

Elmira Planning Team
Meeting Minutes
October 12, 2016

Present: Lorie Brink, Fr. John DeSocio, Fr. Rick Farrell, Amy Finnerty, Armand Fusco, Melissa Kalec, Fr. Scott Kubinski, Tom Kubus, Ed Looney, Bill McCarthy, Mary Montanarella, Philomena Mrkus, Dave Quinn, Karen Rinefierd, Jeff Schmidt, Michael Smith

<u>Action Items</u>	<u>Who</u>	<u>By When</u>
• Ensure each church is counting Mass attendance weekly	Pastors	Ongoing
• Bulletin Articles, pulpit announcement for October/November	Karen	Ongoing
• Respond re. which roles can take at 10/17 meetings	All	ASAP
• Complete pilot survey & email input	All	10/17
• Finalize survey and post on website	Karen	10/25
• Determine options for seniors who are not computer literate to take the survey at each parish	Pastors, pastoral council reps with Pastoral Councils	10/31 or earlier if possible
• Create a survey for ministerial staff to assess the ministries	Karen	10/31
• Each parish's finance council and pastoral council to compile advantages and disadvantages of each model of possible priest appointment/parish configuration	Pastors, parish representatives	11/30
• Give Karen the dates of November pastoral and finance council meetings	Fr. John, Fr. Scott	ASAP
• Provide building usage for Blessed Sacrament and Christ the Redeemer	Anne Bremer	10/31
• Provide building usage for St. Mary's	Mary	10/31

Preparation for 10/17 Parishioner Meetings

- Karen will send out a list of the roles that need to be filled tomorrow and people will sign up via email.
- Age distribution graph should not have the information stacked.

Ministry Assessment Survey Logistics

- Karen will send link to the test survey. Planning team members are asked to keep track of how long it takes to complete the survey and send that input plus any recommended changes to Karen.
- Each parish needs to decide how to help those without computers to complete the survey.
- In bulletin on weekend of 10/29-30
- The survey link will be up on the Elmira Catholic website by 10/29.
- Open thru first Sunday of Advent, 11/27.
- Karen will develop a second on-line survey with open-ended questions for pastors and ministerial staff.

Review possible models for priest assignment/parish configuration

- General Questions
 - Define Parochial Vicar – a priest assigned to a parish under the supervision of the priest pastor.
 - What roles would a Parochial Vicar not perform? He would not make decisions on behalf of the parish (e.g. hiring and firing of staff), sign checks, act as a corporation officer, preside over the pastoral council and finance council.
 - How many households in each parish now? St. Mary's 989, Blessed Sacrament 1,608, Christ the Redeemer 1,460.
 - How were these numbers arrived at? They were submitted by the parishes in the annual report done this past summer. Per Dave Quinn, each parish has about 300-500 households that provide active support.
 - What do we want to look like in 5 years? Then how do we get there?
 - Who can lighten the load on the priests when we have one fewer beginning in June? Deacons? Lay? It was noted that it has been difficult to recruit and hire qualified lay ecclesial ministers.
 - If people cannot give more then what?
 - Can we go to 4 Masses per priest? That would be allowed under what seems to be Bishop Matano's interpretation of canonical law (shared by many canonists). However, some active priests are unable to preside at that many Masses on a weekend health-wise.
 - Will any of the models still support the weekly Mass and other events at the school? The list of areas for Elmira-wide planning includes looking at ministerial responsibilities.
 - What happens in 18 months if St. Mary's is out of money? Before the parish actually ran out of money the process would begin to merge the parish into another one and to sell the church and other property. There would be no more staff except for maintenance. A pastor from a neighboring parish would oversee, and finance staff would continue to pay bills. Insurance and upkeep would need to continue until the property was sold. St. Mary's would continue to pay these bills until it completely ran out of money. Then it would run up debt that would be paid off from the proceeds of the eventual sale. Decisions to merge parishes and to sell churches happen at the Bishop's level after local consultation and the Bishop's consultation with his Presbyteral Council.

- General Comments
 - In 18 months St. Mary's will exhaust their savings. Process needs to move forward sooner rather than later.
 - Surviving spouses can't give at same level as a couple at St. Mary's
 - People are moving to nursing homes or closer to children – who aren't thinking of us
 - We often need to delay a funeral for people to get back to town.
 - Only 60 priests to serve 94 parishes. Age of priests is eye opening.
 - All properties need to go up for sale.
 - Only 1/3 of the people are open to going to a different church
 - River is not that big of a barrier. 5 churches on the north, 1 on the south.
 - Most parishioners aren't aware of the financial condition of the parishes. It didn't seem that they understood the recent annual financial reports.
 - Still need to look at the Mass schedule.
 - Buildings are irrelevant [in terms of meeting current financial challenges] because it will take a long time to sell something.

- May still own a building not being used but could mothball it. Not that much savings in the interim since there needs to be a certain level of heating and we still need to pay insurance and make repairs. Water lines could be drained.
 - Difficult to do Mass schedule not knowing which buildings will sell
 - Churches need to be relegated under canon law before selling.
 - Insurance and gas & electric are about \$260K across Elmira
 - Concerned about number of registered households
 - Don't assume the Mass attendees are the same every week
 - People go to different churches for Mass depending on their weekend activities. We see many different colored envelopes (from different parishes) each week in the collection plate.
 - Assessment for CMA drives discussion at Finance Meetings
 - The way the shared services model for ministry works, St. Mary's costs went up
 - Only opportunity to reduce expense at St. Mary's is in staff.
 - Fairly long discussion on school support
 - Some school families don't come to Mass or support the parish
 - Increased giving has been done but tailed off with no follow-up
 - We currently have 3 pastors and 2 retired priests. Retirees currently do about 100 weekend Masses
 - Prison Masses used to be on Sundays but now are on weekdays
 - With fewer priests we have to rely more on lay ministry
 - Would be helpful to have a list of all the ministerial responsibilities of the pastors and retirees.
 - There should be an effort to reach out to non-contributing members and evangelize
 - When no priest is available on a Tuesday morning to preside at Mass at the school, deacons or a lay person can do a Communion Service. Mass intentions have to be transferred.
- Model A
 - Advantages
 - What is the advantage of keeping separate parishes? One person in charge of staffing is important.
 - More time for the parochial vicar to spend on ministry
 - Disadvantages
 - Too much work for one pastor
 - Comments
 - Merged parishes pool all their financial resources.
 - Like moving from A1 (clustering the 3 parishes first) to A2 (merging them) over a period of time. Helps to get people working together and get used to the change. A merger of two or more parishes generally takes at least 6 months since there are processes under both church and civil law that are involved.
 - People of St. Mary's need somebody (priest) and are ready to do whatever is necessary. Prefer one parish quickly instead of a series of changes where you keep opening a wound.
 - You have to increase income and decrease expenses. It's easier for 1 pastor to make these decisions.
 - Questions

- Can there be 1 parish and 2 co-pastors? Probably not. This model was tried for a while under Bishop Clark but discontinued. There were difficulties with accountability. Now the diocese is dealing with an ongoing decline in the number of priests available to serve our parishes and many retirements of pastors in the next several years.
 - Can we have 2 parochial vicars? Probably not, again because of the declining number of priests available.
 - Can we have model A with 2 experienced priests? Possibly. An experienced priest could be available to serve as a parochial vicar if he is nearing or beyond retirement age, asks for this sort of assignment, and wants to be in our area. The Bishop makes appointments.
- Model C (Model B was never mentioned by name but most of the same apply.)
 - Advantages
 - Likes 2 pastors. Model A has too much work for 1 priest pastor. Less jolt.
 - Disadvantages
 - Not financially viable. Expenses reduced by \$30K at best. We are hitting savings at \$100K to \$125K per year.
 - 2 parishes or clusters means more administration. Both full-time priests assigned to Elmira would have leadership/administrative responsibilities. If one is a parochial vicar, he would be available to do more sacramental ministry and pastoral care.
 - Comments
 - Need to consider the age of people at St. Mary's
 - We'll have to run numbers in B or C Model options.
 - Questions
 - What about sale of buildings? Money from the sale goes into Stable Patrimony of the parish that owns the building or, if a parish is merged into another, to the new merged parish which assumes the territory and ministerial responsibilities to people living in that territory.
- Next Steps
 - Need to take the models to the individual Pastoral and Finance Councils. The Pastors and respective council representatives from the planning team should do a similar process at each council's meeting by the end of November—share the possible models, respond to questions, discuss, list advantages and disadvantages of each model. Detailed minutes should be taken so that they can be shared with the planning team and parishioners.
 - Let Karen know when your councils meet in November. [Dates shared at or after the meeting: Joint meeting of Blessed Sacrament pastoral and finance councils on 11/15, Christ the Redeemer pastoral council 11/8]

South Deanery gathering of pastoral councils, finance councils and staffs

- Sat., October 29, 9:00 am – noon in the Faith Formation Center
- Planning team members who are not on either a finance or pastoral council are welcome
- Karen distributed the agenda for the gathering

Next Meeting: Monday, November 7, 7:00-9:00 pm

Possible agenda items

- Feedback from 10/17 parishioner meetings/communication back to parishioners (Q and A?)
- Review Mass attendance data, demographics of attendees and style of each Mass's music and liturgy
- Agree on principles and practical considerations that need to be met by the new Mass schedule
- Review current usage of all buildings, cost to keep, projected capital needs – Karen will ask Anne Bremer to give us her best understanding of the usage for Blessed Sacrament and Christ the Redeemer buildings; Mary Montanarella will do the same for St. Mary's