



St. Mary of Magdala Church

An Ecumenical Catholic Community

P.O. Box 774, Harwich Port, MA 02646
stmaryofmagdalachurch.org

Focus Circle Meeting
Friday, March 14, 2025

Minutes

1. Call to Order and opening prayer
 - a. The meeting was called to order. Jim explained he would facilitate the meeting but limit his comments. Jim led the opening prayer

2. Review of Parish Life at this time
 - a. Any insights into or thoughts about our parish life at this time
 - i. Ed commented that he had been noting a drop off in numbers for a time, however recently we have rebounded. His only concern right now if we could get more young people involved, but he acknowledges that is an issue for most churches right now.
 - ii. Mary Jane said she thinks we've had some great new parishioners join us and that they are willing to step up and join in, even sharing at homilies. She too experienced the drop off Ed mentioned; she noted we are an older community and so will face the issue of loss, but that's been that way for 20 years.
 - iii. Kathy shared that because of renovations and pastoral transition at St. Peter's we have ridden their coattails with things in flux, lots of moving around, etc. But those things seemed to have settled down now into a better routine, and leadership in both churches are communicating well.
 - iv. Mary Jane commented on Ellie sitting on Kathy's lap at last liturgy, and how powerful that was; she noted that Kathy and Jen exude a real "calmness" that the community picks up on and follows, and how important that is.
 - v. Jim noted that, from his "outside-in" viewpoint everything everyone said made sense.

3. The Parish Discernment Process
 - a. The date for Parish Discernment Meeting
 - i. Has been set for May 10 at 2pm. We will begin listing that in the bulletin, along with preparation material. Kathy and Jen will address the process at Masses as the time draws closer.
 - b. The Focus Circle Question for Parish Discernment

- i. Mary Jane: the energy when we met with other local churches at our Unity Service in January was amazing – the love that was present. It was very power interacting with other churches. So many people are struggling with how divisive the world is right now. People shared how much we can do for each other in terms of unity, non-divisiveness, strength and hope by coming together with common needs and goals.
- ii. Ed: Following up on above, with all the chaos in the world, Jesus is calling us to do all we can as able to foster peace, and acceptance, especially to those most in need and marginalized, the poor, immigrants...
- iii. Kathy: in prayer over this she got the theme of goodness. In light of our own call to goodness and justice, and in light of the call to support the same in the world, what is Jesus calling us to at this point. She also commented on how important it is to frame this toward the positive.
- iv. Barbara (was not present, but shared her thoughts in writing):

In light of our present world situation I believe that Jesus is calling our parish to live as people of hope. We need to go back to our roots - Christianity is a religion of hope. When Mary of Magdala went to the tomb she must have been distraught, but when she left there after encountering Jesus, she was filled with hope.

In times of turmoil hope is the path to inner serenity. While day to day cares can easily paralyze us with fear, we need to look to the arc of history to recognize how far we have come with God's help. In our own environment Saint Mary of Magdala church has survived and grown after the retirement of Jim and Marie David, its founders, and the illness and curtailment of Kathy Carpenter's ministry. Through all these situations Kathy Rigorda Eva's energy and enthusiasm have been a sign of hope for us all, and the timing of Jen Keon's ordination to the diaconate was more than mere coincidence.

The history of St. Mary of Magdala Church is a microcosm of the forward movement of humankind. Today's challenges of upheaval and uncertainty, of unrest and war are undeniably serious but as Christians we need to remember Jesus' simple message to love one another, and in so doing to offer hope to those we encounter, some of whom have had their foundation shaken.

We need to ask Jesus to walk through these days with us, to strengthen our faith, and to enable us to offer hope to each other even as we acknowledge setbacks and fears. Let us be a sign of hope, the light of Christ, for all around us. Let us act in ways that confirm we are people of hope.

Discussion ensued. It was pointed out that the need for hope was a thread through all of the comments. Barbara's thoughts in particular acknowledge we are in an imperfect situation; but that hope carries us into the future, it is the building block for the future. It is in line with the need for positive focus; hope is very important because we are being challenged by evil right now, but it is hope that comes from Jesus that will move us through it.

The first draft of the parish discernment question:

IN LIGHT OF OUR PARISH MISSION STATEMENT; IN LIGHT OF OUR TRUST IN JESUS; IN LIGHT OF OUR CHRISTIAN CALL TO ENGAGE THE HOPE JESUS GIVES US AND TO SHARE IT WITH EACH OTHER, OUR NEIGHTORS, AND OUR WORLD, WHAT IS JESUS CALLING OUR PARISH TO IN THE COMING PERIOD OF TIME?

It was agreed that we would pray over this draft and meet in two weeks to finalize it.

4. Other items

- a. Jim reported on corrections he is attempting to make on Google maps to correct the location to which they are directing people. The issue is that they have our address listed correctly but on maps they direct people to our old location on Lower County Road in Harwich Port.
- b. Kathy reported that she and Jen think that our parish should consider joining the Nauset Faith Association. She explained the Association's goals and that our requirement would be to get a parishioner to join the group to represent SMMC. Their role would be primarily informational, attending meetings and reporting back to the parish on happenings. The cost would be \$100. Jim commented that if the Focus Circle agrees, this should be put out to the parish after the Parish Discernment Meeting on May 10.

Ed made a motion that after May 10 the pastoral team try to find a parishioner to represent us on the Nauset Faith Association and that we approve the cost. Mary Jane seconded it. There was no further discussion, and the motion passed.

5. It was decided that we will meet on March 28 at 3:30pm to finalize the Parish Discernment Question.

6. Adjournment

Mary Jane made a motion that we adjourn; Kathy seconded it. The motion passed without discussion. Meeting as adjourned at 4:43pm