

Cluster 22 Planning Committee

Holy Cross Parish, South Portland; Saint Bartholomew Parish, Cape Elizabeth; Saint John the Evangelist Parish, South Portland; Saint Maximilian Kolbe Parish, Scarborough

Notes from the February 16, 2006 meeting

Present: Deacon John Brennan, Chris Crawford, Scott Ewing, Fr. Michael Gendreau, Deacon Steve Harnois, Msgr. Michael Henchal, Laurie Kelly, Pam Koonz Canarie, Eileen McDonald, Sheila McDonough, Sybil Riemensnider, Dick Sawyer, Michelle Sirois, Kathleen Sparda, Michael Tranfaglia, Kathy Williamson

Absent: Donna Brassard, Beth Carmody, Peter Cianchette, Bob Falconer, Fr. James Morrison, Jim Welch

Msgr. Henchal offered the opening prayer.

Msgr Henchal announced that the diocese has stated that there will be priest personnel changes occurring in July of this year. Cluster 22 will be one of the clusters affected by this change. This does not mean that we have to transition to our model recommendation by then, but we will likely have two priests, instead of three, for our four parishes in July.

Cluster representatives made several comments:

It is important to keep in mind that our committee is charged with recommending a certain model to the Bishop by June. We are not charged with implementing the model; however we need to be clear on why we recommend this model. It is likely that implementation of a model will be phased.

Dick Sawyer had the opportunity to attend a St Bart's finance council meeting to update them and hear their concerns, his take away was that the questions and fears are many of the same fears that we expressed at the outset of this process, i.e. loss of community, loss of identity, reductions in revenue, financial obligations, facilities, school, attraction and retention of qualified lay personnel. Dick stated that in our communication we should be aware of and address concerns.

Scott Ewing reiterated that we are and have been addressing these concerns throughout this process and that we do need to communicate this.

All parishes have begun placing notes from the meetings for parishioners to take, and have instituted a question/suggestion box. There was discussion about how to answer these questions. We will try to address them through the website.

Subcommittee reports

Each subcommittee has established a purpose and goal statement.

For our breakout session we were given a "hypothetical single parish model" for discussion.

Each group met for one hour to discuss this model and the advantages and disadvantages and reported back to the large group.

In summary:

Education and Social justice: Several advantages and disadvantages were noted to this model. Having one Finance Council would provide ease in administrative functions for Pastor and staff.

With one set of books, however, it is important to retain “local” input and delivery of the programming and “delivery of services”. Another advantage to a one parish model is having one pastoral council. If we have fewer priests, it is unlikely that a priest could be available for the all of the local administrative functions in a multi-parish model. There was discussion about the purpose of a single parish pastoral council being to keep on task with the vision and mission. The committee asked if the cluster group had the authority to develop a “constitution” for things like voting and pastoral council makeup etc. The cluster group has no authority and exists to make a recommendation of a model.

Questions were raised about Holy Cross School funding. Decisions will be determined by the Diocese, but all agree that the integrating the school into the cluster is vital.

Finance and Administration: Sybil Riemensnider recapped the finance and administration subcommittee thoughts stating that the debt of St Max and Holy Cross are major concerns to be deliberated. The committee is discussing how to respect each person’s parish. They talked about 1 finance council with equal representation from the 4 parishes, (4 sets of books), with the future goal of 1 finance council and 1 set of books. The subcommittee is inviting business managers and representatives from finance councils to their next meeting, In terms of the model; they see one major advantage as being one set of books, noting that it may not be realistic by July, but something to work toward. Property will be evaluated now and in the future which includes the availability of St. Jude’s as a seasonal worship site. This subcommittee will not make decisions about property but may make recommendations.

Worship and Spirituality: Mike Tranfaglia states that there are four worship sites each with good quality liturgy. An active Worship and Spirituality commission at each church will be important. They see the need for lay people with good skill sets and feel that in order to attract and retain qualified parish leaders salaries need to be competitive. In terms of the model; they see no clear disadvantages noting that there are challenges and that a centralized worship and spirituality commission is an option.

There was much discussion about the ideas presented. The idea of a single vs. multiple finance council was debated, as was the concern of how to merge and still keep identity. Most agree that the delivery of services should be at an individual worship site/church level and that we need to be careful about creating a system where local delivery creates administrative challenges for the Pastor(s).

Communication: We all realize the importance of communication and realize that we need to lead people through the process that we are going through. As cluster representatives we are representing our fellow parishioners and it is vital to get their input. We will begin by inviting representatives from various areas to our next subcommittee meetings.

The next full committee meeting will be spent planning the town meeting. There was discussion about the group meeting for an extended time period on a Saturday, no consensus was reached.

The next meeting will be on Thursday, March 16 from 5:30 PM to 9:00 PM at St John’s.

Respectfully submitted,
Michelle Sirois