

MINUTES – Draft
Voice of the Faithful, Inc.
Board of Trustees Meeting, July 22, 2014

Board members present in the office: Mark Mullaney, Margaret Roylance, Michael Ryan, Patricia Gomez. Board members attending by phone: Anne Southwood, Edward Greenan, Larry Mulligan, Mary Pat Fox

Board members absent: Phil Megna, Mary Freeman

Executive Director: Donna Doucette (in the office)

Guest: Jayne O'Donnell, VOTF Development Coordinator

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

Opening Prayer: Led by Mark Mullaney

Consent Item: The minutes from the June meeting were unanimously approved (8-0-0). Nick Ingala, although not present, was thanked for taking the minutes for that meeting.

Financial Report

Treasurer Anne Southwood reported that VOTF is in a “tight liquidity situation.” A motion was made to reduce the budget 8% to \$410,000. The motion was passed unanimously. Pat Gomez asked for clarification on a vendor cost under “marketing.” Donna Doucette said that Regina had changed the names of some accounts and Donna D. would look into it and get an answer for Pat.

Development Report

Jayne O'Donnell reported on the plans for a 2015 VOTF Assembly in Hartford, which would continue the theme of talk to action. The speaker will be Marie Collins from Ireland who is the only survivor serving on the Pontifical Commission for the Protection of Minors. The Board discussed a number of current activities reflecting the movement from talk to action, which should be at a point where we will have something significant to discuss or demonstrate by April 2015.

In the area of financial transparency and accountability, the Financial Display Portal could be introduced at the Assembly with a tutorial on understanding Diocesan budgets and how to find questionable items, with a focus on vigilance at the parish level. There may be results from the Canon Law Society of America study on Diocesan Finance Councils to report as well. The Restorative Justice group is approaching the goal of holding their first healing circle. This is the fulfillment of a discussion that began at the 2012 VOTF Conference. We have tentative plans for healing circles on Nov. 1-2 in the Boston area, and Bill Casey is planning one in Northern Virginia and Fr. Jim Connell one in Wisconsin. We hope to have Tom Doyle conduct a breakout session on survivor support and Robert Bordone conduct another on negotiating. We also hope to have a clergy/laity dialogue and involve the Association of US Catholic Priests. There was a motion made to proceed with the 2015 Assembly plans which would involve signing a contract with the Hartford Convention Center. The motion was passed unanimously.

In terms of other ongoing development activities, Jayne and Mark over the next 4/6 weeks will be speaking at the SNAP Convention, at a VOTF meeting in Manchester NH and a VOTF meeting in Coastal Delmarva DE. Jayne asked again for names of potential major donors. After a bit of brainstorming the trustees agreed to send her suggestions. Mary Pat Fox has not yet heard from members concerning a possible fundraiser in NYC.

Efforts to Meet with Cardinal O'Malley and Other Bishops

Mark discussed our ongoing contact with the Archdiocese of Boston. He suggested we should put together another letter that is more specific about what we are offering. We also are working on meetings with other bishops about VOTF projects under way. The projects will continue, and the reforms they represent will continue, but perhaps under the new papal regime more bishops will be interested in participating in reform. Currently, the focus of presentations to the bishops will be the married priest initiative, restorative justice and financial accountability. In addition to a planned meeting with Bishop Uglietto, Vicar General of the Archdiocese of Boston, and eventually with Cardinal O'Malley, VOTF contacts with bishops have included a good meeting with Bishop Caggiano in Bridgeport and a proposed meeting with Archbishop Blair in Hartford in July.

Status of VOTF Initiatives

Mark stated that **restorative justice and financial accountability** are maturing from talk to action but that we need to advance other initiatives from talk to similar stages of action. This led to a lengthy discussion about the status of the VOTF position and actions in support of **women's role in the church**.

Anne noted that Phyllis Zagano presently has about 300 participants taking her online women deacons course and feels there will be something coming out of it that we could use. Ordination of women deacons by restoring the female diaconate as it once existed in the Church will require a "bishop by bishop" approach, but first an individual faith community must discern the need for a woman deacon and call a willing candidate. Education of the community to this possibility is an essential first step, and VOTF could be part of that effort. Mark suggested that VOTF pull together a program around women's roles that could perhaps support a membership drive focusing on bringing forward women's roles in the Church, working with leaders like Dr. Zagano and FutureChurch. In doing so, it would be important to note, as Dr. Zagano does in her program, that the diaconate is not a "consolation prize" for failing to achieve women's ordination to the priesthood. It is a separate and worthy vocation.

The Board then reviewed our other initiatives: continuing education on **clericalism** and how to resist it, **optional celibacy** and **ordaining married men** (needs a next step), **bishop selection** (needs another candidate diocese), **prayerful voice**, and **lay education**.

Can we ask people who are involved in each of these initiatives to come back to us with next steps that we could use for discussion in meetings with bishops and garnering new member and more funds? Also, 2015 is the anniversary of Vatican II. How should we observe it?

Executive Director Report

In addition to the reports forwarded to the Board for the meeting, Donna said she is working with some new potential volunteers who would do their work for VOTF “remotely,” so she will focus on our online activities as ones where they can best contribute. Also, the bishop selection portal needs to be monitored and constantly updated, especially to let people know when bishops are retiring and to solicit input.

Finance Working Group Report

Margaret reported on the group’s contact with Canon Law Society, which is doing a study of finance councils nationwide—this would be a good complement to our work on financial transparency and accountability. The Canon Law Society intends to study what Canon Law requires concerning the operation of Diocesan Finance Councils and assess if dioceses around the country are actually meeting these requirements. They recently sent out a questionnaire to the chief financial officer at every diocese in the U.S. and asked a range of interesting questions. When they did a similar survey for a study on Parish Pastoral Councils, they got about an 80% response rate and expect the same for this initiative. The survey was reviewed at the recent Financial Working Group (FWG) meeting Saturday June 14th, and members of the group thought that it was well designed. The next meeting of the FWG will be held on September 13, 2014.

Governance Committee Report

Mark noted that the Nominating Committee actions have been moved to the Governance Committee. Mary Pat said that basically we want to keep our options open to having elected trustees. She said that she and Ed Wilson will draft a suggestion for a change in the bylaws to accomplish this. This would include, for example, maintaining the office of past president. She said the committee would have more to report later.

Other Business

Mark reported concerns of some priests in the Diocese of Venice, Florida, with Bishop Dewane. VOTF members in Florida are working to address this. Mark also reported on interviews he did recently with the St. Louis-Post Dispatch and a radio talk show in Portland, Ore. Mark said he told the reporters, among other things, that 12 years ago bishops had a choice of healing or covering up, and they chose to cover up. Now our restorative justice program might reopen this door. Both reporters were very interested following up on this. So, Mark felt we are definitely showing that we are taking talk to action.

Closing Prayer: Mark led the Glory Be.

Adjournment: The meeting was adjourned at 8:45 p.m.

Next Board Meeting: Aug. 19, 2014

Respectfully Submitted: Margaret Roylance, Secretary and Board Member

Future Meetings in 2014: Aug. 19, Sept. 23, Oct. 21, Nov. 18. No meeting in December