

BETWEEN THE LAKES PLANNING TEAM  
November 18, 2015

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

Minutes from the October 21<sup>st</sup> meeting were sent to all members, approved by email, and included on the St. James web site under “parish merge.”

**Determine locations and times of Masses**

Regarding seating capacity in churches, all churches have balconies that could be used to seat additional worshippers. Also, St. Francis Solanus has additional room in the annex where chairs can be set up as needed.

Reviewed Faith Formation numbers for this year in all three parishes.

Karen Rinefierd distributed a demographic display of where parishioners live in the three parishes; the information was taken from the CMA database.

Reviewed the Parish Survey and changed some wording to include the number of people in the family. Some questions were deleted to shorten the survey and make it a little easier to do.

It was determined that the survey would be distributed and completed after the Final Prayer at Mass in all three churches the first and second weeks in December. The ushers would hand the surveys out where they could be completed and collected before leaving the church. Parishioners not present during these two weeks would receive the survey in the mail.

**Action items:** Kathleen Rourke volunteered to develop an excel spread sheet for the data and Karen Rinefierd will redo the survey. Once the surveys are returned, David Zellinger will determine the financial impact of parishioners potentially moving outside the merged parish if one of the churches no longer has regular Masses (each of the three hypothetical scenarios).

**Parish Merger**

The Parish Merger process was discussed by Karen Rinefierd. There are two parts to the process: 1) merging the three parishes into a single parish under Church Law, 2) merging the three corporations into a single corporation under civil law.

The main points under Church Law that were discussed as follows:

- a. Educate the parishioners what merger means
- b. Seek parishioner input:
  - i. What are the pastoral advantages?
  - ii. What are the pastoral disadvantages?

- c. Fr. Bernard, pastor, needs formal consultation with new pastoral council (and, if he chooses, the three former pastoral councils) and finance councils
  - i. What are the pastoral advantages of merging?
  - ii. What are the pastoral disadvantages of merging?
- d. Minutes of all meetings go to the Bishop with a letter from Fr. Bernard regarding the merging of the parishes and a variety of other required materials.
- e. The Bishop does the same process of consultation with his Presbyteral Council.
- f. The Bishop issues a decree merging the parishes and creating a new one.

The Civil Law process of merging the three corporations under New York State law is begun after the Bishop makes his decision.

The question was raised, since this is the Bishop's desire to merge the three parishes why go through all these formalities? Fr. Brendan indicated that the process is in place to help protect the parishioners.

Discussion followed:

1. This is a canonical and civil process to merge the parishes, not to close a church and sell the property. The three churches remain open although the Bishop's directive was that only two would be used for regular Masses.
2. Not having regular Masses in a church is the equivalent to closing it and will have a devastating effect on the parish family of that church.
3. Pastoral care is most critical if there is only one priest which we expect at some point in the future.
4. Financial problems need to be addressed and mitigate against keeping all three churches open.
5. "Things" may change in two years that may require closing a church. Right now we are looking only at merging the parishes, not closing a church.
6. Fr. Bernard – people / parishioners need to know the mission of the parish so that they can give good input regarding the pastoral advantages and disadvantages of merging the parishes:
  - a. How we come together to perform the mission – Evangelization
  - b. How can coming together through merger enhance worship
  - c. Governance of the church – Finance
  - d. How can coming together through merger enhance our outreach – Witness
7. Kathleen Rourke – As the People of God, our mission as church is to participate in the sacraments and to share the Good News of Jesus Christ.

Timeline of working through the merger process tabled until the next meeting. **Action item:** Karen will draft a timeline for the planning team's review.

### **Unified staff in one office**

Office area space was discussed.

- Kathy Sinkiewicz used a display board with photos of the Holy Cross Rectory to include the rooms used: current office, kitchen, living room, dining room, upstairs.
- For St. Francis Solanus there was a tour of the basement area that could be used for office space.
- Kathleen Rourke brought and distributed photos of the rooms on the first and second floors of the St. James the Apostle rectory.

Parish office needs:

- A private office is not needed
- Workspace is required for everyone to work together with spaces for a receptionist, bookkeeper, David Zellinger, the Pastor, the Parochial Vicar-- 4 workstations with internet capability since some workstations could be shared.
- Area(s) for private discussion

**Action item:** Jennifer Sharp, Gerry Frank, and Kathleen Rourke will map out a floor plan for office areas for St. Francis Solanus, Holy Cross, and St. James respectively – no real cost estimates for making each space the office are needed at this time.

Discussed logistics of collection counting when we have a single parish office.

### **Updates on action steps from 10/21/15 meeting**

Subcommittee to meet December 9 to draft new pastoral council covenant and process for selecting new members with a second meeting to be scheduled in January 2016.

Three finance councils to meet January 13, 2016.

**Next meeting:** Thursday, December 10, 2015, 7:00 pm, at St. Francis in Interlaken.