

MINUTES
Voice of the Faithful, Inc.
Face to Face Board of Trustees Meeting
Friday November 13, 2015

Board Members Present: Mark Mullaney, Margaret Roylance, Mary Freeman, Mary Pat Fox, David O'Brien, Phil Megna, Michael Ryan, Donna Doucette, Executive Director

Board Members Absent: Larry Mulligan, Anne Southwood

Others Present: Priscilla Deck

President Mark Mullaney called the meeting to order and invited Mary Freeman to begin the meeting with a prayer from the *Circle of Life* by Joyce Rupp.

Margaret Roylance presented the minutes which were accepted.

Executive Director's Report

Donna Doucette asked if there were questions about the Director's Report which had been e-mailed to the trustees. There were no questions or specific concerns. In the absence of Treasurer Ann Southwood, Donna covered the finance report as well. She mentioned that VOTF had received a generous donation from an anonymous member. She also reported that the Voice of the Faithful trademark and the VOTF logo associated with it do not expire for another year, but that the VOTF (initials) mark would cost at least \$2,000 (attorney fees) to register. Michael Ryan suggested buying domain names as an alternative: votf.net, votf.us and votf.info could cost less to register than securing an additional trademark.

Development Report

Priscilla Deck, our new Director of Development, was introduced in person to the members of the board and presented her proposed development plans for the next six months. The board was given a copy of those plans. She emphasized the importance of monthly partners, planned giving and working with foundations.

Mark Mullaney reported that he had engaged someone to review VOTF books for next year as a means of cost saving. This review will not constitute an audit.

Updates on Ongoing VOTF Committees and Initiatives

Governance Committee

Mary Pat Fox reported that the Governance Committee has no ongoing actions.

Nominating Committee

Mary Freeman reminded the Board that we will need replacements for Mark and Mary in six months.

The meeting adjourned with a Glory Be until the following morning (Saturday the 14th).

Saturday, November 14, 2015

Board Members Present: Mark Mullaney, Margaret Roylance, Mary Freeman, Mary Pat Fox, David O'Brien, Phil Megna, Michael Ryan, Donna Doucette, Executive Director

Board Members Present via Conference Call: Larry Mulligan

Board Members Absent: Anne Southwood

Others Present: Priscilla Deck, Nick Ingala

Larry Mulligan began the meeting with a prayer from the *Circle of Life* by Joyce Ruff, the same prayer that was selected by Mary Freeman to begin the previous session of the meeting. Since he had made the selection independently of Mary, all acknowledged that the Spirit was making sure that the Board got the message.

Larry then reported to the Board on the Milwaukee meeting of the Catholic Organizations for Renewal (COR). He had provided a written report about the meeting which the trustees received. He had briefed COR about our Healing Circles, and the response was positive. The Board discussed the pros and cons of continuing involvement for COR and agreed to continue our involvement.

Follow-up on the Spotlight Film

Nick Ingala discussed the window of opportunity for us which has been opened by "Spotlight" movie and urged us to act now to build on the current interest in the events in the film and in the aftermath. Mark made the point that VOTF picked up where the film left off, supporting survivors of clerical sexual abuse and working for structural change within the church to ensure that the events will not be repeated.

Nick sent our "Retrospective" DVD to people involved with the "Spotlight" film and is interested in starting a conversation with Globe staffers and those involved in the film. He has blogged about the film and put information such as "Spotlight" reviews on Facebook and in Focus. He wants to get the reaction of the film audience to the Church and the Church to the film. He feels that this is a unique opportunity for change in attitudes and VOTF can be a catalyst.

Priscilla said that we should encourage our affiliates to seize this moment to make sure that our work in survivor support such as the Healing Circles is acknowledged. Mark said each of the Board members should reach out to our own contacts in the print and broadcast media. The group then brainstormed a list of contacts. Mark will make a call to VOTF's Advisory Board for ideas.

Continued Updates on ongoing VOTF Committees and Initiatives

Survivor Support – Healing Circles Initiative

Mark Mullaney reported that we have sponsored seven Healing Circles so far, and have had several requests for others, including one in Ireland at the request of Marie Collins and a second Circle at St. Anthony's Shrine in Boston. We have funds to prepare a brochure on Healing Circles, and Bill Casey and Jayne O'Donnell are working on it.

Dave O'Brien asked about the need for liability insurance coverage for Healing Circles. The nature of the Circles was discussed and Mark indicated that at this time it is not clear that they are medical situations. He also noted that participants are carefully screened. These aspects have an impact on the nature of insurance which may or may not be required.

Finance Transparency and Accountability Initiative

Margaret reminded the Board that the scandal of clerical sexual abuse would have been uncovered years earlier if financial transparency at the parish and diocesan level had been demanded by the faithful. She reported that David Castaldi has reviewed our Diocesan Financial database and worked with Donna and Beverly Spencer to make sure that the information on the database is as current as possible and that the guidance on how to review diocesan financial statements was clear.

She pointed out that achieving true financial transparency and accountability requires that the faithful in each Diocese “follow the money” by demanding audited diocesan financial reports and reading and understanding them when they are provided. This is an important way to move toward structural change within the church. The VOTF financial portal is an excellent tool for following the money. As soon as the database is ready for public use, we should reach out to our members to help keep the information current. For example, Larry Mulligan has offered to inform us if any changes occur in the dioceses in Michigan.

Mike Ryan reminded the Board that, circa 2008, the National Leadership Roundtable on Church Management (NLRCM) adopted the so-called “Chicago Guidelines” as their one-and-only recommended *Best Practice* for handling the weekly collections. Those guidelines are posted for download at the NLRCM website. Mike also reiterated the need for Conference-wide application of those guidelines not only to establish genuinely secure procedures in all parishes, but also to prevent an incoming bishop from nullifying the good work of a predecessor who had the courage to implement those procedures. He discussed a case of church fraud in Ocala FL that occurred only a few weeks ago to point up the fact that this is an ongoing problem. Mike noted that despite the USCCB’s claims to the contrary, Canon 455 provides the avenue by which genuinely secure guidelines can be mandated Conference-wide, thereby removing the question of their use or non-use from the whim of individual bishops. The USCCB must be more involved in requiring financial accountability and transparency throughout the Conference.

Margaret mentioned an early VOTF Structural Change proposal that the USCCB establish visiting committees of brother bishops to review the health of each diocese whose bishop is part of the USCCB. The recommendations of these visiting committees could include financial transparency and accountability, status of diocesan efforts to protect children and other aspects of diocesan life. Mark and Nick both suggested that we find a few bishops who agree with some of our concerns and try to work with them.

Regular meetings of the finance working group will begin again after the holidays.

Bishop Selection Initiative

There is no ongoing activity in this area, although the information on our website has been used in several dioceses faced with a transition to a new bishop. The office continues to monitor activity in this area.

Optional Celibacy and Ordaining Married Men Initiatives

Encouraging the participation of married men in active priestly ministry is of particular interest to Dave O’Brien. He will review and build upon the excellent work done in the area by Ron Dubois and Ed Greenan and provide a plan for future action. Since the Pope has indicated that it is up to individual bishops to decide on allowing married priests, it was suggested that we should identify bishops who are in favor of married priests and work with them.

Clericalism Initiative

Mary Freeman agreed to lead the effort to fight clericalism. AUSCP want a colloquium on clericalism for their June 2016 conference. Mary, Donna and Svea Fraser will participate.

Women's Roles in the Church

VOTF has actively supported the ordination of women to the diaconate, but thus far no women have stepped forward asking for diaconal ordination. This is in spite of the fact that many women are performing diaconal service across the US. Although we will continue to support women in the diaconate, the decision was made to de-emphasize the issue of ordination of women and refocus on the broader issue of women's roles in the church. Margaret and Mary Pat stepped forward to lead the effort, and selected October to be the focus month for women's roles.

Mark, Donna, and Bill Casey have planned a conference call on November 17 to speak with Francis Piderit and his affiliate in New York City on the issues around women's role in the Church and to discuss the possibility of employing a restorative justice approach.

Protection of Children Initiative

Pat Gomez has agreed to continue to lead this initiative, and April will be her focus month since it is Child Abuse Prevention Month. She is considering monitoring child protection at the parish level but this would be an enormous effort. We might be able to establish a portal on the VOTF website like the one with the Diocesan Finance database, but we do not currently have the resources. The fact that child protection programs seem to have been re-clericalized in some dioceses may be a matter for concern.

Prayerful Voice Initiative

Phil Megna and Larry Mulligan have offered to lead this initiative going forward. Priscilla Deck will work with Mary Freeman and Svea Fraser to provide Advent reflections which will be e-mailed to our members each day during Advent.

The meeting adjourned with a Glory Be.