

Minutes of the Between the Lakes Planning Team

October 21st, 2015, at St. Francis Solanus Church, Interlaken

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

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

Karen introduced Scott Hamula from St. James who is joining the planning team to replace Mark Scibilia- Carver.

Reaction from the meeting on Sunday, 10/18/2015 at St. James and Bishop Matano's letter to the three parishes:

- Scott mentioned that Karen did a very good job explaining the merger process and all agreed.
- Parishioners seemed to be most upset with the fact that although only two churches will have masses, all three churches will remain a financial responsibility. It seems if the main objective of the merger is to save money, one of the churches should be disposed of.
- Stephanie mentioned that she felt deceived by the “planning team” turning into a “merger team” and that was not the initial purpose when she volunteered to be on the team.
- Kathleen mentioned the report that was received by some regarding the physical condition and possible repairs for each parish facility. Karen distributed copies of this report to the entire team. This report will be analyzed when coming up with recommendations on location of a shared office and location of masses and mass times. Kathleen stated after reviewing the report she is afraid keeping up with costs associated with Holy Cross' facility will deplete the funds from all three churches. Lee Anne made the point that many parishioners will be lost to Waterloo/Seneca Falls if Holy Cross is closed. Karl stated that after an initial survey of St. Francis Solanus parishioners, 99% will go to St. James if their church closes; therefore Holy Cross will not have higher participation at masses.
- Father Bernard felt that after the meeting everyone seemed ready to move forward with the merger process.
- Jennifer asked Father Bernard if he will be taking into consideration the recommendations that come out of the Planning Team's work or if he is making the decision based on his own thoughts and feelings.
- Kathy feels we need to have more activities between the three parishes to develop and improve relationships prior to merger.

Action Items to be handled by Planning Team prior to merger date of June 2016:

- **Single Pastoral Council**
 - Target date of new pastoral council – February 2016
 - Father Bernard with one member from each parish will formulate a plan for how many members, what guidelines will be used, how often they meet, etc.
 - Kathleen Rourke will convene the first meeting with Father Bernard, Bob Duthie (St. Francis Solanus) and Mark Sinkiewicz (Holy Cross)

- **Single Finance Council**
 - The Bishop asked for occasional meetings with all finance councils sharing their financial records with each other. Mid- January will probably be the best time for the first gathering due to the timing of the quarterly reports coming out. Lee Anne will organize the combined meeting.
 - Parish finances will not be combined until the parish corporations are legally merged.
 - David Zellenger (Finance Director) should be attending planning meetings along with finance meetings to provide financial information as needed.
 - Father Bernard mentioned that all parishioners should have already received end of fiscal year financial reports however David is having trouble getting the reports run. Once they are complete, they will be distributed to all parishioners.

- **Single Office Location with Unified Staff**
 - How much office space is needed? Father Bernard mentioned that he would like some private space for meetings. He would also like a separate desk for himself and the administrative person.
 - How much staff is needed? Currently St. James has one bookkeeper/administrative person that works Thursday 1 – 5 p.m. St. Francis Solanus & Holy Cross share a bookkeeper that works off hours and an administrative person that works two ½ days a week. Father Bernard mentioned that Holy Cross does have a number of office volunteers. St. James members mentioned that they have never been asked to volunteer in the office.
 - Action: one of the representatives from Holy Cross and one from St. James will arrange to have pictures of the rectory rooms taken before our next meeting. This will allow planning team members to develop familiarity with possible office space at these two locations. No one needs to take pictures at St. Francis Solanus since the planning team meets there and can walk through the downstairs area.

- **Determine Location and Times of Masses-** this will include looking at the following data:
 - Mass attendance numbers at each parish that will come in at the beginning of November. We will also consider the demographic makeup of each mass.
 - Demographics of each parish and their surrounding community.
 - Facilities and parking conditions including how often the facility is open for use.
 - Survey to parishioners regarding where they would attend if their church would shut down, if they would continue to go to church and if they would continue to volunteer.

Communication:

- Karen will send information (Merger PowerPoint from 10/18/2015 meeting, Bishop's Letter and Father Bernard's Letter) to Kathleen Rourke to include on the St. James website. St. Francis Solanus can add link from their website and Holy Cross can add link from their Facebook page.

- Karen will write up brief summary of meetings to add to parish bulletins.
- Minutes from meetings will be sent to Karen first for review and then she will send out to team for review. Once all okay, Kathleen will post on website.
- Team decided to hold off on any get together between the three churches until we have more to share with the parishioners.

Next Meeting:

- Wednesday, November 18th at 7 p.m. at St. Francis Solanus, Interlaken.
- Develop survey to go to all parishioners

Meeting ended with “Glory Be.”

Respectfully submitted by Jennifer M. Sharp