

Minutes of the Between the Lakes Planning Team

January 19, 2016 at St. Francis Solanus Church, Interlaken

Present: Gerry Frank, Karl Messmer, Stephanie Houck, Kathy Sinkiewicz, Lee Anne Fox, Karen Rinefierd, Fr. Bernard, Barbara Willers, Kathleen Rourke, Jennifer Sharp & Scott Hamula

The meeting began with an opening prayer led by Fr. Bernard.

Parish Survey Results Discussion:

- The team went through the survey result summary sheet.
- The overall consensus is that the St. Francis Solanus Church would move basically as a group (primarily to St. James) if they closed. St. James and Holy Cross would not move cohesively if their church closed and would have the largest numbers disperse among various churches.
- The survey did not address if a particular mass time was removed, would the parishioners continue to go to their church or would they change based on mass time. Therefore, it is hard to know exactly how many parishioners would be lost.
- When asked why the Holy Cross representatives indicated on the survey that they would move to a church outside of the “merged parish” if Holy Cross did not have regular Masses, the answers included: would go to a number of different churches, would go toward Geneva or Waterloo because there is more around that area (shopping, etc.), would go to Geneva where a spouse is a member of another Christian church.
- Many Holy Cross parishioners live closer to the north end of the county and therefore would go towards Waterloo/Geneva area.
- There was concern with not offering a mass at the “north” end of the merged area. Even if mass was not offered it was pointed out that the new church would have to service the needs of that area because it would be within the merged parish’s territory.
- The question was raised as to what the concern was to keeping a church that has a Sunday morning Faith Formation with a Sunday mass. Wouldn’t faith formation merge at whatever church remains open? The concern is with St. Francis that has recently brought younger parishioners back to the church and they enjoy having their kids attend the Faith Formation, pageants, etc. If St. Francis were to close, there is a chance that those individuals would stop coming to church.
- David provided a spreadsheet with his financial analysis of what money would be lost if each church no longer had regular weekend Masses. Total contributions at Holy Cross last year were \$80,727. Results from those who completed a survey indicated that \$18,460 would stay within the merged parish, \$29,020 might go to other parishes, and \$383 would be “lost” (parishioners who thought they might not attend any Catholic Church). 41% of parishioners who contribute did not complete a survey. Total contributions at St. Francis Solanus were \$39,665. Results from those who completed a survey indicated that \$29,254 would stay within the merged parish, \$2217 might go to other parishes, and \$493 would be “lost.” 19% of parishioners who contribute did not complete a survey. The planning team also looked at the financial impact of no regular Masses at St. James the Apostle, even though the members agreed that this was not a possibility. Total contributions at St. James the Apostle were \$128,713. Results from those who completed a survey indicated that \$20,700 would stay within the merged

parish, \$47,744 might go to other parishes, and \$729 would be “lost.” 46% of parishioners who contribute did not complete a survey.

- The members agreed that this financial analysis is most likely not completely accurate due to the fact that mass times will change and there were many parishioners that were not surveyed.
- The members all agreed that we should not even consider not having masses at St. James since it has the most members and brings in the most income.
- Karl provided a separate financial report which included what the basic cost of just keeping the doors open of each church (insurance, rectory and building maintenance). Holy Cross costs \$35k, St. Francis, \$14k and St. James \$30k. He then analyzed how much of the “regular collections” covers this cost- 50% Holy Cross, 35% - St. Francis and 26% - St. James. His financial impact survey of the closing of one church vs. the other two had some incorrect figures that will be corrected and reissued.
- Seating capacity of remaining two churches will be plenty if any one church stops offering masses. Currently, only St. Francis is above the 50% utilization of their church at their one mass.

Do we want to make case to Bishop to continue masses at all three locations?

Each member was asked to respond to this question. It was not unanimous however the majority of the group would like to proceed forward with making a recommendation to the Bishop per his original letter (masses at two locations). Many felt that continuing masses at all three locations is just prolonging the overall outcome. Some members felt it may “ease the pain” by continuing masses at all three locations, however others felt it may provide false hope. There is responsibility as well to try to prolong the life of the church in our region. We need to make sound financial decisions to make that happen.

Therefore, next meeting we will work on mass scenarios for two locations. Group agreed the decision will be between having masses at either Holy Cross or St. Francis as St. James will continue to have masses.

Parish Merger Process.

Question and Answer for parishioners will be handed out at this weekend’s masses. Full parish meetings after masses will be held as follows: St. James weekend of January 30th – 31st, St. Francis and Holy Cross weekend of February 6th – 7th. Someone from the planning team will facilitate, Karen will attend and we will need someone to take minutes. Members of the planning team are encouraged to attend and participate in as many parishioner meetings as they can.

Father will need to consult with each church’s pastoral council and finance council after each church holds the all church merger meetings. These meetings should provide feedback to Father and need to be completed by end of February.

Pastoral & Finance Councils Update.

Kathleen is continuing to work on the updated Constitution/ByLaws which are based on the diocesan guidelines. Once it is complete, she will forward to other two representatives. First merged pastoral council meeting will be held in March.

The three finance councils met on January 13th. They received income statements and balance sheets for the three parishes, learned more about the parish merger process, and had the opportunity to ask questions.

Helping Parishioners deal with emotions/faith issues and lead them through change in as healthy way as possible:

Karen dispersed some handouts to all members including a resource list and articles about a spirituality of change to help us work through these emotions.

Next Meeting:

- Thursday, February 25th at 6:30 p.m. at St. Francis Solanus, Interlaken.

Meeting ended with “Glory Be.”

Respectfully submitted by Jennifer M. Sharp