



**Roman Catholic Episcopal Corporation of St. John's  
STRATEGIC PLANNING  
Zone 6 – Parish Representatives & Public Meeting**

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**NOTES FROM CONSULTATION  
STRATEGIC PLANNING COMMITTEE MEETING  
PROPOSED ZONE 6 – Witless Bay & Area  
Public Meeting & Parish Representatives  
December 14, 2016  
56 in Attendance**

**QUESTION #1**

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

- In some respects, Yes, when you have massive geographic area but when the parishes are in a straight line with small populations, not so certain
- Reasons: decreasing # of priests and church attendants – should approach be attempts to catechize and evangelize those who have moved away
- Strategic Planning Committee – Issues at every meeting – youth, declining populations – need to look at 5 years from now, obvious shortage of people to do what needs to be done. In rural areas, often doing the best we can. 18% of Catholics regularly attend Church – where are the other 82%? This is actually the reason for the pastoral zone idea = sharing model in the zone to determine what is needed in that zone (will vary from zone to zone). Maybe we have not been an attractive church for a while – is this a new way to gain energy, revitalize?
- One size does not fit all – cannot use a cookie cutter approach, differences throughout the Archdiocese. Archdiocese top down does not work. Has to be what the people in the zone need and want.
- Results of survey: teachings of church have been sanitized, too liberal. Evangelization described as modernizing teachings of the church – how are teachings relevant in the modern context? Every pope in our history has been calling for evangelization – evangelization and tools for evangelization are what is needed not pastoral zones.
- Focus on evangelization critical
- In this area two of the parishes have been clustered since 1999. Sharing of resources essential, but this is not the way to achieve this



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## QUESTION #1 CONT.

- Pastoral zones are good as a start – can be tweaked, variable between urban and rural areas, tweaking has to come from the people: we lost denominational education and gave no appropriate alternative structures for education – have to educate the children – used to marvel at “Sunday schools”

## QUESTION #2

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

- Geographic spread an issue – where is the normal traffic movement – it is to St. John's
- Travel patterns across the zone – tend to head north
- Must be conscious of community identities, e.g., Mobile, Witless Bay, Cape Broyle – no matter how you try to design it, there will always be a challenge – may have to get on with it and then let it unfold

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

- Would Goulds/Petty Harbour be better linked to Bay Bulls area rather than up the Shore (see arrangement re Anglican parish which linked Bay Bulls and Goulds)

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

- No comments noted

## QUESTION #3

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

- What are we doing about shortage of priests – are we praying, having adoration? Is this structure meant to be permanent – would we keep it if we had a strong renewal
- Concern re sense that the role of the priest is being diminished – “priest and lay people are equal” – not acceptable statement



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### QUESTION #3 CONT.

- Does make sense – but first thing we must do is catechize the people in the pews – understand that this is still liturgy even when led by a lay minister. Concern re Mass on TV seen as liturgy.
- Not appropriate acknowledgement of people who presently run the parishes, almost all of whom are volunteers – this is the real basis of maintaining this strength into the future – needs to be better stated in the document.
- Strategic Planning Committee – Not the intent in any way to diminish the role of the priest – essential to the life of the church – priest would be leader of the pastoral zone – inequity among areas within the Archdiocese – decline in many areas, e.g., #s of priests, people attending church, evangelization . . . something has to be done about each theme – encouraged by the 1400 people who have attended these sessions and given wise input
- Strategic Planning Committee – Issue of catechesis, understanding gatherings led by lay people, education for priests working as part of a team
- Role for deacons – we have a deacon in our parish working without pay – is this not a way to go?
- Proposal lay ministers contrary to teachings of the church? – in no way should we promote clericalization of the laity – under some circumstances can do what is proposed and lay persons authorized to do some of this ministry
- Strategic Planning Committee – Solution would probably include a mix of deacons, foreign-born priests, retired priests, etc. Need also to address women present in lay ministry and diaconate (see Pope Francis' study). “Vocational diaconate” – a lifelong commitment, not all so called would be able to participate without a salary.
- Presently, have to be able to guarantee financial independence in order to become a deacon.
- Strategic Planning Committee – Key is role of lay people in the church. Nothing in the proposal which is not presently allowed.



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### QUESTION #3 CONT.

- Strategic Planning Committee – Father Puddister has put together a response based in Canon Law which supports what is proposed – sufficient flexibility within Canon Law. Also approved by Archbishop. Availability brought up a number of times.
- This is a proposal for the future when it might be necessary – happening in other places around the world because of their realities
- Strategic Planning Committee – What can we do? What do the people want us to do? What is it permissible for us to do?
- Have we done a resource plan for the priests which we have now? Do not have a shortage of priests – yes, in rural areas, not in urban areas.
- Questions re lay minister – take someone and train them for 2 years – then come out and we will pay them? Financial impact analysis?
- Are there some people who have some training now?
- Strategic Planning Committee – Financial issues facing church are significant right now – needs to be addressed. We need a workable framework first and then find the people to do the work. Convinced that the focus is finding what is the right way to go – then ask what is the timeframe, way to go, way to pay for it
- Fear – further diminish role of ministerial priesthood – if Mass in one church in zone with Liturgy of Word in another church in zone – who will go where? Will concept of priest going to suffer?
- People would love to go to the “Sister’s Mass” rather than the priest’s!
- Finances: if we do have lay minister in the area, would better off parish(es) have to bear the financial burden for the other parishes who do not have the financial means to do so? True across the whole Archdiocese



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**QUESTION #4**

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

- Finances already mentioned
- Politics of the area – up the shore, down the shore – different ways of running parishes
- Strategic Planning Committee – It is about being community, about gathering, do not want to take away from sense of loyalty

**QUESTION #5**

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

- Time is of the essence – 18% of Catholics going to Mass now, given ages that percentage will continue to decrease. At least this is a start – something has happened. At least starting a process – sense of urgency
- Even in St. John's quite parochial – need to be very careful that this approach does not drive even more people from the church. Ex: in Renew's no priest has come to encourage the people to preserve the church building and it has deteriorated. The people must make the decision for their own parish re continuation of church building; otherwise even more will leave the church. We made a mistake re denominational education system – destroyed from within. Bigger is not better.
- In present situation, probably could work well with existing parishes on the Shore rather than building larger bureaucracy, see example from government decision re creating zonal boards which failed – need to do something but not create a new level of bureaucracy
- What happens if zone cannot raise the funds needed to support the pastoral team?



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## QUESTION #6

### WHAT SHOULD BE THE NEXT STEPS IN OUR PLANNING PROCESS?

- Sense of urgency already mentioned
- Reiterate – all the popes have focused on evangelization – in this interim period, could we not look at some of programs available for evangelization
- All members of committee are from St. John's – no one from rural areas, no parish representatives – suggest going forward to be more inclusive of other representatives
- Why is there not a representative from each zone, the common person?
- Is there someone who can link with youth and young families?
- Re evangelization – training people through catechetical formation programs who will in turn catechize the communities
- Do need the structure to respond to the world in which we live – need to find ways to attract people into the church, make it more interesting – children today have many other more attractive things
- Strategic Planning Committee – Look at 17 churches in one section of St. John's – not well attended Masses all of which are at the same time, population based on 1950's structure – if we came together in some way, would it have the potential to be better? Need to create some excitement in our church
- Seems if this can be something of the future – one or two people start small, learn from that experience, get the kinks out of the program and improve as you go

## OTHER GENERAL COMMENTS

- Experience from Ontario and presence in many parishes – see here hardworking and devoted people to their churches, initiative of a few key people are sustaining the church here in this area
- True about getting people back to the church – children attend program but do not stay for Mass.



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### OTHER GENERAL COMMENTS CONT.

- The Basilica costs so much? Jesus did not preach from a building. Choices will have to be made, and it will be heart-wrenching, it will hurt. Hang on to what is the most important thing – your faith
- 2003 lost daughter and had crisis of faith – blamed God, have come back from that road. Nobody reached out and encouraged return to church or provide help. How many of us reached out to encourage others to come here? One in person, one on facebook.
- More attention needed to teachings of evangelization
- Strategic Planning Committee – Teachings not meant to be modernized but the environment and the world are changing dramatically – how do we adapt for that – concern for children who no longer go to church despite the fact that parents have faithfully gone to church – must come up with something to help us address this
- Evangelization at the family level is significant with parents having a major role, with young families – important role for lay persons in providing leadership in this area
- Important point – it gets the debate going. Attention to getting people back to the church is absolutely key! Can see examples of a priest coming into a parish and many people came back to the church. This Southern Shore area was once the strongest Catholic area in the country. Impact of abuse. No one has given the leadership needed to get people interested in the church again.
- Thanks for Committee members' giving this time
- Challenge across rural areas – improvements in financial committees, pastoral zones would allow better financial planning