



Roman Catholic Episcopal Corporation of St. John's Strategic Planning Committee

ROUND-TABLE LET'S TALK SESSIONS MARCH – JUNE 2016 SUMMARY OF FEEDBACK

Sessions were held at: Sacred Heart Church, Marystown (parishes of the Burin Peninsula Deanery) Mary Queen of Peace, St. John's (for the parishes Basilica and East), St. Kevin's Parish, Goulds (parishes west of the Basilica, Southern Shore and CBS), St. Anne's Church, Dunville (parishes of the Placentia-Cape Shore-Salmonier-St. Mary's Bay area) St. Patrick's Parish, St. John's (for St. Patrick's and St. John Bosco Parishes)

COMMUNICATION

- Consultation needs to be as broad as possible.
- People need to be engaged, as well as informed, every step of the way.
- Good communication is a two-way street; incoming as well as outgoing.
- Educate people so that they see that they belong to faith communities bigger than their local centre-parishes, Archdiocese, etc.
- Parishes need regular updates.
- This process must be undertaken in consultation, in prayer, with the more effective realization of the mission of the Church uppermost in mind.
- People want more communication from the Archdiocese.
- We need to develop programs that address local needs.
- Pastors often do not pass on information they receive from the Archdiocese.

ROLE OF LAITY

- Recruit, train and delegate lay pastoral leaders to work as equal members of pastoral teams alongside priests.
- The Archbishop must properly delegate these lay leaders, and stand behind them.
- Is the Archbishop willing to engage, empower and delegate lay leaders?
- The role of a lay pastoral animator or minister is a vocation. We need to offer it the same support as we offer for the formation of priests.
- There are well-trained lay people ready and willing to lead.
- Adult faith formation is the key.
- New visions of Church are emerging and will emerge.
- More outreach means greater role for laity, and more effective engagement of the laity. The Gathering Place models the kind of outreach that should be the hallmark of the Church.
- People need to be trained not just for ministry, but for a collaborative model of ministry.
- If parishes cooperate to fund the services of a priest, they can also cooperate to fund the services of a lay pastoral leader. Women must be engaged as pastoral leaders.



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INSIGHTS

- The Church is not a business. The bottom line is how we proclaim the Gospel with energy and vitality. Reorganization is not enough; this must be a plan for renewal. This is about growing a stronger Church.
- We are a mission, and the mission exists outside the Church walls. What happens inside the walls is to strengthen us for mission.
- People may be more ready for change, and more open to it, than we think.
- Even if people are not ready for change, they are capable of change and growth.
- Whatever we create has to be more vibrant than what already is.
- Viability of a parish has to do with more indicators than size.
- A parish viability assessment instrument must be developed by the Archdiocese.
- We have a surplus of buildings in the Archdiocese; we have too many churches, too many halls and too many rectories.
- We are spread too thin. Find ways to close some buildings in order that parish life and vitality is enhanced.
- Start by closing some buildings in St. John's. This would send a clear message to the rest of the Archdiocese.
- Start with selling some of the larger parish houses, and moving priests into small houses or even apartments.
- The money realized from sale of property must be re-directed toward outreach.
- Keeping churches open for weddings and funerals is not the answer. Some churches must be closed.
- Adult faith formation is the key. We have to start very soon. The need is immediate.

CONCERNS

- The Archdiocese has a history of not following through on other renewal initiatives.
- People have been burned before when open doors were closed or plans not carried through.
- The failure of the MLPA (lay formation program) has left a bitter taste. We are hampered by our own focus on our local interest. Parishes are pitted against Archdiocese, and fail to experience a sense of belonging.
- People valued the experience of General Absolution, and found it a very meaningful experience of encounter with God and one another. Its retraction was keenly felt and deeply mourned.
- How can we balance support and enhancement of rural life with the need to gather people into bigger centers for more vibrant liturgies and meaningful outreach?
- The Archdiocese needs to develop a compassionate and effective way of housing and caring for elderly priests.
- We are too focused on what happens inside the church buildings, and often fail to realize that the work of being a Church is done outside the walls. We are not good at forming people for this reality.
- Many smaller places can't afford to pay and house a priest.
- Every parish does not need an administrative assistant or secretary.