Board needed to know what a Healing Circle "is and what it isn't."

Donna directed the trustees to the documents on the new web site where Healing Circles and Restorative Justice are described; they are listed as a Program from the dropdown menu on the Home Page. For additional information, also go to the web site for Communities for Restorative Justice: www.c4rj.com . A monograph is also available from the USCCB on Healing Circles.

VOTF continues to support SNAP by attending their meetings. Mary Pat will go to this summer's SNAP Conference.

Child Protection: Mark asked Pat Gomez if there were child abuse reporting statistics available to get a sense of how much progress has been made in this area. She suggested the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate (CARA) at Georgetown University. The Board agreed that child abuse is still going on and we need to collect data to assess any progress that has been made. The USCCB has a CARA report about child abuse covering 2004-2013:

<http://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/child-and-youth-protection/upload/2013-Annual-Report.pdf>

Another good resource is: Child Welfare Information Gateway: www.childwelfare.gov

Jetta Bernier was also noted as an excellent resource for information on child sex abuse.

There have been some changes in the area of child protection for the better. For example, VIRTUS training is taking place across the country, but Larry pointed out that the most important part of VIRTUS training is the follow up, and that is limited.

Pat also mentioned how moving she found Tom Doyle's speech at the August 2014 SNAP Convention "How Survivors Changed History":

<http://christiancatholicism.com/how-survivors-have-changed-history-by-thomas-p-doyle-o-p/>.

Clericalism: Mark said that, as lay people, we are 50% responsible for clericalism. The Assembly workshop on "Can Clergy & Laity Speak to Each Other As Equals?" should address one of the primary factors that make clericalism so difficult to break down.

Ordination of Married Men: We have written a paper on the subject which may be found on our website. There are no real impediments to progress on this issue, but some Bishop must step forward and make it happen. Mark suggested that we find a bishop with whom that issue resonates.

Women's roles in the Church: Future Church is leading on this issue. We use our web site to make people aware of the need for female deacons. Going forward we must be aware of bishops who would support the female diaconate. Larry Mulligan said that Michigan has a bishop who might be open to women deacons and agreed to investigate.

Bishop Selection: Portal – Our process worked well in Chicago, and Vermont used our resources but not our process. Any effort in this area needs strong support on the ground.

Prayerful Voice: New leadership is needed for this key effort. Svea’s Fraser was mentioned as a strong possibility. Phil Megna volunteered to support this initiative, as did Larry Mulligan.

Finance: The Diocesan Database portal has opened on the VOTF website and will be a focus of the Finance Workshop at the Assembly. We will demonstrate how to access the information on the portal, and present David Castaldi’s guide to reviewing a Diocesan financial statement. We will use the Diocese of Venice in Florida as a case study. Bishop Dewane has attracted some negative attention as a result of his authoritarian attitude, but his diocese is in excellent financial shape.

Keeping this portal as up-to-date as possible is important because no other reform organization is engaged in a similar activity at this time. Ann Carroll was mentioned as someone who would be good at that job. Margaret Roylance asked that members let her know if they see information that isn’t correct on the portal. We feel that keeping this activity going is important, because the extent of diocesan finance reporting is clearly increasing. Washington DC and NYC are examples of dioceses that had no financial information posted on their web site when we started this effort and now they post at least some information.

Summary of Leadership of Initiatives/Committees

Project	Lead
Married priests/optional celibacy	Larry Mulligan
Clericalism	Mary Pat Fox
Survivor Support	Bill Casey, Jayne O’Donnell
Finance	Margaret Roylance, Mark Mullaney
Bishop Selection	Anne Southwood
Cooperative Projects	Larry Mulligan, Phil Megna
Prayerful Voice	Larry Mulligan, Phil Megna
Child Protection	Pat Gomez
Audit	Phil Megna
Governance	Mary Freeman
Nominating	Mary Freeman
Development	Mary Pat Fox, Mary Freeman

Future Efforts: The Board spoke briefly about where VOTF should focus its efforts after the Assembly. Our organizational resources are limited, so the Board must make some decisions

about priorities among these ongoing initiatives. In addition to continuing to support our two major initiatives (Financial Transparency and Accountability and Survivor Support /Healing Circles), we envision supporting a vigorous effort to present a VOTF perspective as part of the Family Synod.

The meeting closed with a prayer.