

Holy Cross/St. Francis/St. James Planning Team
May 4, 2016 Minutes

Present: Fr. Bernard, Fr. Brendan, Karen Rinefierd, Karl Messmer, Stephanie Houck, Kathy Sinkiewicz, Barbara Willers, Kathleen Rourke, Jennifer Sharp, David Zellinger, Scott Hamula

Meeting began with the Prayer of Unity.

A Decree:

Yesterday was when the Bishop's Diocesan Presbyteral Council met to, among other things, discuss the proposed merging (amalgamation) of the three parishes into one. Father Bernard proceeded to read a letter he had just received via e-mail (copies to be provided to committee members). This is brief summary of its major points:

- The bishop has decreed that the three parishes shall be extinguished and amalgamated into one single parish, as per Canon 515 ¶ 2.
- A name shall be assigned by the bishop.
- The decree must be announced in each church at the Masses this coming weekend and posted in each church.
- A person aggrieved by this decree has recourse, via canons 1732-1739, to request in writing a revocation of the decree. This letter needs to be written within 10 days of the announcement to the congregations.
- The canonical merger will become effective July 1.

Father will read the letter to the congregations on Sunday and post it as required.

Naming the Parish:

Karen outlined the process for naming a new parish. She will send out the exact process after this meeting and after clarification from Fr. Condon and Bishop Matano.

Mass Schedule:

Karen has talked with the diocese communication director on who should be contacted to publicize the new Mass times and shared that list with the committee.

A news release was sent out but needs to be revised.

It was suggested that the revised list include the merge web address.

One person suggested that mentioning the merge decree may generate some news interest.

A couple of people felt it was important to include Ithaca Times, which may also generate the newspapers for the three villages (T'burg Free Press, Interlaken Review, Ovid).

Kathy indicated that she has a list she uses for publicity and she will use it to send out a revised release.

Father suggested that we need new signs outside each of the churches to announce the new times. A few people recommended Gnomen to produce them.

Kathy can contribute a sign board for out front of Holy Cross. St. James might have two others.

Eventually all signs will need to be redone to show new parish name as well as church name and Mass times.

Father said other ministers at a Trumansburg Area Church meeting told him they heard that some St. James parishioners were upset about the new Mass times.

Interlaken is planning a coffee hour to celebrate the new time while Holy Cross is planning a brunch to initiate the new schedule.

All churches will need greeters, ministers of hospitality, to help people, provide directions, etc.

Karen reminded us that our role continues, as we need to encourage others to work with the new Mass schedule. Our role is essential.

Parish Office Discussions:

We've looked at pros/cons and various designs.

How is the office used during the week?

Ronnie volunteers at HC three times a week: providing Mass cards; answering phones; answers questions about purchases, cemetery, etc.; providing certificates for baptisms and weddings. Money is counted on Mondays at HC

At St. James Eileen works there on Thursdays but doesn't answer phones, money is counted on Sundays or Mondays, cemetery people occasionally use the computer; other volunteers use office for bulletin, doing collection recording, scanning checks, etc. There are no regular hours when you would know if Father or someone was there so most people request things like Mass cards after Mass.

St. Francis uses the HC office as their office.

What the new staff may need to be is unknown and, therefore, office hours are also unknown. Right now there are two paid bookkeepers (one for HC/SFS, one at St. J), and one paid secretary for HC/SFS. There is one volunteer receptionist (Ronnie).

David suggested that there be one business office but possibly limited satellite offices, with volunteers available for certain posted hours to answer questions and meet parishioners' needs, especially during the transition.

HC used to have a paid person for 10 hours a week. They handled cemetery, paperwork for the office, record keeping – all things now done by volunteers.

All records, especially sacramental records, need to be kept in one place. It is helpful to have all business functions in one location and having one office helps staff who are working together as a team. David gave an example of how it works at Good Shepherd with multiple churches but one office in Aurora for all business.

Mass schedules can be coordinated via computers and it should be possible to get a voice mail system accessible from other locations and that could be interactive.

It was pointed out that HC has an office in a separate building that will still need to be maintained.

The Rectory at St. James:

is in the best shape

is closer to majority of the members of the new parish

is easily adaptable with multiple rooms

Father said that an office in Interlaken may be preferable because it is more central. On week days when he travels to the various churches and to parishioners' homes, it might be a better use of his time to have an office in the middle of the parish.

Scott: Do we want to use our resources that it would take to create an office from scratch when St. James is a viable and easily adaptable location? Strategically and resource-wise, St. James makes the most sense.

Someone countered that by saying the same could be said of HC, though it was pointed out that the building in Ovid has issues.

What is important to this decision is logistics, people, and money.

There are more Masses said at St. James, during week as well as weekend.

There is nominal activity during the week at any of the present offices.

Any location will involve costs to convert it into an office.

Karen asked if making the office location in Interlaken would intrude on religious education. The answer was, though the future of what is going to happen to religious education is uncertain, as it is right now, there would be no problem.

The decision is affected by the pastor's needs. One person suggested as a compromise that a satellite office be set up at Interlaken to give Father an option. He didn't think that would work.

[Committee broke to take a look at the room downstairs at SFS that is being proposed for the new office. Some went to look out back at what might be involved in making it ADA accessible.]

Stephanie feels we should respect Father's request to have the office in Interlaken.

Receptionist would need to be located in office. It would need to be made ADA compliant and meet Seneca county requirements for office space. Homework needs to be done on financials and legal aspects. David will get some numbers on cost factors and feasibility.

Father said that he is not necessarily set on Interlaken but is open to hearing from St. James and HC as to what might make the office location feasible at either place.

Eric Patchke is retiring and being replaced by an architect, Sean Moran. It was suggested we invite him down to look at all three possible locations for the office and see what he recommends. It is important that we get the place right now. Changing later is not a good option.

Wherever office is located we need to keep a presence in all 3 church communities.

Next meeting may possibly be our last meeting as our business is transferred over to the new parish's new pastoral council and finance council. For that reason it was suggested that the final meeting will begin with a dinner, cooked by Fr. Brendan, at 6:00 p.m. on Wednesday, June 22. The meeting part will begin at 7:00. Both will be in Interlaken.

Father provided the closing prayer from the Ascension Thursday vigil.

Meeting concluded at 9:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by Kathleen E. Rourke