

Mt. Irenaeus
Board of Trustees Meeting

Minutes

April 27, 2024

Present:	Excused:
Paul Aroune	Rob Buckla
Kathy Colucci	Kathy Dougherty, osf
Tom Conway, ofm	Matrecia James
Jimmy Kernan, ofm	
Dianne Kuzia Hills	
Jeff Gingerich	
Jackie Lanzillo	
Greg Licamele	
Terri Marrie	
Mike New	
Otto Rothermel	
Mike Sullivan	
Sarino Tropeano	
Kate Trosch	
Mike Fenn	
Mary Giardini	
Martha Kopcienski	
Joe Kotula, ofm	
Kevin Kriso, ofm	
Michelle Marcellin	
Lou McCormick, ofm	
Natalie Pronio	
Karen Pulaski	
Dan Riley, ofm	

Fr. Lou McCormick began the meeting with prayer.

Introduction of Provincial Councilor for our region (which includes Mt. Irenaeus), Br. Roger Lopez, joining us on Zoom. The role of Provincial is to ensure the health and well-being of the friars; physical, emotional, spiritual and fraternal. Since the Provincial is not able to meet with all members of the Order, he delegates this duty to the Council, of which Br. Roger is one. Br. Roger will meet with those friars assigned to him and then follow up with them later.

Br. Roger visited with the Mountain friars during Holy Week. Here is the report he submitted to the Province:

From the March 30 2024 Provincial Visitation Report

MISSION

The Mountain transforms people. Repeatedly, lay people shared the impact of the friars had on their spiritual life. Christ is alive here! In the documents of the 1997 Priorities of the Order, it reads, “the fraternity is our gift to the Church.” And such is found here and it is a powerful witness.

The establishment of a Board of Directors with an Executive Director was a pivotal step for the ongoing mission started here. Reviewing and refining succession planning with the Board of Directors is vital. In conjunction, the need to Remember, Reflect and Respond to the Mountain life without “me” (an individual friar) should start immediately. This experience will be a death and will carry the stages of grief. Our faith in Christ tells us that death has no more sting. Only when we address it early and constantly, with it ever before us, do we embrace Sister Death like our Seraphic Father Francis.

As new brothers express interest in the Mountain, may the brothers hold their current practices and customs gently. Others will come and changes will be introduced. It is important to not assimilate a person but be open to integration. We are not meant to be colonizers but collaborators. You have built a great empire of hope and peace. Trust that the Holy Spirit will see it forward for the next generation, for God’s love endures forever (Psalm 135). You see this more and more with long-term companions and interested friars. Invite them in and allow the mission to evolve where the Spirit wills.

In conclusion, I have been welcomed wonderfully by the brothers here at Holy Peace Friary, it is a privilege to be here. I am grateful to our Lord, Jesus Christ, that the brothers were open, honest and loving to me. All observations and directions come from a heart that wants and desires this fraternity to be life-giving. Christ said, “I came that you may have life and life to abundance” (Jn 10:10). I pray this Visitation may help the brothers experience that fullness of life found in our Savior, Jesus Christ.

Fr. Roger Lopez, O.F.M. – Provincial Definitor

Since the Province has dwindling numbers of priests, they are looking at ministries and where they can be most effective. Changes will happen. Not every ministry can be staffed by friars.

There was a discussion and comments between the Board, Br. Roger and all attending the meeting, about the life and ministry of Mt. Irenaeus. Br. Roger is familiar with the Mountain because of visiting while he was a student at the Franciscan Institute.

Some comments:

- ✚ As Br. Roger looks at other retreat centers, this type of model is not akin to the other places because of the fraternal life of the friars and the lives of the retreatants are so intermeshed that they partake in each other’s spiritual life. Something to highlight.
- ✚ Living the life is really our program, a contemporary expression of early life.
- ✚ The brotherhood of the friars is very inviting.
- ✚ Three areas the Province is considering: charism, lifestyle and mission. They are reviewing these and then will meet in January 2025 compare information. Decisions will be made for 2026.
- ✚ We are a mission that has an institution, not an institution with a mission – fraternity is our gift to the church.
- ✚ We hope friars are always here but integration is what the world needs.

- ✚ We are big on transforming and being reformed. How do we sustain the charism without the friars? Karen is a good example of a layperson living the life with the friars.

Further discussion and explanations of how the Province will move forward and how the Mountain might be involved.

Discussion on the financial/ministry agreement between SBU and the Mountain:

There have been “Branch meetings” consisting of Mike Fenn, Stephen Mimnaugh, Dan Hungerford, Jeff Gingerich, Kevin Kriso and Dan Riley. The past agreements have been reviewed and discussed at these meetings. These agreements try to establish our mission and relationship with SBU. The latest agreement is from 2008. Some points of the agreement and discussions since:

- ✚ SBU will contribute \$124K/year.
- ✚ The majority of time, since 2008, we have received \$110K.
- ✚ In middle of Covid it went to \$80K (from DePerro), which was Mike Fenn’s last discussion with him. This was not put in writing.
- ✚ The Mountain gets \$100k and SBU University Ministries gets \$40K. At the end of the first Branch meeting, Jeff Gingerich stated he wanted to split that money between the Mountain and University Ministries. SBU \$70K/Mountain \$70K. This will be reviewed annually. This is SBU proposal for a 2-year agreement. The Mountain would stay in the ministry building with the same offices.
- ✚ The Mountain will not be part of the mission team of SBU, Kevin will review our ministry work with the students/SBU to Stephen Mimnaugh.
- ✚ We have always been in the SBU President’s budget, now we will be in Fr. Stephen’s budget.
- ✚ The Mountain team is working on an addendum to propose to SBU.
- ✚ We want to make sure things are on paper and have it recognized that we are worth more than \$70K and that the Mountain is a GIK to SBU.

All present are comfortable with Mike and the team going back to SBU with proposal on changes to the agreement. Would like to tighten up loose ends, such as adding “no less than” amount in the contract. We must be precise and not ambiguous.

40th Anniversary – ways to “celebrate:”

Discussed ideas on events that can be done over the whole year. Discussed ways of having MOTR/MIH events to bring people together in different areas; NC, NYC, CT, etc. Would also like to have follow up with the people who attend to draw them closer into our ministry. We are looking to renew old friendships and find new ones. Keep the events mission driven and not just nostalgic.

Also, discussed videos that could be released of our history, current news, etc. to show the life and ministry of the Mountain. Dan is also considering writing a memoir that would include the Mountain story.

Continued with further discussion and suggestions.

Land discussion:

- ✚ Took the tax maps and identified the owners of surrounding properties. Considering if we need to purchase more land, exchange land, etc. in the future.
- ✚ Chris Premielewski has stated they are ready to receive a new offer on their land. He shared with Mike Fenn his plans for the future. We are considering the following: \$115K plus the 50 acres across from Taylor for the Premielewski land across the road from the main house plus another 6 acres. They are also interested in Clark property. What are we willing to offer? We need a master plan so that we can move forward. Had a discussion on these points.
- ✚ Mike is inquiring about the Eschenbach property also. This property is attractive because of the buildings on the land that could house families that might join us. Could we at least get a first right of refusal for the Eschenbach property?

MOTION by Mike Sullivan: Give Mike Fenn permission to include the Clark property in any negotiations with the Premielewski's. Second by Jackie Lanzillo. Unanimous approval by Trustees.

Executive Director Search:

It is recommended we hire Pat Lynch from Catholic Recruiters to help us find a new ED. They are very informed on the market for Catholic leadership. Pat will come to the Mountain to talk with us about our requirements and needs for the ED. They will be paid as follows:

- 1/3 of payment when they start,
- 1/3 when they send us candidates,
- 1/3 when we hire a replacement.

MOTION by Otto Rothermel: We hire Catholic Recruiters to find an ED for us. Second by Mike Sullivan. Unanimous approval by Trustees.

Nominations Committee:

There are four Board members leaving: Paul Aroune, Dianne Kuzia Hills, Greg Licamele and Terri Marrie.

New candidates to be voted on: Matt Delforte, Mike Kasperski and Evan McElroy.

MOTION by Otto Rothermel to accept the candidates as new Board members. Second by Mike New. Unanimous approval by Trustees.

New Trustee Officers:

Kathy Colucci	Chair
Kate Trosch	Vice Chair
Tom Conway	Secretary
Sarino Tropeano	Treasurer

Community Reports:

Fr. Dan gave a summary of his sabbatical time and his travels. It was a good, prayerful, healing time for him. Some future opportunities may have surfaced and he is open to traveling again in the future.

Kevin reported that the ministry has been very busy. Natalie has been a wonderful addition to the ministry activity. We have accepted one student so far for the summer internship. Looking at approving one more person. Have others who are visiting the Mountain this summer for extended times and will be helping with duties both physical and spiritual.

Natalie has been very active in getting students to visit the Mountain. She stated that some have expressed a nervousness to visit, but once they are there, they do not want to leave. That is a testament to our work on campus AND at the Mountain. They are being transformed at the Mountain as well as on campus. "Transformed people, transform people!" Kevin points out that our mission has not changed, the characters do, but not the mission.

Karen Pulaski is continuing to cultivate smaller student experiences such as with the Franciscan Action Network conferences. We were invited to apply for an ACOR grant to help with these trips. The next conference is in the fall. Karen is working with University Ministries to brainstorm ideas on how to get these trips done with few resources. Karen is also working the Justice Circle on campus. There are 7 faculty members, 3 students; consisting of Sisters of Allegany, Kevin, Karen, and Alice Miller Nation. The focus is on care of creation and Laudato Si.

Fr. Bill is settling in at the Mountain. He makes visits to campus to mingle with the student population. He is meeting many people and encouraging them to visit the Mountain. He is very thankful to be at the Mountain and in the community.

Finance:

- ✚ Have not drawn from endowment because we do not need the cash right now.
- ✚ Martha is putting together a draft of the next budget.
- ✚ Working with Michelle and Mary on office procedures of financial issues.

Advancement:

- ✚ Fund raising continues to go well.
- ✚ Mary Schlosser retired from heading the Auction. Mary Giardini is stepping into leadership with the Auction.

Buildings and Grounds:

- ✚ The committee continues regular meetings.
- ✚ Getting ready to have new roofs put on the House of Peace, the Other House and the Chapel. That will take place beginning in July.
- ✚ Martha has been working with B&G to get projects set up.

Initiation and Education Branch:

- ✚ Karen has been successful at development “Pod” groups that meet regular on Zoom. Looking at ways to continue to nurture the participants in the future to become more involved in our ministry.
- ✚ The pod groups area a place for peace, reflection and joy.
- ✚ The Branches are integrating with each other whereas a few years ago they were standalone.

Weekends and More Branch:

- ✚ Martha and Don Smith are co-conveners in the group. They meet once a month to have Lectio and gather.
- ✚ This group does activities outside the scope of the students, such as Evenings of Re-Creation, Justice Series that took place in March with a hosted speaker. About 40 people showed up for the event, some had never been to the Mountain before, and had 3-4 students.

Meeting adjourned.

Next meetings:

September 20-22, 2024

November 8-10, 2024

February 7-8, 2025 (Zoom)

April 25-27, 2025