



St. Frances Cabrini Parish

125 South 7th Avenue ♦ West Bend, Wisconsin 53095 ♦ 262-338-2366

February 16th, 2012

Julie Lange
Administrative Organizer, Southeastern Wisconsin Common Ground
Common Ground Inc
1034 E. Ogden Avenue
Milwaukee, WI 53202

Dear Julie:

Greetings to you. I was not sure who to address this letter to so I hope that you will please share it with all of the people at your organization to whom it most directly applies.

As you may know, Bob Connolly was kind enough to visit Saint Frances Cabrini Parish for our January Parish Council meeting and to answer some questions directly that we had about the nature of both Common Ground as well as our ongoing membership in the organization as a corporate, parish entity. We appreciated his time and his answers and we decided to reconvene to further discuss our involvement in February.

Our Parish Council did discuss the topic of Common Ground at our February meeting, and a wide range of opinions were charitably and openly expressed. Ultimately, the Parish Council made the decision that Saint Frances Cabrini Parish would be withdrawing our membership in Southeastern Wisconsin Common Ground, effective July 1st, 2012.

At the core of the decision was the challenging reality of belonging as a corporate entity. It is one thing for a group, or an association, of like-thinking individuals to put their collective name to a set of public policy decisions and to use that as a vehicle to advocate for social change. But when it comes to a parish, especially one as large and politically diverse as ours is, it is very challenging to put our collective name behind the positions

and approaches that your organization takes. Many here agree with the mission and work of Common Ground. And at the same time many do not. On the sensitive matter of politics and public policy reform, we had to find a way to honor the convictions of those who did not want to be associated with your organization because the fact is that in virtue of being parish members they were lending their support (financially and in name) to causes that they deeply opposed. There are some political causes that it is very easy for a Catholic parish to take a more collective position on, for example on opposing abortion, because the Church's teachings leave no room for ambiguity on these matters. But the types of issues that your organization deals with do not fall into that category, important as the issues may be.

Many in the Council expressed their appreciation for the fine work that Common Ground has done already and continues to do, and I would echo those same sentiments. But the problem of the nature of corporate membership is ultimately unsolvable in our case.

The Council also agreed that we need to honor our financial commitment to your organization for the dues that remain for this fiscal year, totaling \$6,000.00. Enclosed you will find a check for this amount; it constitutes the final payment that we will be making to your organization as a parish.

The Council desired to wait until July 1st to officially end our affiliation in Common Ground because we would like to allow any interested parish members the opportunity to organize, on their own, into their own corporate entity so that it (the new organization) may become a Common Ground affiliate and continue to work on the advancement of your mission. If such an entity takes shape and develops the needed structure, we agreed that they would be welcome to continue to promote Common Ground around West Bend and around the parish, inviting interest and financial support, but it would be clear that they would be doing so as an organization independent of the parish, and that no parish budget monies would be contributed to Common Ground either directly or through this new organization. All donations would have to come from private individuals. The parish would continue to evaluate the appropriateness of any ongoing promotion of this new organization (and with it Common Ground) based on the degree to which we felt your ideals were consistent with Catholic teachings, with the same scrutiny that we apply to any other organization that seeks to promote itself to our parish family.

Your understanding in this matter is much appreciated and further questions are welcome. Note that I will be informing the parish of our Council's decision, and of the July 1st 2012 withdrawal date, immediately.

Yours in Christ,

Father Nathan Reesman,
Administrator