

Minutes of the Between the Lakes Planning Team
June 22, 2016
St. Francis Solanus Church, Interlaken

Present: Karl Messmer, Stephanie Houck, Jennifer Sharp, Bob Duthie, Kathy Sinkiewicz, Lee Anne Fox, Gerry Frank, Karen Rinefierd, Fr. Bernard, Fr. Brendan, Barbara Willers, Kathleen Rourke, David Zellinger.

Opening prayer.

The new Weekend Mass Schedule—how have things gone? Anything that needs to be done?: Comments and / or concerns were expressed by Planning Team Members.

- Have attendance numbers changed regarding the new Mass schedule? No numbers were available.
- Are attendance numbers being kept every week in all three churches? No one was sure.
- At St. Francis Solanus Church there has been a “packed house” every week.
- Numbers were down at St. James the Apostle. Some may be going to Immaculate Conception and elsewhere. For those who previously attended the Sunday 8:00 am Mass, the 5:00 Mass on Saturday is not Sunday and the 11:00 Sunday Mass is too late for some. There had been a suggestion to have a coffee hour after the last 8:00 am Mass but it was not held.
- At the first new schedule Mass at Holy Cross [Fr. Brendan] felt an “electric” thrill in the air; it was a beautiful thing to see so many people at the brunch after the Mass.
- There was a very positive response to the coffee hour at St. Francis Solanus and the breakfast following the first weekend’s Mass at Holy Cross.
- Additional books have been ordered for St. Francis Solanus and Holy Cross Churches.
- We need ways of connecting with people – reaching out to new faces in the congregation.
- Fr. Brendan works Saturday at the prison. Fr. Bernard says the 5:00 pm Mass at St. James the Apostle; currently, whoever says the 8:15 Mass does the 9:30 Mass. Discussion followed regarding how the priests’ schedules could be modified to allow time after Mass to meet with parishioners, i.e. have the priest who says the 8:15 Mass say the 11:00 Mass, allowing them more than enough time to speak / socialize with the congregants at St. Francis Solanus rather than having to immediately rush off to the next Mass at Holy Cross.
- Addressed concern regarding the lack of any social gathering at St. James the Apostle with the new schedule.
- Lee Anne Fox took information regarding the new Mass schedule times to Sampson State Park but not to other local campgrounds.

Merger: The parishes are canonically merged as of July 1st. Fr. Condon will contact Fr. Bernard regarding the paper work needed in order to proceed with the civil merger. All

parishioners should continue writing checks to the individual churches as currently being done and not to “Mary, Mother of Mercy” until the civil merger is complete.

Bulletins:

- Beginning July 3rd there will be a combined bulletin for all three churches.
- Liturgical Press (new bulletin) probably will not start until September. There is a need for someone to format and submit the bulletins to the printer. Liturgical Press can provide an opportunity for reflection on the scripture readings for an extra cost.
- Kathleen Rourke volunteered to talk to Fr. Bernard regarding the formatting of the new bulletin.
- Web sites should be combined; St. Francis Solanus site needs some corrections.

Choosing the location of a new Parish Office:

Sean Moran, the new diocesan Director of Buildings & Properties and an architect by trade, visited the Holy Cross rectory, St. Francis Solanus, and the St. James the Apostle rectory on June 7th to consider what it would take to make each into the parish office. (*For details see the report on the St. James website.*) It was noted that his recommendation was to locate the office in the St. James rectory.

Fr. Bernard read a prepared statement regarding a Parish Center concept. (*For details see the report on the St. James website.*) He provided reasons why he thought the office should be located at St. Francis Solanus. In addition he stated that office space in the basement would be open to staff members only, while parishioners would be greeted in the annex.

A discussion followed which included questions being raised and answers being provided.

- What part of the projected cost of \$120,000 to create an office at St. Francis Solanus is for the proposed elevator? We do not know.
- Where is the sacristy at St. Francis Solanus Church? Behind the altar.
- How many people could be in the office at the same time? How many work stations are needed? – Work stations would be needed for the Pastor, Parochial Vicar, and business; probably 3 or 4 work stations.
- Where would the safe and files be located? Probably in the office area.
- There are no diocesan rules regarding office space.
- St. Francis Solanus is centrally located within the territory of the new parish. However St. James is more central in terms of the total population of parishioners of the new parish.
- A ramp needs to be put in St. Francis Solanus Church for altar access [anyway].
- There was discussion regarding the appropriateness of using the church proper at St. Francis Solanus as a walkway to the bathroom.
- Remodel the sacristy at St. Francis Solanus Church to allow access to toilet room.
- Volunteers at Holy Cross Church staff the office with very few parishioners coming to the office.

- If the office is at St. Francis Solanus Church in the basement, where is the Parish Center? The annex at St. Francis Solanus Church is the parish center. Having the office at the parish center allows materials to be on hand as needed.
- The concept is “blurry” regarding the parish office where business work takes place.
- It is more efficient to have everything in one place.
- Fr. Bernard felt that the St. James the Apostle rectory is an unsatisfactory place for an office for wheelchair bound individuals, even if a ramp is added to the front, because of the narrow halls and doorways.
- The basement of St. Francis Solanus is not suitable for an office. Have the office at St. James the Apostle.
- Wherever the office is located, it was suggested that there be an office station in each of the three churches.
- One person shared fear for the future of St. James the Apostle. Once the new parish has our money, what will be left for St. James? We have lost a Mass, we are losing the office, we have lost our savings. What have we gained? I worry about Fr. Bernard’s commitment to St. James over his feelings for Holy Cross and, by extension, St. Francis Solanus.
- The office and parish center need to be in one locale; the office being where the pastor is.
- Personally, it doesn’t matter where the office goes, but the office does need to be staffed to answer the telephone.
- None of the bigger changes need to be immediately done. For now we can move furniture and equipment to St. Francis Solanus and create 3-4 work stations in the basement as well as have a desk/phone for a receptionist in the annex. Over time we can decide what else needs to be done.
- Did Sean Moran have the understanding of Fr. Bernard’s Parish Center? No discussion of a Parish Center was addressed when Fr. Bernard, David Zellinger, and Karen Rinefiord accompanied Sean on his tour of the three possible office locations.
- Faith Formation, where will it be? The Word Committee will make decisions regarding Faith Formation.
- Most of the religious education children are at St. James as well as the Confirmation classes. Assuming classes will be at St. James, it would make sense to have the office with copier there. Also, most of the Masses (4 weekday and 2 weekend) are at St. James so there may be more people in need of access to the office.
- There were a number of concerns from St. James the Apostle including that taking the office away from the church would lessen the importance of the church to the community of Trumansburg because there would be no office to conduct business, i.e. – bookkeeping business and cemetery work.

A short break was taken followed by each planning team member sharing their thoughts in turn:

- Respect Fr. Bernard’s opinion.
- The comment regarding the possible selling of St. Francis Solanus in the future, was there really a chance in reality?

- Feels badly for St. James the Apostle in the fact that they think that they are losing everything, but the central location of St. Francis Solanus is a good thing to help pull everyone together.
- The office could be anywhere, given that connection to people is more important – that carries a lot of weight – you don't need a whole lot of money to make office space.
- A central location is important, it is nice that St. Francis Solanus is ten minutes from either Holy Cross or St. James the Apostle Churches.
- One person said that they don't use the office but respect Fr. Bernard's wishes.
- There is the financial question - St. Francis Solanus would cost less than modifying the other buildings. The central location for the people should be a priority.
- Don't care where it is but modifications need to be made. We need to be sure all health and safety concerns are addressed.
- Sean Moran should return and give perspective of what is needed for Fr. Bernard's idea.
- St. Francis Solanus might be centrally located but not for the population of St. James the Apostle. Sean Moran needs to return.
- [The speaker believes] churches are exempt from ADA rules & conditions; one office with three or four office stations.
- We do not know about ADA rules regarding office spaces. There was a suggestion to research county requirements.
- A central area and finances are very important. It is more efficient to have all in one place.
- Concern about the future vitality of St. James the Apostle, there are soft signs – collections and attendance are declining; a solid Catholic presence needs to be there. We need to focus on building new ways to connect people to the church community.
- A contractor should meet with Fr. Bernard and walk through idea changes, possibly with Finance Council input.

There was not unanimity regarding where the office should be located. However, given the input of planning team members and Fr. Bernard's preference to have the office at St. Francis Solanus, the intent is to move ahead and set up an office there by the end of August. This would be a useable office area, not the final project.

Lee Anne Fox said she would contact Time Warner regarding telephone and internet connections. Karl Messmer indicated that he would assist Fr. Bernard in establishing the office space at St. Francis Solanus. There is still a desire to have a contractor from the local area and familiar with local building codes go through the building to offer advice before we move forward with creating the office space.

Closing Prayer.
The End. Amen.