



**Roman Catholic Episcopal Corporation of St. John's
STRATEGIC PLANNING
Zone 2 – Parish Representatives**

**NOTES FROM CONSULTATION
STRATEGIC PLANNING COMMITTEE MEETING
PROPOSED ZONE 2 – St. Pius X Parish & Area
Parish Representatives
November 08, 2016
34 Participants in Attendance**

QUESTION #1

DOES THE CONCEPT OF A PASTORAL ZONE MAKE SENSE IN LIGHT OF OUR PRESENT REALITIES?

- Zonal approach a lot more impersonal, will diminish role of priest in parish.
- Facing inevitable realities, reflected in school system as an example, decreased number of schools continuing = Church is part of fabric of society, will have to take hard look at how resources (personnel, financial) can best be deployed
- Will we support the Archdiocese at the expense of the parish – will this end in downgrading the whole Archdiocese?
- Idea of zones forward thinking – school system had to look at zoning to better utilize resources – have to do something, focus: sharing of resources
- Same number of churches and church buildings today as in previous time with different population mix
- Not comfortable with “stand alone” parish – need to be enriched by each other. Cannot be fixed on one parish, enrichment in parishes working together, e.g., Pius X with church hall which can be shared, some parishes have younger and more vibrant families while others have older populations – together better
- Need to look at differences between urban and rural realities – rural areas facing declining numbers – where does equity come into this – everyone in city has Mass every day, rural area once a month??
- FOCUS: sharing resources in creative way
- Do we come with one proposal or more than one – out of this one proposal other proposals are emerging – reflection on input will shape other approaches



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QUESTION #1 CONT.

- How do parish councils and finance committees fit in – parishes will continue with their own structures of councils and committees – possibly initially other changes will come
- Even after initial set-up for zone, experience will lead to further adaptation and change – things change, other options will emerge. There will be guidelines for initial implementation
- Another committee is looking at current status of buildings and finances to provide information and data for zone pastoral teams as they look to making decisions – realities of a specific zone will guide the decisions in that zone – e.g., 17 churches from Pouch Cove to Mary Queen of the World
- From financial perspective, easy to look at parish not financially viable – help make decisions re vitality/viability of the parish and whether it should be kept in place
- “Old school” = when you lose parish, you lose heart of community? E.g., St. Francis of Assisi Parish
- Church and priests focus of parish community and the community itself
- Want strong parishes + strong zones =strong Archdiocese
- Zones are not yet fixed, suggestions of changes welcomed
- Criteria for zones as presented – list in slide earlier for information purposes
- Will merging of parishes lead to stronger zone? Will some parishes disappear? Merging parishes will become a decision that a zone will consider and recommend if it makes sense in light of resources

QUESTION #2

a) DOES THE ARRANGEMENT FOR THE PASTORAL ZONE IN YOUR AREA MAKE SENSE?

- Does present Zone make sense as delineated?
- St. Francis of Assisi + St. Paul's working well now, why can't this continue
- We hope that participants will bring up other proposal(s)



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QUESTION #2A CONT.

- Difficulty regarding St. Francis of Assisi + St. Pius X = separated the two, so we are closing??? Why could there have not been more than one proposal (2 or 3) – then choose which one makes most sense.

b) WOULD SOME COMMUNITIES BE BETTER PLACED IN ANOTHER ZONE?

- Basilica belongs to everybody – not going away. Is there another way to look at that Basilica Parish – very large, needs many resources to operate? Good point from building plant perspective (in comparison to other parishes) – not really addressed by Strategic Planning Committee yet. Its participation within a zone needs to be explored more carefully. How can Basilica be kept going/maintained into the future? See what happened in Harbour Grace. Major issue

c) WOULD SOME COMMUNITIES FROM ANOTHER ZONE MAKE MORE SENSE IN YOUR ZONE?

- St. Francis of Assisi does not make sense with the grouping in which it is placed. Makes more sense in connection with St. Paul's, a relationship that seems to be working well St. Francis of Assisi + St. Pius X = they are adjacent to each other geographically

QUESTION #3

DOES THE CONCEPT OF A PASTORAL TEAM OF PRIESTS AND LAY MINISTERS MAKE SENSE?

- Canon law = priest needs to be pastor but can be pastor of more than one parish at the same time – in 10 years what happens if there are far fewer priests even than today? We have to face the reality.
- Proposal re: lay ministers is to recruit and pay for lay ministers but no reference to recruitment of priests – why not? Compare physician recruitment. No shortage of priests around the world, happy to come here. Why pay for some who can do part of job instead of priests who can do it all?
- Will parish priest be in charge of zone – there will be a team in each zone with priests and lay ministers – will have to be leadership which will vary from zone to zone. May have to be the parish priest unless the zone decides otherwise for logical reasons
- Has this concept been proven? – Yes, done elsewhere. Has shown itself to work in other places. Way of getting other parishioners involved as well.



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QUESTION #3 CONT.

- What about the training and preparation of our priests in working with lay persons (works both ways).
- Driven by reality of declining attendance/resources/priests – fear that “we are going to close” – probably need to focus more on working together right now, work as team pastorally, then face the future together.
- Many lay people willing to participate in parishes in many ways – lay ministers can have greater role in evangelizing the young – we have not been strong in youth ministry (unlike other faith traditions) – perhaps having teams would strengthen our capacity to do this kind of ministry.
- What is difference between lay ministers and deacons? Are they not the same? Vocational deacon or permanent deacon is a holy order – deacon is ordained with specific responsibilities.
- Deacons have come up a lot. Are we asking for deacons because of a misunderstanding of the role of lay ministers? Has not yet been addressed by Strategic Planning Committee? Implications = is there not a call to the diaconate? How does this impact on role of women in the church? What can deacons do that lay ministers cannot do?
- Location and cost of training
- KEY: how do we see the role of lay people in our church in the longer term? Is as it is today? Is there an expanded role in the future? Many varied answers emerging over the past few meetings
- Are there lay people available, is there a place to train them, who covers the costs, how are they evaluated, how hired or let go, qualifications?
- Role of women in the church has to be foremost – would not choose deacon model if it excluded women
- Sharing model works differently in rural areas than urban areas. We are less aggressive in this proposal.
- Not possible to provide appropriate services in larger rural areas without some kind of sharing model



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QUESTION #3 CONT.

- Examples from other jurisdictions – St. Pius X Church has done much research, e.g., Edmundston, NB. Yet other jurisdictions in Europe and US which are much more aggressive than proposed here. Everywhere emphasis on sharing model.
- Many who are more aggressive even lament not having done it earlier
- If people are to take on lay minister roles – a calling, not meant for everyone. Need to have good screening – not regressing to a very conservative element
- Hesitation to lay persons to come forward.
- Re guidelines for teams and zones – who would do the recruitment, who would be responsible?
- How are lay ministers recruited and chosen, e.g., will there be psychological testing, what are criteria for selection – would need to be clarified, good screening tools, focus on competencies needed in ministry such as compassion

QUESTION #4

WHAT WOULD BE THE IMPLICATIONS OF IMPLEMENTING THE PASTORAL ZONE IN YOUR AREA?

- Previous experience of parish clusters (lay component was not emphasized) but there are important learnings that can be applied here – would be strengthened by addition of lay component
- Ex. Priest from Ireland – “clustering” unless it includes trained and commissioned lay ministers will do nothing except kill off the last few priests more quickly”
- Inequities in our church are not acceptable – will urban churches be better resourced than rural churches? Why? We need to ensure that the proposal is rooted in a fair distribution within the Church.

QUESTION #5

DO YOU HAVE ANY CONCERNS WITH THE FEASIBILITY OF THE OVERALL PLAN OF THE PASTORAL ZONE AND PASTORAL TEAMS?

- “Promise for new life in our parish and in our Archdiocese” – too little about spiritual renewal – what are we doing to strengthen the faith community – needs more attention.



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QUESTION #5 CONT.

- Have to make the zones viable – we are running out of time, over the years we have tried and stopped – all the zones will look different – have to make it work this time – we have maybe 2 years left. Each zone will take its own shape.
- Process begun is good – have to do something, people are being involved, members are talking about the document! We have to encourage, nurture, bring along every member of the parish – ensure that everyone has a say.
- Any thought to implementation – are there experience from other jurisdictions? Many places are ahead of us – we are coming later. Other jurisdictions have not done the consultation we are doing here. Implementation can only happen once we find the best way forward – will be slow and probably difficult. If you create a framework, then you can find the way forward. Good change in seeing an acceptance of the need to do something.

QUESTION #6

WHAT SHOULD BE THE NEXT STEPS IN OUR PLANNING PROCESS?

- Material will be put on website once gathered
- People are being encouraged to make their views known in these meetings
- Strategic Planning Committee must listen to comments made, see if there are any gaps, see if several alternative approaches are emerging – if so, bring them back for further consultation
- Move as quickly as possible – advise if there are plans for closing parishes so that the wondering stops
- Important for priests to understand where they will be in this plan – do not add to their stress, ensure good communication with them
- Need to know the direction in which we are going before we can plan how to get there
- Ensure priests are supported in their parish ministry roles
- How do we sell this to a broader audience than the people coming to these meetings?



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QUESTION #6 CONT.

- Good communications but also good catechesis – realizing that many things are no longer working
- Every conversation will lead to further refinements
- Need for continued leadership, energy, hope
- “Strength finder” – great if each parish made known their strengths, what they bring to the other parishes in their zone, where is the route to improvement based on the shared gifts from all the parishes – build on strengths
- Proposal has potential but must be carefully explained to people so they truly understand the issues and the implications
- Keep talking and thinking about the issues – keep telling us what we need to hear
- 18% attend Church in our parishes on a regular basis – why not more
- Our Church has been on the defense for far too long – have to think of being on the offense – create some excitement (not boring)
- Yes, we tried before and it failed – there is nothing worse than abdication of leadership – we are fighting for our lives, our future – too busy trying to plug holes rather than facing the core issues
- Strategic Planning Committee has spent much time – this committee not going to do what is not in the best interest of the Church – trying to do what is right, challenging, fresh, new – 2500 people will have participated in our 18 meetings – extensive consultation
- Strategic Planning Committee will take into consideration all it will have heard – will be the first and maybe even second quarter of 2017 before we come back with the next steps
- We cannot have an abdication of leadership – we have started a conversation – we have opened the church doors wide – WE CANNOT FAIL!!!
- Experience shows that good teams work – they find the way forward, they provide leadership



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QUESTION #6 CONT.

- 2017/2018 – timeframe for implementation
- Important that core group within each parish – need to be attentive to ensuring that they understand what this is all about
- Encouraging core groups to be part of this process – this is why the leaders are meeting with the Strategic Planning Committee first before the large public meeting
- Some cannot accept this proposal – is there anything to help people understand that this proposal is strengthening the church not diminishing it or even destroying it – a leadership responsibility
- How do we help explain the proposal in a way that helps people understand the key elements of this proposal – hopefully in times of change like this, leaders will emerge and will help people truly understand
- A new Church is emerging – if there is not communication and we do not continue to promote our idea of Church beyond our own local area – there will be growing pains – have to grow in this society in which we find ourselves – our church is in the parish but it is also beyond the parish

OTHER GENERAL COMMENTS

- None



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STRATEGIC PLANNING COMMITTEE MEETING
PROPOSED ZONE 2 – St. Pius X Parish & Area
Public Meeting
November 09, 2016
170 Participants in Attendance**

QUESTION #1

DOES THE CONCEPT OF A PASTORAL ZONE MAKE SENSE IN LIGHT OF OUR PRESENT REALITIES?

- Yes, already working on a minor level – St. Francis of Assisi (SFA) working well in cluster with St. Paul's (SP)
- Essence of pastoral zone to design it in a way consistent with strengths of existing parishes – take care not to destroy what is good, what is happening well in a strong community – each supports the other (SFA + SP) – a very successful sense of community, in close proximity geographically, contiguous
- In theory, zones excellent – coming here as parish communities – how can we find oneness as a zone – need specific ways to build that oneness and sense of community
- Where does the focus lie or identity lie – are the zones just administrative regions or are they meant to be communities?
- What other models has Strategic Planning Committee explored and/or rejected? Why only parish zones? Strategic Planning Committee is seeking other options as these meetings occur. Recognition of the differences among the zones (e.g., geographical area of Burin Peninsula vs. larger population in section of St. John's). Leadership team of the specific zone will be responding to realities of the zone – what is needed specifically in that zone – focus is on sharing within the zones, ability to make decisions for what is best for that zone – is it acceptable that there is one Mass a month in one area and daily Mass in another – questions of equity – “take what we can get”
- Roles and responsibilities at parish level and at the zone level – how will they be differentiated? How can zone teams be involved in finances given the presence of parish councils and finance committees



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QUESTION #1 CONT.

- Premature to expect anything prescriptive at this time – responsibility of participants to give some suggestions/ideas/options, opportunity to take some ownership, should not give definitive answers in this process which should be evolutionary
- Problem with word “zone” – we as a parish are a family, or cluster of parishes – is this a larger family than existing family parish —need a name which reflects better that sense of family or community – may be “cluster” or “family of parishes”
- Assess viability of different church buildings – an important issue to explore, what criteria would have to be used. People are fearful about these questions.
- Property Committee is collecting data: age of buildings, state of buildings, cost of maintaining, etc. Provide bank of data for the pastoral team to enable them to make their decisions in the zone
- Strategic Planning Committee focus is not about closing churches – focus is renewing the parish and Archdiocese

QUESTION #2

- a) **DOES THE ARRANGEMENT FOR THE PASTORAL ZONE IN YOUR AREA MAKE SENSE?**
 - Note: the position of St. Francis of Assisi not in right zone!
- b) **WOULD SOME COMMUNITIES BE BETTER PLACED IN ANOTHER ZONE?**
 - None noted
- c) **WOULD SOME COMMUNITIES FROM ANOTHER ZONE MAKE MORE SENSE IN YOUR ZONE?**
 - St. Francis of Assisi is in the wrong zone now – linked with St. Pauls', natural flow towards the city, like “larger parish” or “family of parishes”



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QUESTION #3

DOES THE CONCEPT OF A PASTORAL TEAM OF PRIESTS AND LAY MINISTERS MAKE SENSE?

- Any priests coming up for ordination in foreseeable future? One right now.
- Parish priest makes St. Francis of Assisi/St. Pauls' what it is – lay ministers to assist the priest not replace the priest
- Role of the priest in parishes is really important, priest sets the tempo for the parish, need lay people to come forward but fear that zones will make parishes more remote and sense of community will be lost – priests provide leadership to bring people together
- Training of lay ministers – timeframe? Costs? Is it wiser or more economical to bring in foreign priests?
- What is going to be the role of the lay person in our church in the next 5 to 10 years? We need more clarity re answer to this question.
- Lay ministers – what do they do – many people would miss the liturgy around the sacraments of Marriage or Baptism or Communion service
- Team (one priest and one lay minister) – allows room for more than that. In this specific zone, many will be needed to respond to the needs. Lay ministers will support work of priest – they also must not get burned out. Probably need as many as 8 lay ministers in this zone
- Religious orders and ordained deacons – will they be included in the pastoral teams
- Whether or not lay ministers will be inclusive of women – YES – previous history has not been positive in this regard – experience of our history is that many women are already in active ministry in parishes
- support concept – must take the time needed to ensure that the implementation is appropriate, the proper training happens
- In 1979 – woman in paid position in lay ministry– communication is important in ministry – probably not the best solution



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QUESTION #3 CONT.

- this will change all of us – yet the world around us is changing and changing rapidly – many are involved in ministry today – Strategic Planning Committee place more attention to the changing realities in world around us and the recognition that church happens in that context
- concern with pastoral teams that have special training – that is more significant than being a lay person
- Canon lawyer has provided advice on acceptability of proposal from that perspective
- Concern about underlying principle that parishioners have access to sacraments and rites of church – broader vision that includes more than sacramental ritual, more vibrant communities – what helps create those vibrant communities. Needs a broader vision statement – that inspires and creates energy

QUESTION #4

WHAT WOULD BE THE IMPLICATIONS OF IMPLEMENTING THE PASTORAL ZONE IN YOUR AREA?

- Big challenge will be simply realizing that when you begin it is the beginning of a journey – will learn as it goes along, will change as the learning happens – not creating a situation that stays still or carrying water in a sieve – will never be a done deal, always in process
- Difficult at first for people to accept that a lay person can preside at a funeral – can be a Catholic funeral rite without Mass – is truly a Catholic rite – hard for us to accept that
- Adjustments can be made over time, always in the context of its own time
- Anxious to begin the process to engage people more
- Can lay people fear that Baptism or Marriage is not quite right if a priest does not do it – it takes time to understand differently – in many parishes in Canada, lay people are participating in these sacraments in a real and vibrant way
- Each individual needs to be evangelized, as well as to evangelize – we need to focus more carefully on this in whatever proposal is developed



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QUESTION #4 CONT.

- Number of funerals today without any clergy or any religious rites at all – growing significantly in this city these days – this is by their choice in this city not because of shortage of priests
- We know that we need some kind of change – in this proposal, beginnings that can lead to a lot of change – grew up in Catholic school system yet no real faith development (a myth that it was great then). Missing element – how will each parish approach evangelization itself, now, in this time
- Does not like term “lay ministers” – everyone in the church is a lay minister – how can each one of us become a better lay minister, learn better how to minister to each other – a responsibility for all of us
- To be a priest or deacon is a vocation – separate from being a lay minister, priests lead the parish – teams to be led by priest and/or deacon

QUESTION #5

DO YOU HAVE ANY CONCERNS WITH THE FEASIBILITY OF THE OVERALL PLAN OF THE PASTORAL ZONE AND PASTORAL TEAMS?

- Each one of us by virtue of our baptismal call is priest, prophet and king
- Pope Francis – Church is a field hospital – examples of places of justice outreach in this city where the church must be present
- Big change – grew up in Catholic home where religion prominent, schools no longer allowed to include religious symbols or language, we have put up with much – have to stand up for our faith –whatever is put in place is for everybody – for our children and children’s children – not just talked about and then left unfinished – all children of God, importance of priests (holy, hands consecrated) – where do we get more priests? Lay people must be active in places where there is suffering. How do we get children back in the church? Concern for future – encourage more priests



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QUESTION #6

WHAT SHOULD BE THE NEXT STEPS IN OUR PLANNING PROCESS?

- Not a one time thing – start of a conversation, use website, email, do not stop talking to us, we want more ideas and information
- We will finish 18 meetings before Christmas
- Then we will have the wisdom from so many – report on questionnaires, this feedback, many emails and telephone calls from individuals, will meet with stakeholder groups like Catholic Women's League, Knights of Columbus; preparing data base re properties
- First quarter of 2017 – gathering all the information and put together a new pastoral zone draft, this is in evolution, hope that it will be a catalyst for something more
- Strategic Planning Committee will hear 1500 people before we finish – seeking wisdom, advice, courage, way forward into the future – not too many churches but too few people – has to be done because it has to be done – sense of urgency
- This is a proposal not a conclusion

OTHER GENERAL COMMENTS

- Questions about youth, people not attending church, role of women – we need to organize ourselves to be in a better position to explore these questions – financial sustainability – fairness between urban and rural is a huge issue
- Should be praying for more priests, for more vocations, there is a shortage, more young men to go to the seminary
- Where do the people come from – how do we keep the parishioners in the church, young children receive sacraments of initiation but do not continue to be in the church community – many parishes dying, fewer and fewer attending
- When parents bring the children for first sacraments, how do we sustain their participation – links with catechetics, youth ministry – is there not an obligation to attend Mass
- Basilica is a beautiful parish, a place where I can do ministry, wish young people would come back to the church



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OTHER GENERAL COMMENTS CONT.

- Foreign priests: complex issue, dimension re ethics – rich countries recruiting from poorer countries (similar to ethical issue of recruiting doctors for Canada/USA from poor countries who need them more) – a justice issue – quick fix but right fix?
- The real question – if we do nothing, how will our church be in 5 years? Likely, someone will come in and make dramatic changes unilaterally then.
- My heart aching – I do not want to lose my parish, I do not want it to change, I see it as a family a community – need to show our faith, to evangelize, to encourage others to return to church – parish matters, is a source of joy, fear losing all of that – is there something else we can be doing before moving to zones
- Thank you for providing opportunity for open communication, allowing young and old to participate – pastoral plan from Archdiocese of Toronto, five core directions (parish life, vocations, etc.), four essential priorities (e.g., engaging families with ways to do so, important role of parents as primary educators, catechizing and faith formation, celebrates cultural diversity) – no reference to zones or paid lay ministers, each one in parish takes their proper place, detailed document and plan, gives examples of parishes which are truly vibrant – good resource for SPC
- Work done in looking at other dioceses – Strategic Planning Committee has done research – many parishes in North America and Europe – in some sense of panic – reduced numbers of parishes quite aggressively by combining parishes – many jurisdictions struggling to find the way forward
- We also have a history of previous attempts which were well developed but not implemented – we have taken a conservative approach focusing on input and consultation
- We have memory of a vibrant church – but that is no longer so. We speak about past with great respect as we should – but the reality is different today. We must make real change together!
- What we can do – look at the parishes you are close to – getting to know people in other parishes, how to make new partnerships, learn from each other – I am going to do that now, not wait for the conclusion of this process