

Between The Lake Planning Team
Minutes
December 10, 2015

Members Present: Jennifer Sharp, Karl Messmer, Stephanie Houck, Barb Willers, Scott Hamula, Kathleen Rourke, Lee Anne Fox, Gerry Frank, Kathy Sinkiewicz, Fr. Maloney, Fr. Buckley, Karen Rinefierd, David Zellinger

Purpose of the Planning Team as it exists after Bishop's letter.

Karen started discussion and offered that the purpose of this group was to accomplish the tasks set forth by Bishop Matano so that the new parish is healthy, financially stable, and able to proclaim the good news of Jesus through word, worship, community building and service. It is the hope that this group can be a place to develop two way communication between group members, people of each parish and the diocese.

The group is charged with listening to input from the respective communities, and each other, make recommendations for the decisions to come in the future. They are to help three communities as a whole move forward toward being one community.

Planning group needs to work together to make the merger process happen and help to establish one parish.

There has been a communication from the Bishop, it is up to the group to decide how to move forward. There is always an option to contest the merger. This would involve making an appeal to the Bishop and if necessary can appeal to Rome.

Karen reminded the group that the Bishop did not make the decision to merge the parishes in a vacuum. There is data to support a merger of the parishes in decreasing numbers in attendance and a declining number of priests within the diocese.

Some members felt the process does not make sense. It is suggested that the decision be made which church would no longer have mass, then decide other things like the office location. Also it does not make financial sense to keep one church open only for wedding and funerals. The new parish will still be responsible for the financial upkeep of that church building.

Karen stated that merging of the parishes and closing of a particular church campus have to happen at separate times. These two processes have to happen with a significant separation of time. This issue has been clarified by Rome that merging and closing happen separately.

Merger equals the three current parishes becoming one parish, one corporation, one financial entity.

There is a chance that the Bishop might be willing to change the plan for one of the churches to discontinue regular masses; however as Fr. Brendan stated, these three churches have to be able to managed by one priest. One priest should be able to administer the area based on the number of registered families. Currently that cannot happen because of the number of masses at the three churches.

Census update at Holy Cross is completed with 89 registered families, St. Francis Solanus 59 registered families. St. James Census update is not complete. Fr. Maloney reported that the number of registered families at St. James is incorrect.

The feeling is that the Merging of the three parishes is inevitable but there may be a way to negotiate keeping mass at all three churches; however that would need to make financial sense.

There would need to be a re-structuring of the mass schedule to be able to be managed by one priest.

This committee is no longer charged with managing evangelization since our role changed with the Bishop's letter. That will be one of the responsibilities of the new shared pastoral council which will work with Fr. Bernard to address the pastoral areas of parish life. This committee needs to communicate to parishioners about the merger process and status.

Fr. Maloney would be open to a request to the Bishop to keep all three churches open for mass. He would be open to the possibility of keeping all three churches going. Question can it really happen with constraints of money and mass schedule. Decision to not send anything to the Bishop regarding this until the surveys of the parishioners is complete and a strong plan is in place.

Budget

David Zellinger shared financial information from all three parishes. In summary Holy Cross is budgeted to break even in fiscal year 2015-2016, St. Francis Solanus budgeted to \$4,000.00 to the good and St. James the Apostle has a projected budget deficit of 12,000. St. James the Apostle budget figures are generally more conservative.

The revenue line items on the budgets of the three churches are not the same. At Holy Cross and St. Francis there is a category for Plate Collections, GL 3001. These are cash collections without envelopes and not attributed to a certain person or household. For Holy Cross and St. Francis these are separated from regular collections, which are booked to GL 3001. At St. James the Apostle, these are included with regular collection. This practice does not alter the total recorded collections amount.

The question was raised that if current spending is maintained and one of the churches did not have regular masses, would the new merged parish be able to financially survive? **Once we have the results of the parishioner survey compiled, David will do an analysis of how much collections might change with the end of regular Masses at any of our three churches.**

Holy Cross Building Clarification

The Holy Cross Building and Grounds committee submitted a report to the diocese to show that some of the items mention in the report by Eric Patchke and Jamie Ott in September were incorrect and had been completed already. The planning committee needs an updated report to include realistic information from each church.

Holy Cross Buildings and Ground committee needs to email Karen with an updated and accurate facilities report.

Including information regarding:

1. Cost of repairs necessary
2. Urgency of repairs
3. Timeline- over the next three years and cost estimates.

It is suggested that each parish's building and grounds committee look at the report submitted by Eric and Jamie for accuracy.

David reported on estimates received regarding the roof repairs at Holy Cross. These repairs do not need to be completed immediately... It is also suggested that repairs would be a long term project completed in stages over a 3-5 year (or more) period.

Rough Estimates are as follows (actual quotes attached):

Hack the Jack: Steeple Work-\$16,000- repair loose slate shingles on steeple.

2nd Estimate

It was suggested by Dennis the contractor it might be better to remove the slate and get asphalt shingles with an estimate of \$52,500

If steeple was just repaired- cost estimate was \$20,000

North Main Roof (on the left) - estimate \$49,650 this side of the roof has been completed recently. If it is not leaking does not need repair.

South Side Main Roof- 58,795.

The roof has many layers to remove. Cannot tell integrity of roof decking.
(these are estimates and subject to change)

Trustees:

Discussion regarding whether to add parish trustees to planning committee. Currently St. Francis Solanus is the only parish that does not have a member that is also a trustee. It was decided to add Bob Duthie from St. Frances to the planning committee. Jennifer will contact Bob regarding this.

Merger Timeline:

Karen provided a draft of timeline for work needing to be completed by the planning team. There was an outline of tasks necessary to complete and when they needed to be completed by to follow merger process of diocese. Materials need to be sent to Bishop by March. This includes meeting minutes, financial information, church inventories of property as well as a letter from Fr. Bernard regarding merger of the three churches. The Bishop would need all of this by **April 5th, 2016**. The Bishop would meet with Presbyteral Council in May. Following meeting with Presbyteral Council Bishop would make final decision regarding merger.

If there will be a proposal to the Bishop to keep all three churches open for mass, this would need to be done following parish surveys and a financial analysis. Letter to be sent in February.

Follow Up from 11/18 action steps

Survey- The survey to see where people would go if their parish was closed was completed the weekend of Dec 5-6. Will be available again Dec 12-13. Karl will collect the surveys at St. Francis, Gerry at Holy Cross and Kathleen at St. James. These members of the planning committee will check surveys for accuracy. There may have been some confusion about people not responding as if their church was no longer to have mass.

Kathleen will compile information into an excel sheet. David will need to analyze information to see what amount of financial contributions would be going to different places. Jennifer offered to help compile information.

It was decided that no surveys will be mailed to registered members who were not at mass those two weekends. If you know someone is away, you can send them a survey but it needs to be back in December.

Office Space- Floor Plans

Floor plans of how a merged office space could be developed at each church were provided. At Holy Cross proposal is to use large room in parish meeting center that is currently living room space, St Francis suggestion is lower level of parish annex. St. James is in rectory. St. James the Apostle provided a pros and cons list for setting up the office at the St. James Rectory. Need a pro/ con list for each location. **Planning members are to look at all three suggestions and email pros/ cons to Karen**

Items to consider when thinking about office location:

1. Handicapped accessibility
2. Distance between office and churches
3. Where would staff be most comfortable? Priests, paid staff as well as volunteers
4. Distance to banking facilities
5. Financial – what would the cost be to create the office?
6. Equipment- Should consider in cost but would be the same regardless of location. This would be based on recommendation from Fr. Maloney about necessary equipment for office.
7. All places have the ability to allow wheelchair access but the degree varies.

There was a discussion about the logistics of handling collections in a merged parish. A merged parish would have one bank account but you could make separate deposits. Different merged churches do things differently. In Geneva, each church does their count separately and makes a deposit. At Good Shepherd the count happens together. The priest brings the money from each church back to the office. He has an approved exception to the diocesan rule that the money is never with only one person at a time.

Our practice once the parishes are civilly merged could be to have money placed in a secure bag at each worship site, then either counted separately and deposited, or brought to the central office for counting and then deposit in the shared bank account.

Pastoral Council

Representatives from each parish (Mark Sinkiewicz, Bob Duthie, and Kathleen Rourke) met with Father Bernard to outline structure of merged Parish Council. Will meet again in January to finalize a new covenant/constitution and a selection process for members. Potentially merged pastoral council could meet in February.

Finance Councils

Jan 13th- Financial Councils of each parish will meet. Barry Roach from Holy Cross and Bob Duthie from St. Francis will not be available to attend. Karl will be at the meeting. David will do a historical financial review. The group will need information on year to date financial information. account balances and income statements.

Final Agenda item of emotions/ faith issues with merger not addressed due to time.

Next Meeting:

Tuesday January 19 at 7:00 pm at St. Francis Solanus

Submitted:
Kathy Sinkiewicz