

MINUTES - DRAFT
Voice of the Faithful, Inc.
Board of Trustees Meeting Feb 28 – March 1, 2014
Our Lady Help of Christians, Newton, Massachusetts

Friday, February 28, 2014:

Board Members Present: Mark Mullaney, Ron Dubois, MaryPat Fox, Mary Freeman, Ed Greenan (phone), Larry Mulligan, Margaret Roylance, Anne Southwood, and Pat Gomez

Executive Director: Donna B. Doucette

Guest: Public Relations Director: Nick Ingala

Board Member Absent: Phil Megna

VOTF President Mark Mullaney called the meeting to order at 7 p.m.

Opening Prayer offered by: Larry Mulligan

1. **Consent Item:** The minutes from the January 28, 2014, meeting were unanimously approved (9-0-0) after a minor change.
2. **Finances:** Treasurer Anne Southwood reported a decrease in operating expenses by 6% over YTD 2013, and that monthly expenses are being met. Status: Adequate. Executive Director Donna Doucette noted that the spring newsletter mailing will go out the first week in March. After some discussion, the financial report was unanimously approved (9-0-0).
3. **Development Report:** Donna reported that 2014 Assembly expenses have been met. A more long-range goal is to establish an endowment fund through a program of identifying potential donors to this fund. The benefits of structuring the Board to be more donor-oriented were discussed.
4. **April 2014 Assembly:** There are more than 100 participants signed up, and revenue is over \$11K to date. Affiliates will be contacted directly to promote registrations. Mark reminded all Board members to encourage others to register as soon as possible. The discounted rate for students of \$40 will be publicized.
5. **Nominating Committee Report:** Chair Mary Freeman reported on committee efforts to identify and make contact with potential nominees. The committee recommends an ongoing, year-round process of cultivating potential board members.
6. **Executive Director Report:** From among the many topics in the report, Donna highlighted a letter sent to the USCCB president about a Montana parish financial situation, which will be detailed at the 2014 Assembly. Also noted was the completion of a Church Governance document by Vice-President Ron Dubois.

7. **COR:** Ron Dubois reported that a COR-developed website to mark the first anniversary of Pope Francis' papacy at www.popefrancis365.org is now available. Our Church Governance document is also posted on that site. COR has written a letter to the Pope as part of the anniversary initiative that requests a meeting and urges the Pope to place women in positions of responsibility in the Church.

8. **Public Relations:** Commenting on our overall public relations and use of Social Media, Public Relations Director Nick Ingala reported PR efforts through news releases and statements (distributed as appropriate and posted on VOTF website); and Social Media in the form of a blog, Facebook page, Twitter account, Scribd submissions, Constant Contact emails and website. The VOTF blog currently has 425 posts, 33,162 hits, 48 email followers, 14 wordpress.com followers and 107 comments; VOTF Twitter has 145 followers; VOTF Facebook has 1,909 followers; top blog post since January 2012, "Convicted Prelate Apparently Not on Bishop's Agenda in Baltimore this Week," on Nov. 13, 2012, with 926 hits.

Closing Prayer: offered by MaryPat Fox
Board adjourned for the evening around 9 p.m.

Saturday, March 2, 2014:

Board Members Present: Mark Mullaney, Ron Dubois, MaryPat Fox, Mary Freeman, Larry Mulligan, Margaret Roylance, Anne Southwood, and Pat Gomez

Executive Director: Donna B. Doucette

Guest: Public Relations Director: Nick Ingala

Board Member Absent: Phil Megna

VOTF President Mark Mullaney called the meeting to order at 8:30 a.m., Mar. 1, 2014.

Opening Prayer offered by: Larry Mulligan

Mark Mullaney led the full-day discussion on five topic areas. Notes were recorded on poster boards that listed all current VOTF action groups.

Question #1 Discussion – How has the environment changed?

Discussion on changed environment included these areas: society; the Vatican; heightened awareness of abuse and malfeasance in the Church; parish configurations; youth and call to service; high technology; fading of initial anger; many leaving the Church; call for evangelization; joy and hope in Pope Francis; world economy: gap between rich/poor growing; meeting and working with bishops, a positive path.

Question #2 Discussion – Is the problem we set out to change still a problem?

Discussion then centered on identifying the problems within our Church that forged VOTF. Areas discussed included clergy sexual abuse as the catalyst for VOTF; lack of power and voice of lay people; clericalism: we are part of the problem; need for parish safe environments; support of survivors started as raising awareness and listening, and now includes promoting changes in state SOLs and prevention. All concurred that the root problem, clericalism, is not yet solved.

The last paragraph of the VOTF identity statement was read: “VOTF welcomes the active participation of all Catholics who share a commitment to assisting survivors, supporting priests of integrity, protecting children, and working for full lay participation in Church governance. VOTF will continue to seek structural reforms that will correct the problems that led to the abuse scandal, and that, if unchanged, could enable other scandals to occur. Joining VOTF is a commitment to work to strengthen and renew the Church, and to assume shared responsibility for its governance.”

Question #3 Discussion – Is our mission statement flexible enough to allow the organization to grow and change?

Unanimous concurrence in the affirmative!

Question #4 Discussion – Are our goals flexible enough to allow the organization to grow and change?

After careful reflection and discussion, Board members expressed firm belief that our goals be understood as interconnected and be seen as focal points on a triangle within a circle that is our mission and identity statements.

Question #5 Discussion – What is our vision going forward for the next two years?

Board members discussed our current activities in detail with a focus on immediate actions:

Bishop Selection: Pope Francis has asked for pastoral leaders; the people can readily identify these qualities in the clergy.

Celibacy: Push to start dialogue on ordaining married priests with our bishops as we continue working for change within the Church.

Synod on the Family: Continue collaboration with COR initiatives during this 3-year process; VOTF outreach to the family has a focus on child protection.

Support for Survivors: SOL Guide developed; survivor resources provided on the affiliate level. VOTF has a repository of government and academic reports on clergy sexual abuse. Pathways to Healing at the 2014 Assembly may lead to additional projects.

Child Protection: April is Child Abuse Prevention Month, which is highlighted annually with encouragement for parish-level actions, such as creating safe environment programs, adult prevention training, annual background checks for volunteers.

Women's Roles: Promotion of Phyllis Zagano's online course through Hofstra University on women in the Church and women deacons. Also promote other writings by Phyllis (her best book on the subject is *Holy Saturday*). Also, several initiatives have been developed and will be discussed at the 2014 Assembly, and we'll come away with other ideas that we can use.

Clericalism: An action plan could be developed from the discussion at the April 2014 Assembly.

Financial Accountability: Focus on protecting parish collections; financial malfeasance and clergy abuse go hand-in-hand. A review of all U.S. diocesan websites to determine availability of diocesan financial information on diocese's website was completed. A future web portal will hold the results of this study and include a primer on how to read a diocesan financial report.

International Membership: 23 countries including U.S., Ireland, New Zealand and Canada.

Open Projects: Securing priests' pensions, security for pastoral ministers, and youth outreach.

Closing Prayer: Ron led us in the concluding prayer.

Meeting was adjourned at 4:30 p.m.

Next Meeting: Tuesday March 18, 2014 at 7 p.m.

Thankful to Nick Ingala for providing notes taken at the meeting,
Respectfully submitted,

Patricia T. Gomez
Board Member and Secretary

SEE: Poster Board Discussion Notes: "Summary BOT Review Feb. 28/Mar. 1, 2014."

#####