

Diocese of Owensboro
Disability Awareness Committee
Minutes
February 21, 2019

Present were: Father Brandon Williams, Lauren Johnson, Judy Kapelsohn, Jane Isbill, Michelle Clouse, and Richard Murphy.

The meeting opened with a prayer by Fr. Brandon Williams.

The minutes from the December 13, 2018 meeting were approved as published.

Old Business

1. Efforts to Assist Persons with Disabilities with Receiving the Sacraments: Sr. Jeanne Wiest left the Office of Worship in the spring of 2018. Fr. Brandon and Lauren Johnson were named as co-Directors of the Office in October 2018. Bishop Medley had charged the Office of Worship and Office of Social Concerns with drafting ideas for the implementation of "Guidelines for the Celebration of the Sacraments with Persons with Disabilities." This is a document drafted in 2017 by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops.

After careful study of the document Father Brandon and Mrs. Johnson shared several ideas developed to further the implementation of the document.

a. It would be very helpful if persons with disabilities parishioners, guests, or visitors, would introduce themselves to the pastor and inquire what they should do and where they should set to be able to receive sacraments at celebrations of the liturgy. The pastor would then have better ideas of what was needed to be done to accommodate to these persons.

b. One important consideration to determine is if an individual church building has a designated area for persons with disabilities to set. Churches vary by design. If a known and designated area exists, then persons with disabilities will be directed to those spots, so as to facilitate, their receiving the sacraments.

c. Universally marked places for special accommodation will be recommended for parishes to use for designated seating for persons with disability.

d. It is recommended that ministers of hospitality and parishes throughout the diocese have included in their training information about how to assist persons with disability with accommodation. Clearly ministers of hospitality would need to know the special designated seating arrangements. The churches too, may or may not have, notched out areas in the pew arrangements to facilitate persons in wheelchairs or other devices of accommodation.

e. If a person, who is normally healthy, has surgery that may temporarily set them back in their ability to walk, or other vital human abilities, then it would be important for them or some member of the parish, to bring it to the attention of the ushers so that they can assist the member in receiving sacraments. Should a family member communicate that they wish to bring a host back to their loved one, and usher can assist them with the Eucharistic minister in providing the extra host to them.

In general, the Office of Worship agreed to reach out to other dioceses to learn what policies they may have for implementing the document. Some specifics can be communicated to parishes, but some flexibility was also needed because of particular parish layouts. The best rule of thumb is for a person with disabilities, or their loved ones, to communicate their needs to the pastor who can work with the church layout and church staff to see that the person receive the sacraments.

Committee members discussed the problems that funerals or weddings, for example, have on the special seating arrangements for persons with disabilities. Father Brandon recommended dialogue or communication with the pastor and his staff as the best practice under these circumstances.

To facilitate persons with disabilities to participate in taking part in ministerial roles, some parishes provide adjustable podiums so that lector with a disability can wheel up in their wheelchair, while in a seated position and read from the lectionary.

Certain cognitive or mental disabilities present issues in the training necessary to receive the sacraments. Once again consult with the pastor is a good place to start. Most pastors take these matters under consideration case-by-case. The pastor can consult with the parents and the child about workable solutions to receive the necessary training. One on one instruction may be necessary.

It may happen that a person needs a gluten-free host. It is possible to get a host that is gluten-free to the level of .001%. These types of hosts are obtainable. There can be issues of difficulty with swallowing and these issues must all be taken into account by the pastor and pastoral staff. Sometimes spiritual communion may be the only option and is given with the blessing.

It was agreed that the document "Guidelines for the Celebration of the Sacraments with Persons with Disabilities" would be placed on the diocesan website under the Office of Worship.

2. Special Education Needs for Religious Education in Schools (Goal2): this matter was tabled until the April meeting when Kristin Miller could be with the Committee.

3. Camp Retreat for Young People with Disabilities at the Gasper River Retreat Center: On 2-5-19, Judy, Jane and Richard visited with Ben Warrell, Director of the Gasper River Retreat Center in Bowling Green Ky. It was agreed that a one day camp would occur on 4-18-20. This should give an ample amount of time needed to prepare for campers who may wish to take part. It is clear that a number of medical and social worker professionals may be needed to assist those children from third grade up to 12th grade ages 8 to 21), who may wish to take part in the event. The Western Kentucky University campus may have volunteers that may wish to work with this population. There is speech therapy, the nursing program, and the social work program that could provide volunteers to assist. It might make possible staffing to camper ratios of 1 to 1. Special dietary needs may require a parent to bring the young person's own food if necessary to the facility.

It was decided that this would be a Catholic camp. Mass would be offered. Ben agreed to do research on activities offered at these type of camps around the state of Kentucky.

4. Planning for the Mass of Inclusion (goal three) on April 28, 2019 at 2:00 PM at Brescia University: Father Jamie Dennis has agreed to be the main celebrant for the event. The committee discussed what ministries needed to be covered and who might possibly serve in those roles. Michelle Clouse agreed to seek two servers for the event: Ian powers and Michael Smith. To lectors for the event were suggested to be Ann Switzer and Carissa Johnson. For the petitions, Caleb Isbill was recommended

and forgive bears Michelle Clouse agreed to contact couple of nephews of hers. Eucharistic ministers that were recommended were first Judy Kapelsohn and a few others. Jane and Judy agreed to be in charge of refreshments for the reception after mass this would include cupcakes lemonade and cookies and water. They believe they could get these items from the Family Bakery, owned by the Greenwell family. Richard agreed to involve the Office of Communication in advertising the event in the Western Kentucky Catholic and in parish bulletins. It is hoped that it may be advertised on social media as well, with the help of the Office of Communication . Michelle agreed to obtain some signs and balloons for the reception. Richard agreed to contact Tom and Amy Payne to request that the SPACE group be involved to sing the Our Father. Michelle agreed to contact her youth group to see if they could help with parking and directing people on Brescia's campus to the chapel.

5. Sr. Audrey Gold Award Planning for 2018/19: The Committee selected Mr. Gary McFayden as the recipient of the award. Richard agreed to contact St. Joseph Parish in Bowling Green Kentucky to tell them of the award.

Note: all other matters on the agenda were tabled, given the length of the meeting.

The meeting closed with a prayer.

The next scheduled meeting was set for 4-18-19 at 5:15 PM at Blessed Mother Parish Hall.