

Minutes (Final)
Board of Trustees Meeting (at Wellesley College Club)
Voice of the Faithful, Inc.
April 16-17, 2010 – Friday, April 16, 2010 5:30 PM-9:00 PM EST
Saturday, April, 17, 2010 9:00 AM-3:45 PM EST

Board Members Present: Bill Casey (presiding), Mary Pat Fox, Pat Gomez, Elia Marnik, Dan Bartley, Ed Wilson, Ron DuBois, Jayne O'Donnell, and John Hushon (Saturday).

Officers Present: Janet Hauter, Kevin Connors, Nick Mazza.

Executive Director: Donna Doucette.

Opening Prayer Service was led by Pat Gomez to create a spirited focus for the weekend meeting. Pat led a reflection of four themes: Planting, Nourishment, Trust, and Faithfulness.

1. Administrative Matters: Upon a motion duly made and seconded, the Board approved minutes of the meeting on March 2, 2010, as presented (7-0-1).

In favor: Bill Casey, Dan Bartley, Ron DuBois, Mary Pat Fox, Pat Gomez, Elia Marnik, Ed Wilson.

Abstention: Jayne O'Donnell (was not present at the March 2 meeting).

2. General Sharing: Bill Casey invited each of the participants to share their sense of the recent developments in the unfolding global story of clergy sexual abuse and cover-up, along with their inclinations as to how VOTF should best respond to the fast-breaking developments. Participants' varied reflections pointed to a sense of an unprecedented breakdown in the leadership of the hierarchy as well as an unprecedented opportunity for VOTF to advance its mission for laity to share in the governance and guidance of the Church leadership. Participants agreed that VOTF needed to move quickly and decisively in line with expected continuing developments, and all expressed high satisfaction with the public statements of VOTF in recent months and in the appearances of key VOTF leaders in the public forum.

3. Conversation with Tom Doyle: Tom Doyle was unable to attend the meeting as scheduled due to last minute scheduling conflicts but he participated by teleconference on Friday evening. Tom reaffirmed his position that the problems with the church are systematic and that the laity must use its common intelligence to address those issues. He encouraged us to work toward systematic change. Tom felt that the hierarchy are holding on and will not change, but VOTF imposes a threat to the hierarchy and they are afraid of losing power.

In response to participants' request for guidance in collaborating with survivors of clergy sexual abuse, Tom indicated that the survivors' greatest wounds are spiritual and that this trauma has not been ministered to by the church. There is little homogenous about the survivor community, for survivors who have been abused and victimized experience this violence uniquely and respond differently. Anger and post-traumatic stress disorder are evident. He indicated also that although some in the survivor community are disappointed in VOTF, affiliates should partner with the survivor community more frequently when there is opportunity for mutual respect and collaboration.

4. VOTF's mission in light of shifts within other Catholic reform organizations: The discussion centered on a paper prepared by Trustee John Hushon about the shifts he has observed in working closely with other Catholic reform organizations in his role as co-leader of the American Catholic Council's planning efforts. John indicated that many reform organizations are moving away from

priority attention to reform a broken Church leadership model to one that focuses on how to take responsibility for the Church life that its members want to achieve. Participants discussed a range of ideas on whether VOTF needed to adjust its mission/goals and focus in light of developments in the life and leadership of the Church, but the general sense was that VOTF should continue to adapt to the signs of the times while maintaining its mission and goals—with the people in the pews (along with the lower clergy) remaining as its primary focus for governance reform. The participants also were in agreement that VOTF should continue to collaborate with other reform organizations particularly where interests were common and the other organizations were willing to accept VOTF's differences from their missions and goals. President Dan Bartley agreed that he or one of the officers will make contact with COR (Catholic Organizations for Reform) to see if VOTF's differences in identity make it feasible to join that organization.

5. Finances: President Dan Bartley reported that the financial state of VOTF continued to show improvement and that expectations for increased contributions was high as the unfolding global story of the abuse scandal continued to receive high media attention. Dan pointed out that VOTF experienced an \$85,000 increase over last year and that financial projections are conservative. Treasurer Kevin Connors complimented Executive Director Donna Doucette on cutting expenses by 15% during the past year, and he suggested it was time to review the salary cuts made during the financial emergency last summer. Kevin indicated that the Officers were finishing work on the FY 11 budget and hoped to present it at the May meeting of the Board.

6. Development: Committee Chair Jayne O'Donnell reiterated her belief that development success depends heavily on someone with professional expertise dedicated to this initiative. Major donors and the use of planned giving vehicles need to be our primary focus. During the lunch break, Executive Director Donna Doucette introduced Julie Dutcher as the new VOTF development specialist. Julie has just been hired and is getting up to speed with VOTF's major donors and patterns of revenue development. She will also focus on grants and foundations opportunities.

7: Officer's Plans for Mission Accomplishment: Discussion continued on the successes of the Voices in Action (VIA) program. VIA has given our members some actionable projects, including the Universal Church Reform Platform's Bishop Selection initiative and another one in progress on Women In Leadership. The Child Protection Survivor Support platform led a campaign to promote child protection during the national celebration of Child Protection during April. President Dan Bartley indicated that we are increasing our membership and experiencing more success, especially due to leadership and successes on the VIA initiatives.

Clear messaging in defining who we are is showing success as well. A recent survey about the VIA campaign drew 763 respondents of which 445 would like to be more involved and 263 provided personal contact information. The media team is responding quickly especially with the constant line-up of events they had to handle. A letter is being developed that will be sent to every bishop on the Bishop Selection document and an Op-Ed piece is being written for the New York Times.

The participants engaged in a spirited discussion of a bold statement and action on Pentecost in light of the unprecedented global revelations and hierarchical failures. Chair Bill Casey introduced a proposal for VOTF to issue an uncompromising position of the removal of Bishops with a demonstrable record of reassigning predatory clergy and to promote placement of this statement in collection baskets by members and others on Pentecost, with or without withholding of ordinary contributions on that one day. In view of favorable response to this kind of bold action, Bill offered it to the Officers for implementation as they best determined.

President Dan Bartley indicated tentative plans for the next VOTF conference on Long Island on October 30, 2010. Dan agreed to reconsider the date given the proximity of the national CTA convention on November 4th and a possible survivor-led event in Rome on that same weekend.

John Hushon provided an update on the ACC conference next year in Detroit. Confirmed speakers are Hans Kung, Anthony Padovano, James Carroll, Kathleen Kennedy Townsend, Diana Hayes and Sr. Joan Chittister. The conference begins on Friday evening at 5:00 PM and will end at about 12 noon on Sunday. Pre-registration fee of \$170 will be offered by this summer. John indicated that the ACC website offers a full set of materials for those groups interested in conducting local listening sessions leading up to the ACC conference. VOTF affiliates in many locations are planning such sessions.

8. Internal Board Business:

a. Governance. Committee Chair Elia Marnik reported that the committee has no immediate governance issues to address following the successful two-year effort to issue the recently announced revised By-Laws.

b. Trustee Nominations. Committee Chair Mary Pat Fox reported that the committee extended the deadline to April 24th to provide additional time to secure nominations for upcoming Trustee vacancies. Once the nomination process is complete the committee will interview those who were nominated. A slate will be provided the BOT no later than the June meeting. Chair Bill Casey solicited nominations to replace him as Chair when his term ends in May. He indicated that nominations would be accepted through the end of April.

Trustee Pat Gomez encouraged participants to write a letter of support for Fr. Scahill to the Springfield, MA diocesan bishop in support of his call for serious reform of the hierarchical governance model, including the option of the resignation of the Pope. Some detractors of Fr. Scahill are urging the Bishop to begin procedures to defrock him.

9. A Proposal to Consider the way VOTF does Business: Based on papers submitted by John Hushon and Janet Hauter, the participants engaged in a lengthy discussion on the way the BOT conducts business. There was general consensus on efficiency measures, such as a consent agenda to reduce the time needed to conduct routine business as well as to allot more time for substantive discussion on the Board's vision about VOTF's overall focus and emerging issues. The participants also expressed openness to meeting in person three times a year given the quality of face-to-face conversation and the productivity on important issues. Some suggested that the Board ought to examine and advocate, as appropriate, core issues in a broader context and related issues that VOTF might have side-stepped in the past. The Trustees agreed to restore a Board committee on Strategy as a vehicle for this effort and to rely on the Chair to institute efficiency improvements in the Board deliberative process.

Closing prayer: Pat Gomez concluded the reflection and prayer she started at the opening of the meeting.

Next meeting: Tuesday evening May 25, 2010 at 7:00PM EST.