

St. James Parishioners Meeting  
January 30, 2016  
After 5:00pm Mass

Planning Team members present: Kathleen Rourke, Barb Willers, Scott Hamula, Fr. Brendan, Stephanie Houck and Karen Rinefierd

Fr. Brendan started the meeting with an opening prayer.

Members of the planning team introduced themselves to the approximate 22 people in attendance.

Kathleen Rourke reviewed the merger process. She stated that there are two legal parts to the process: church (canon) law and civil law. She explained the canonical process in detail including a timeline that was developed by the planning team. If it is determined to move forward with the merger, the civil process will take place.

**The following questions were asked by parishioners and answered by members of the planning team or Karen Rinefierd:**

Q. Is it likely that St. James will close?

A. It is unlikely that St. James will close.

Q. Will it be a problem merging since the 3 churches are in 2 different counties?

A. A petition for the merger will have to go through both counties and filed by the county clerks.

Q. Once we are merged, how will fundraising work?

A. All fundraising monies will go into the joint account unless the fundraiser is designated for a particular purpose.

Q. How will the Catholic Ministries Appeal goal be affected?

A. Since we will be one Parish, we will be assessed as one Parish and have one goal.

Q. How will the Mass schedule be affected?

A. We do not know what the Mass schedule will be, but are taking thoughtful considerations to meet building and priest availability.

Q. Are collections kept separate by church?

A. Once the new Parish is a corporation, all collection monies are put in the same account. Bequest money wishes are granted.

Q. It sounds like it is more of a money issue than anything else.

A. The Bishop's desire is that we maintain a Catholic presence between the lakes. Numbers have been going down and this is being seen as the survival of the three churches. This situation needs to be dealt with responsibly.

Q. Will there be one Parish council?

A. Yes and there will be one finance council and one church office. As dictated for non-profit organizations in New York State, a church needs to have officers as a corporation. For our church that means the Bishop serves as president of the corporation, Vicar General as vice president, the pastor is the secretary/treasurer, and there are two lay trustees. The pastor is the one who selects the trustees who are then appointed by the bishop.

**Comments:** The church names will stay the same, but the Parish will get a new name. Typically, the Pastor will recommend one to three names. Certain types of names can be used under church law.

Q. Will there be one priest?

A. We have no idea what the future will bring in the way of priests.

Q. St. James has been financially healthy. Are the two other Parishes in financial distress?

A. St. James is solvent and has the most financial reserves. St. Francis is financially stable. In the past year, Holy Cross has come back to where they are financially stable. With the style of the church there are foreseeable costly repairs that will need to be done in the future. One church would remain open for weddings and funerals.

Q. Have donations gone down at St. James since talk of the merger?

A. We're not sure why donations have gone down. A lot of changes have taken place at St. James.

Q. Will there still be three Masses at St. James?

A. We do not know yet.

Parishioners were encouraged to send their input including advantages and disadvantages of a merger in writing to Fr. Bernard as soon as possible and to encourage others to do the same. Fr. Bernard will send their input to the Bishop.

Kathleen closed the meeting with the Unity Prayer at 6:30.

Respectfully submitted by Stephanie Houck