

MINUTES OF THE PARISH COUNCIL MEETING AUGUST 10, 2021
SAINT MATTHEW ECUMENICAL CATHOLIC CHURCH

The zoom meeting was called to order by Tonya Adams at 7:14 pm.

Opening Prayer was given by Bishop Peter Hickman.

Roll & Quorum Determination:

Parish Council Members: Tonya Adams, Mariah Doyle-Sandoval, Jennie Guida, Sharon Smith, Doris Hand, and Ana Diaz. Anitha Madanu gave her proxy vote to Mariah Doyle-Sandoval.

Council Members Absent: Stephany Crisantos, Joshua Cruz, Rosa Isela Lopez, Lydia Russo, Polly Touhey, and Anitha Madanu.

Non-council members: Bishop Peter Hickman, Paul Schumaker, Mirella Hickman, Deacon Adelia Sandoval, Rebecca Stevens, and Fr. Arturo Querijero.

With Anitha Madanu's proxy, a quorum is present.

Decisions and Votes:

Tonya moved to approve the July minutes of the meeting with the changes that were discussed. Mariah seconded the motion. **Passed unanimously. None opposed.**

Approve Minutes of Prior Meeting:

There was a correction of the minutes from Mariah. Under Environmental Stewardship Mariah reported the title of the class was Sacred Land, Food & Farming, not "Secret". Change Secret to Sacred. The report should continue: "Last Saturday the group went to the San Juan Capistrano Ecology Center to see how regenerative farming is done. The class will repeat in the Fall. Six to eight people are needed from our community and it will be opened to outside people." Delete the statement about the book suggesting a meal to share.

Continue with only the statement: "We are losing Brother Christopher."

Tonya moved to approve the July minutes of the meeting with the changes that were discussed. Mariah seconded the motion. **Passed unanimously. None opposed.**

Old Business from previous PC meetings:

Finance Report: No financial meeting today as Deacon Tony Russo is on vacation. Tonya will send an email asking Deacon Tony to give a summary of finances when he gets back from vacation.

Saint Matthew Constitution Formatting:

Tonya explained that she carefully compared the formatted Constitution with the one before formatting. None of the content was changed yet items were placed in a different way because of the formatting. She did not send out the formatted Constitution because she wanted to explain the formatting differences during the meeting, which she did. For example, Tonya explained one change in the Bylaws regarding the schedule of things to be done before the election of the new parish council.

Tonya will send the formatted version of the Constitution and Bylaws to everyone. According to the Constitution a 2/3 vote is necessary for approval. No vote was taken because there was not a quorum of 2/3 or nine of PC members present. The formatted Constitution will be represented for a vote at the September PC meeting. (Note, during the week following the August meeting, Tonya sent a copy of the formatted constitution and the difference file to the council. Via email and text, the council agreed the content didn't change and that formatting the constitution did not require a vote.)

Community Meeting:

We cannot have a community meeting until the PC votes on the formatted Constitution. Sharon pointed out that we will need to educate the community about the changes in the Constitution, what brought about the revising, and about the parish council. More time will be needed and the election of new PC members will be in November as the new council starts in December. If our PC meeting is on Sept. 14, education would start Sept. 19. We are stressed for time. It was pointed out to check with Kelly and Mirella on scheduling education sessions between the Masses.

Fr. Arturo said that two sessions would be good for presenting the highlights of the revised Constitution and the process of rewriting. Each could be one hour between the Masses. The Constitution will be online and can be emailed. For those who need a printed copy, a few will be available to be checked out like done in a library.

With the time crunch, Doris suggested the September PC meeting be moved to September 7th. After the PC vote than the Constitution would be ready for the Clergy Council when they meet the 2nd Sunday of September.

New Business:

ECC Town Hall Meeting with Bishop Francis:

Bishop Francis had a zoom town hall meeting August 4, 2021. Members of the HOL, HOP, and Council of Bishops were invited. From our community, Sharon, Tonya, Deacon Tony, Bishop Peter, Mirella, and Jennie attended. Doris had written an email to Bishop Francis asking him to read what she wrote because she would be on vacation and unable to attend. (A copy of what was written is attached.) From Doris' question of authoritarianism, Tonya wrote a suggestion for a topic she wanted discussed. In Tonya's topic she stated she felt the leadership disrespected the laity. Bishop Francis asked how the leadership disrespect the laity. Tonya's letter was in response to this question. (A copy of the suggestion and the letter is attached.)

At the meeting Bishop Francis responded about our joining the California Diocese that our vote was just a formality. Then he quoted Bible passages and Canons of the ECC. Tonya asked, "What happens if Saint Matthew does not vote to join the diocese?" Bishop Francis said we needed to talk to the Chancellor

George von Stamwitz and/or the Council of Bishops who may have to decide. Tonya kept pressing for an answer. There were people in the meeting who spoke on our behalf. Marisa Warner suggested this could be worked out and she did not want Saint Matthew to leave the ECC. Rev. Rosa Buffone spoke of independent Catholics who have no interest in joining organizational institutions.

Jennie said that at the end of the meeting someone brought up the independent Polish Catholic Church in St. Louis having a connection to the ECC. Yet, the Bishop of the Polish Church does not have a vote in the ECC. Bishop Peter has not been invited to meetings of the Bishops Council.

Fr. Arturo was grateful that Saint Matthew was well represented at the Town Hall, yet that was not the place to share what happened. It was good our side got to tell our story. What the lay people did was what the clergy had done before about the situation. Fr. Arturo pointed out that we are following the founding principles of the ECC: self-determination, collegiality, and the three-legged stool and we are doing everything to honor these elements. The idea of being an autocephalous community can be transferred to prelature. A prelature enjoys the privileges of a diocese, but is not a diocese. We have other communities who want to join us in growing what Bishop Peter started.

Both Bishop Francis and Rev. Rosa Buffone sent an email inviting us to dialogue with them and Tonya said yes.

Bishop Peter said he was proud of our presence at the Town Hall. Tonya expressed the will of Saint Matthew. Those attending saw Bishop Francis as pushing us to join the Diocese of California. The old parish council who resigned wanted to slip us into the diocese without consulting the community, marginalized the clergy, and attempted to take over the running of Saint Matthew.

Dinner With the Clergy:

Jennie gave a report that we need to promote this event. There are only 25 tickets sold. The drawing will be at the Unity Mass.

Unity Mass:

The sign for the Unity Mass is up. Tonya suggested putting out a sign and the A frame could be used. Also, a suggestion was made to have the community park their cars in front on the street side because it seems no one is attending Mass with no cars visible. A suggestion was made that the Unity Mass be held outside because of the numbers in attendance and the upsurge in COVID cases.

Fr. Arturo gave the closing prayer.

Meeting was adjourned at 9:03 pm.

After the meeting was over, Matthew Hickman's Beatles show was reinstated for August 28th in the sanctuary.

Respectfully submitted by Doris Hand
On August 14, 2021

ATTACHMENTS TO MINUTES OF PARISH COUNCIL MEETING AUGUST 14, 2021

Doris Hand's Reflection:

REFLECTION FOR TOWN HALL MEETING WITH BISHOP FRANCIS

AUGUST 4, 2021

When I first came to Saint Matthew in Orange, I was blown away by the relational atmosphere and the invitation to the Eucharistic Table. Community was built on hospitality and acceptance. I kept coming back because I was fed spiritually at the Masses. I needed this as our family had a health crisis going on. In the community I observed a desire to be there and participate. I found caring.

As a delegate to the 2010 ECC Synod again I was deeply touched by the relational and hospitable atmosphere that prevailed. I have come to believe that the Spirit of Jesus is very much alive and operating in the ECC. Now that we have approved our revised Constitution, I desire to point out two sections that we need to always honor. First, we are a communion of communities. Second in the organization section, we are "a confederation of independently incorporated faith communities...with a synodal form of governance." I point this out because this allows the Spirit of Jesus to work in each of our communities differently. The community needs to decide their own direction. We always need to be open to new ways and new ideas. Each one of us have come from different faith traditions or no faith tradition. Those coming from certain faith traditions may carry with them unconscious structures or attitudes that were in that faith tradition. The attitude that bothers me is authoritarianism. We do not have it in our communities, yet we need to be on guard always that it does not creep in when some new idea is proposed. Authoritarianism kills the work of the Holy Spirit.

Tonya's Submission for ECC Town Hall Topic Request

The constitution and bylaws of my church, Saint Matthew Church in Orange, California, have given some decision-making power to the laity. Since 1999, the constitution stated that to join a diocese, a majority of all adult parish members present at a special meeting must vote in favor of joining the diocese. The requirement is the same for leaving a diocese. The ECC leadership ignored and disrespected the laity's vote requirement. Here's the topic I would like to discuss. How do we, or better yet, why should we assure our local communities that staying in the current ECC is not a step towards a Roman Catholic structure where the laity has little or no decision-making power?

Tonya's letter in response to Bishop Francis request to clarification on Town Hall Topic Submission:

August 3, 2021

Dear Bishop Francis,

Thank you for the opportunity to explain my concerns about the ECC leadership. I will get straight to it.

In 2019, several members of the Saint Matthew parish grew concern over the Parish Council's lack of transparency, especially the steps taken to find a new pastor. Our 2015 amended constitution, the version of the constitution at the time, documented the process for finding a new pastor. Step three of the five-step process required the approval of "the Diocesan Vocational Board." This was a major problem.

To join a diocese, the 2015 constitution (and the previous 1999 version) required that a special meeting of all adult parish members be called and a majority of attendees vote in favor. The parish council realized that Saint Matthew never voted to join the ECC California Diocese. To further complicate the situation, unbeknownst to the parish, four of the eight Saint Matthew Parish Council were members of the California Diocese council.

The obvious thing to do was to have a vote on joining the ECC California Diocese. The parish council indicated the vote was a simple formality—a cleaning up of paperwork and that everyone needed to just vote in favor of joining. Bishop Peter was very much in favor of formally joining the Diocese. However, he respected the desire of parishioners to have an informed vote. He appreciated that many of us were not on board to do an automatic yes vote. Because from the beginning of its formation, Saint Matthew has been a church where the parishioners had a say.

Parishioners requested a meeting where we could hear the benefits and disadvantages of joining the diocese. I believe that the deal breaker was a request to a meeting with the parish clergy to hear what they thought of joining the diocese.

The parish council did not call for a vote. Many active parish members leaned towards a no vote, but it did not guarantee the vote outcome either way. In the end, the Parish Council left the church to start Holy Angels with a priest they had chosen to be the next Pastor of Saint Matthew. Please know that the last of the five steps for finding a new Pastor in our constitution states, "*Approved candidate is then presented to the Church members at a special meeting. A majority vote of attending adult members is required.*" That vote was also not guaranteed either way.

Now finally, I get to why I say the ECC leadership ignored and disrespected the laity vote requirement. With all the messy issues we were having at Saint Matthew, the old Parish Council never denied that the laity must vote in favor of joining (or leaving) a diocese. The ECC leadership ignores the fact that our constitution predates the ECC. The leadership does not acknowledge the role the laity has in our church. There seems to be an attitude that Bishop Peter needs to decide for us. It's as if our constitution, past and present, is a joke and unnecessary.

Thank you for giving me this opportunity to explain the town hall suggestion I sent.

~Tonya Adams

Saint Matthew Parish Council Chairperson