

BETWEEN THE LAKES PLANNING TEAM
25 February 2016

All members present.

Opening prayer by Fr. Bernard (Unity Prayer)

Reviewed the updated timeline:

- Discussed the timeline regarding the letter from Fr. Bernard to Bishop Matano requesting the merger of the three parishes. Fr. Condon will assist Fr. Bernard, as needed, in the preparation of supporting materials.
- The [new] Pastoral Council is projected to have its first meeting in March.
- The three Finance Councils will meet together again in April.
- The office location and Mass schedule should be determined by April or May.
- Very much work has happened and has been accomplished since the beginning of the Planning Team's work, even though there were a number of course corrections that had to be dealt with in doing the work.

Weighing reasons for Mass at Holy Cross / St. Francis Solanus Churches:

- The question was raised regarding volunteer work being done, i.e. – mowing grass on the church grounds – St. Francis uses volunteers while volunteers at Holy Cross were not permitted due to Diocesan insurance requirements. D. Zellinger answered that there are numbers of volunteers who perform these kinds of tasks, but those might be at the discretion of the Diocese; some may have written exemptions which we could probably get for Holy Cross.

How does this group weigh the reasons?

- We should not be pitting one church against the other. Having to choose one church to continue to have Masses and the other to lose regular Masses creates the worst possible scenario, pitting one against another.
- K. Rinefierd has discussed this situation with others whom she works with in the Diocese. For the uniting and wellbeing of the new community, we want to retain the greatest number of parishioners and do things that work toward a united faith community.
- Is there a possibility to have Mass in all three churches?
- One of the main considerations of the Bishop in his proposing the merging of the three parishes and moving to regular Masses in only two churches had to do with the small number of people in attendance at the Masses. If we develop a new Mass schedule with fewer, fuller Masses and one that can be handled by one priest that may be satisfactory.
- Finances was only one of the reasons why the Bishop proposed that the parishes merge. The Building Assessment was completed at the request of the Bishop but after he sent his October letter to Fr. Bernard.
- There has never been an issue with the Capuchins in serving these parishes. However, Fr. Bernard said that the Capuchins, like the diocese, are dealing with decreasing numbers of priests available for ministry. Fr. Brendan shared that, while Bishop Matano was Bishop of Burlington, he had the experience where the Capuchins discontinued their ministry in Vermont. Therefore, he wants a

situation where one diocesan priest could handle the three churches if the Capuchins can no longer send priests to us.

- Working together is hard; the clustering between Holy Cross and St. Francis has not worked as well as possible.
- Four (4) Masses on a weekend by one (1) priest, plan for one but we have two and changes can be made if one leaves. Fr. Brendan noted that he is waiting on the State of New York in order for him to go into the prisons and that we should not be counting on him to continue as he currently is doing – that may continue or it may need to change, but we should be planning on only one priest serving this new parish.
- At this past Sunday's gathering of Catholics between the Lakes it was wonderful to see so many people from all three churches together.
- If the parishes merge, there will be two (2) Trustees for the [new] parish corporation and they will rotate yearly.

The 7:45 agenda item (the analysis of financial implications) was dropped –in lieu of the following proposal:

Are we able to develop a four (4) Mass schedule and have weekend Mass in all three buildings?

A proposal was placed on the table for discussion and seconded regarding having Mass at all three churches. The consensus was that we would ask Karen to propose to the Bishop that, since we have to maintain all three buildings and one could be used for funerals and weddings, it could also be used for a weekend Mass. When asked, a few planning team members added caveats about Mass times but, in the end, all agreed to be open to discussing the proposal and possible schedules.

Principles to guide in developing a new Mass Schedule – The planning team agreed on the following:

- Create a weekend Mass schedule that can be handled by one priest with two Masses at St. James the Apostle and one each at Holy Cross and St. Francis Solanus.
- Mass times and locations that help unify the parishioners of the three churches.
- Minimize the disruption to parishioners in their current Mass attendance patterns as much as possible given the challenge of fewer Masses.
- Mass times and locations will displace as few people as possible.
- Consider the financial impact of whatever decisions we make.
- Allow enough time between Masses so that the priest(s) can spend some time with parishioners after a Mass, occasionally visit faith formation classes and then travel to another church.
- Ensure that families can both attend Mass and have their children participate in faith formation classes (with acknowledgement that the faith formation programs may change in the future).

Fr. Bernard indicated that Faith Formation programs should not be tied to scheduling Mass times.

Identifying the advantages and disadvantages of Mass Scenarios previously brainstormed by planning team members – all churches have Mass – 2 @ SJA, 1 @ SFS, 1 @ HCC

#1 SJA Sat 4 pm, Sun. 10 am; SFS Sun 8 am, HC Sat 6 pm

Advantages:

- 8 am SJA Mass goers might travel to an 8 am Mass at SFS
- SJA 10 am good time for them
- 4 pm Mass at SJA would respond to desire expressed by parishioners and maybe other travelers from Ithaca

Disadvantages: 6 pm Mass at HC too late to drive after dark in the winter

#2 SJA Sat. 4 pm, Sun. 10:30 am; SFS Sun. 9 am; HC Sat. 5:30 pm

Advantages: #2 similar to #1

- 9 am Mass at SFS available for SJA & HC
- Travel for priest is OK on Sunday

Disadvantages: 8 am Mass needed somewhere

#3 SJA Sat. 5 pm, Sun. 9:30 am; SFS Sun. 8 am; HC Sun. 11 am

Advantages: 9:30 makes nice compromise between times of current Masses at SJA

Disadvantages: Priest travel time too tight

#4 SJA Sat. 5 pm, Sun. 8:30 am; SFS Sun. 10 am; HC Sun. 11:30 am

Advantages: Linear driving for priest on Sunday morning is better

Disadvantages:

- no mid-Sunday morning Mass at SJA—that is currently our largest Mass
- 11:30 start time for HC is too late

#5 SJA Sat. 5 pm, Sun. 5 pm; SFS Sun. 8:30 am; HC Sun. 10:30 am -- Deleted

- Does not make sense since SJA would have no Sunday morning Mass
- Sunday evening Mass is a real burden in scheduling Lectors, Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion, Musicians, etc.
- Not good for priest

#6 SJA Sat. 5 pm, Sun. noon; SJS Sun. 9 am; HC Sun. 10:30 am -- Deleted

#7 SJA Sat. 5 pm, Sun. 10 am; SFS Sun. 8 am; HC Sun. noon

Advantages: Works well for SJA & SFS

Disadvantages: Does not work for HC (the Mass is too late)

#8 SJA Sun. 8 am, 11:15 am; SFS Sat. 5 pm; HC Sun. 9:45 am

Advantages:

- SJA has 2 Sunday Masses
- Sat. Mass is located centrally

Disadvantages:

- No Sunday Mass at SFS
- No Saturday Mass at SJA; 5 pm Mass goers from SJA would go to Ithaca
- Priest travel time too long on Sundays

#9 SJA Sat. 5 pm, Sun. 8 am; SFS Sun. 9:30 am; HC Sun. 11 am (similar to #4)

Advantages: Priest travels in one direction on Sundays

It was suggested that we could have a different Mass schedule during the summer: change the SJA Saturday Mass to 4:00 pm and add a Sunday 6:00 pm Mass at HC or SFS.

What kind of schedule will enhance the celebration of the Mass for the most people? Summer / winter schedules are not unusual but do not necessarily work. Both comments from Fr. Bernard

Prior to the next meeting, are there other schedules that serve the needs of all of our parishioners best—e.g. other schedules having one Saturday Mass (SJA) and 3 Sunday Masses at SJA, SFS & HCC? Are there other advantages/disadvantages of any of these scenarios?

K. Rinefiord will update the Bishop on our progress and get his input.

Next meeting: Wednesday, March 16, 6:30 pm at St. Francis Solanus