

St Luke School Commission Emergency Meeting 5/4/24

Pastor: Fr. Brad Hagelin

Principal: Rick Boyle

Commission members: Monique Cohen, Chair

Lacie Hansen, Vice-Chair

Elizabeth Buchner, Secretary

Eric Blom, Scott Coil, Adam Fluckey, Erica Knauf Santos,

Jason Therrell, Jackie Zevenbergen

Mildred Medina, Parents' Club President

MINUTES

Opening Prayer

1. **Opening Prayer** Rick Boyle 4:35 pm
2. **Opening statement** Rick Boyle
3. **Roll Call** Present: Principal Boyle and all commission members (in person and via zoom); Guests: Millicent Cassandras (president of Parish Council); Alicia Sullivan (representing school communication); Jess Cunningham (representing school development); Absent: Fr. Brad

Goal of Emergency Meeting

- The purpose of this meeting is to craft a united communication to the school community to go out imminently and to get an action plan in place

Clarification of Facts

- Rick shared an overview of how staff covenants work: done on an annual basis; intent to returns are sent out each January; in February Karen Pala submitted she intended to return; at the end of April Fr. Brad put in writing that he would not be renewing Karen's covenant; Karen communicated this to staff at Friday prayer yesterday (May 3rd) and emailed her current students' parents via email, also yesterday. This is standard practice (sharing with staff and then current students' parents) when a teacher will not be returning.
- Fr. Brad's last day as pastor is June 30th. Fr. Chad Green (incoming pastor for St. Luke & Christ the King) is unable to meet with Rick until July 1, due to an archdiocesan recommendation to focus on current parish until reassignment date
- The letter sent by Miss Pala to the parents of her kindergarten class was read aloud

Discussion

- A discussion regarding the facts of the decision was held
- The Commission should not try to speak for Fr. Brad or for the archdiocese
- Consideration given to whether sending a communication at this time will be more harmful than helpful

- Is the church or school is open to a lawsuit?
- Reminder that some members of our community may be in support of this decision
- Reminder that the decision rested with Fr. Brad
- Families feel upset and deceived by the decision, including the timing of it becoming public (being post-auction; some would not have given/given as generously had they known)
- Emphasis on the safety for our school children and families as repercussions may come forth from the larger community
- Holding a forum with school superintendent and Fr. Brad, the decision makers, was suggested
- Archdiocese would do a press release for the school were one to be necessary

Commission Statement

- Elizabeth motioned to write a statement to the community
- Scott seconded the motion
- All in favor: unanimous. A statement will be drafted tonight for imminent release.
- The statement was written, edited, finalized, and sent to the Archdiocese for review (see end of minutes for the completed draft)

Miscellaneous topics of discussion

- Reminder that the Archbishop is coming to the Mary crowning on May 15th. Could this be a safety concern for students?
- A reminder us to focus on what we can do to bring the community together. The serenity prayer was prayed.
- 72 schools have LGBTQ+ members in ministry in parishes and in the school in archdiocesan: it is inconsistent in our archdiocese and across the US.
- A statement that Karen's private life is not negatively impacting any of her students in kindergarten was made.
- The commission feels this decision should be the archbishop's call, not Fr. Brad's
- Statement to please not lose your faith in the school or the church. Life is long and our faith and community are here.
- Feedback regarding a school community zoom being hosted by a commission member tomorrow; what is the goal of the meeting?
- The reaction at Eastside Catholic high school and Kennedy Catholic had the covenants changed. Our goal is to work to change the covenant and make them consistently interpreted across the archdiocese.

Meeting adjourned: 7:50 pm

Statement follows. It was sent to the school community the next day (Sunday, May 5th).

May 4, 2024

Dear St. Luke School community,

Many of our community members have expressed strong feelings about a recent staffing decision regarding the upcoming school year. We hear you.

Our pastor decided not to renew one of our teacher's employment covenant (contract) and she will not return next year. At a Catholic school, the school commission does not advise on employment decisions; the pastor is ultimately responsible for all school matters including employment. On May 3rd, the teacher shared this news with the staff and her current students' parents.

As a commission, we pledge to diligently gather and assess accurate information and provide feedback to uphold our collective values and principles. We are committed to our school's mission and philosophy statements. **You are the community that makes our school strong, loving, caring, and supportive.** We are committed to ensuring that this community continues to reflect God's kindness to everyone.

We ask for your prayers and support as we navigate this challenging time together.

Sincerely,

Principal Rick Boyle and the St. Luke School Commission