

DIOCESAN PASTORAL COUNCIL

MEETING MINUTES

Friday, January 17, 2025

The meeting was called to order at 11:00 a.m. by Paul James, Chair, and Bishop Taylor offered a prayer.

In attendance: Bishop Anthony B. Taylor, Fr. John Connell, VG, Dcn. Matt Glover, Mr. Dennis Lee, Mr. Greg Wolfe, Dcn. Ramon Argueta, Ms. Anabel Garcia, Ms. Alma Stewart, Sr. Cecilia Nguyen, OSB, Mr. Paul James, Mr. Roberto Martinez, and Mrs. Kristy Dunn.

Not in attendance: Sr. Mickey Espinoza, MCP, Mr. Jeff Hines, and Mr. Adrian Dominguez.

Also present: Mrs. Kelly Wewers, Director of the Stewardship and Development Office.

Welcome new member: Dcn. Ramon Argueta was introduced by Bishop Taylor as the Deacon Representative and welcomed by the other council members.

Review and approval of the previous meeting's minutes: The minutes of the October 18, 2024, meeting were approved by acclamation.

Old Business

Update on Emergency Response Plan – Dcn. Matt Glover

Deacon Matt Glover, Chancellor, briefed the council on “Parish Security Plan” Guidance that was recently sent out to all the priests, parishes, and schools as a resource. These are guidelines and not diocesan policy that must be followed. This led to a discussion about Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) training, a FEMA program that involves a 20-hour curriculum that covers the topics of disaster preparedness, fire safety, light search and rescue, disaster medical operations, and team organizations. Some members of the Knights of Columbus councils in Conway and Morrilton are CERT trained.

New Business

Immigration Issue – Dcn. Matt Glover

Deacon Matt reported on an e-mail that was recently sent by him from the Chancery Office to all the parishes and schools with guidance on what to do if an ICE agent were to show up at a parish or school to serve a warrant or if they did not have a warrant.

Symposium Against Human Trafficking and Pornography – Dennis Lee

Dennis Lee, Executive Director for Catholic Charities of Arkansas, shared that its diocesan task force was hosting a Symposium Against Human Trafficking and Pornography at Christ the King Catholic Church in Little Rock on Saturday, January 25 from 7:30 a.m. – 4 p.m. There is no charge to attend, and attendees are asked to register at dolrtaskforce.org where more details about the symposium can be found, including information about the speakers and topics that will be addressed.

Pro-Life Efforts – Catherine Phillips

Catherine Phillips, Director of the Respect Life Office, provided a report on pro-life activities within the diocese. She passed out flyers in English and Spanish for the upcoming Mass for Life at the Cathedral on

Sunday, January 19. In the course of her remarks, she mentioned that January 22 is a day of prayer for the protection of unborn children, and that October is Respect Life Month when the focus is on the consistent life ethic. There was some discussion about the law and abortion in Arkansas. Abortion is still illegal, but there is concern about an attempt last year to amend the state constitution to permit abortion that barely failed to collect enough valid signatures for a ballot initiative. Catherine said more prayer and education are needed to secure the safety of the unborn.

“Free Will” Program – Kelly Wewers

Kelly Wewers, Director of the Stewardship and Development Office, introduced a new program, “Free Will,” that will be offered through the diocesan website. This will allow anyone to complete a simple will at no cost to them. There is a company behind “Free Will” that is developing a custom link that will comply with Arkansas law and allow people the option of directing estate gifts to the diocese, a parish, a school, or a church-related charity or entity of their choice. Besides being a way for people to complete a simple will for free, eventually other forms that are compliant with Catholic teaching will also be offered at no cost to the user for legacy planning, funeral plans, a living will, and for designating a health care proxy. The council had a very positive response to the diocese using “Free Will.”

Meeting Wrap-up

Bishop Taylor’s remarks

Bishop Taylor thanked the council members for their attendance, especially those who traveled a great distance. He said the council’s contribution is important, and he hoped to see everyone at the Mass for Life.

Future Agenda Items

These can be submitted to Paul James, Chair, Bishop Taylor, or María Velázquez in the Bishop’s Office. Topics that are on the agenda for the Presbyteral Council will also be brought to the Diocesan Pastoral Council meetings.

Next Meeting

The next meeting will be Friday, April 11, 2025 at 11 a.m.

Closing Prayer

The meeting ended at 12:20 p.m. with the Lord’s Prayer led by Bishop Taylor.

Respectfully recorded by:

Dennis Lee
Chancellor for Administrative Affairs