

Guiding Values in the On-Site Sanctuary Decision

A different format was used during the parish meeting of Saturday morning, October 7 on the topic of Sanctuary. Don Noack moderated the meeting. Approximately 40 attendees were broken into four small groups to encourage open discussion focusing on our parish providing Sanctuary or not. As Ombudsman for Sandia Labs before retiring, he observed that conflict among individuals and within organizations, communities, and churches often occurs because of polarization around differing viewpoints.

Higher Purpose: Why Balance this Polarity?			
Action Steps: How will we gain or maintain the positive results from focusing on Pole A? What? Who? By When? Measures?	Positive Results from focusing on Viewpoint A. Values Served, Benefits, Principles upheld	Positive results from focusing on Viewpoint B. Values served, Benefits, principles upheld	Action Steps: How will we gain or maintain the positive results from focusing on Pole B? What? Who? By When? Measures?
Pole/Viewpoint A	AND	Pole/Viewpoint B	
Early Warnings: Measurable indicators (things you can count) that will let you know that you are getting into the downside of Pole/Viewpoint A	Negative results from over-focusing on Viewpoint A to the neglect of Viewpoint B. Fears, Costs, Risks	Negative results from over-focusing on Viewpoint B to the neglect of Viewpoint A. Fears, Costs, Risks	Early Warnings: Measurable indicators (things you can count) that will let you know that you are getting into the downside of Pole/Viewpoint B
Deepest Fear from Lack of Balance			

Four stations were set up with flip charts for each of the four areas associated with the tension between two equally valid points of view: practical and spiritual. The four groups rotated between the charts so that everyone could understand all sides, contribute to and read others’ benefits and concerns about the two viewpoints. The completed charts were assembled on the wall in this Polarity Management format and left there the following Sunday.

The group then broke into sub-groups and developed the following lists of guiding values for each pole.

Group A

Most Important **Practical** Guiding Values

1. Respect the dignity and views of our community; that the process be open and respectful
2. All ministries continue and thrive; we are not dominated or defined by “providing sanctuary”
3. The vetting process for guests is objective and transparent
4. Have conversations about long-term ramifications regardless of the decision.
5. Plan to have a check-in point or points regardless of the outcome, to learn how the decision has manifested in the spiritual life of the community; how people see the impact on the community

Most Important **Spiritual** Guiding Values:

1. Social justice as the Gospel imperative
2. I want my spiritual home to be courageous and inclusive of all nationalities
3. Show people Jesus in the face of those who would use immigrants to divide us
4. Our action would reflect our faith

Group B

Most Important **Practical** Guiding Values

1. Clarity on all ramifications; full insight is important
2. Don't decide only on emotional or moralistic basis, include the practical with the spiritual

Most important **Spiritual** Guiding Values

1. WWJD?
2. Uphold SMAA vision
3. Trust that God will provide whatever we need
4. Allowing parishioners to be true to themselves; maintaining a "safe" parish environment for all, like "coming out" (if having a minority viewpoint?)
5. Respect for dignity of every human being
6. Be mindful of God's love for all
7. Be humble, valuing all inputs and feelings
8. Allow for and listen to expressions of fear about The Practical overcoming The Spiritual

Group C

Most important **Practical** Guiding Values

1. Need a committed, dedicated group to deal with solving practical issues and making it happen
2. Decision is not irreversible
3. Is this all we do? Will I get spiritual food here? I work and may not be able to help. Is that OK?
4. Practical issues can be challenging and fun to resolve together in community, and we have the God-given minds to do it, all politics aside
5. I can't let the world change me, I have to change the world. Let's send an important message to world about who we are.

Most Important **Spiritual** Guiding Values

1. Be Christ's body on earth; support in prayer and finances; we all don't have to serve directly
2. Matthew 25: Take care of others who need, share our privilege
3. Keeping our actions true to what we believe... who are we if we don't?
4. We are not separate from others, but one. Sometimes we have to move forward with what we feel is right, without knowing all the outcomes
5. It is a spiritual gift to do this ministry

Group D

Most Important **Practical** Guiding Values

1. Preserve the diversity of opinion in the parish. It's got to be OK if the Parish provides Sanctuary and people disagree with it.
2. Remain in community w/one another – even in disagreement

Most Important **Spiritual** Guiding Values

1. Faithfulness to God's call
2. Willingness to take up the cross
3. Standing as a voice of God in a broken world
4. Church is countercultural by definition

Questions at the end for decision maker(s) to consider:

1. What do we understand discipleship to mean?
2. What are the resources of a church community for?
3. What is the countercultural role of this church?

Noteworthy in this session:

- People had spoken to attendees about Sanctuary, often negatively, but are not attending meetings to discuss it openly. What does this mean? How could these individuals be engaged?
- During the Rector Search, extensive work was done to understand and describe what and who SMAA is and wants to accomplish. We were urged to revisit the archives that describe SMAA's vision and mission as guidance for a decision.
- Whatever decision is made, it should be revisited in 6, 12, 18 months.