



**Roman Catholic Episcopal Corporation of St. John's
STRATEGIC PLANNING
Zone 8 – Public Meeting & Parish Representatives**

**NOTES FROM CONSULTATION
STRATEGIC PLANNING COMMITTEE MEETING
PROPOSED ZONE 8 – St. Bride's & Area
Public Meeting & Parish Representatives
153 in Attendance
November 20, 2016**

QUESTION #1:

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

- Will there always be a priest present when someone wants him or will it sometimes be a lay person
- Response: this is the intent of the exercise – an attempt to address the realities
- Concern: how can we be sure this will happen?
- Concern: not equal across the Archdiocese – today some people get a Mass once a month while others get Mass every day
- Purpose of pastoral team – they can look to the actual needs of the zone and its parishes
- Fear: if there are lay ministers, there will be fewer people financially supporting the parishes – will be forced to accept lay persons instead of priests
- This area does not cost the Archdiocese one penny – when it was suggested that they take down a church or two – people said no
- Remembers resettlement and its effects
- Someone from this area should be on Planning Committee
- Visited 95% of homes to seek input
- Brought a petition which everyone signed either in their homes or in the store
- For past 10 years, no deficit in the parish – paid all expenses as well as upkeep of church buildings
- Is the issue – millions in debt



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QUESTION #1 CONT.

- Cannot believe in zone from here to Southern Harbour – going back to 1950s and 1960s when had to wait a year to get child baptized
- This plan an attempt to resettle NL
- We look after ourselves with our own priest – all we ask is that a priest is assigned
- We will not accept a lay minister to bury our dead
- We will not pay for education of the lay minister
- We will pay salary of parish priest whether a foreign priest or not – good experience with parish priest
- Why should we be the one to be put into a district the size of the one proposed – not geographically sensible
- We want the zone kept as it is
- Is the committee moved by the Holy Spirit or the cash cow
- Church is not a business – our church and our faith are not a business
- Nothing wrong with having a foreign priest – may be a different culture but their faith in God is what matters
- Call to Archbishop – be shepherd of the flock, stand with us and keep his promise to us
- Liturgical committee very active in Branch – children involved, Eucharistic ministers carry Communion to the sick, sing at Mass – do not see any enhancements in the proposal
- Committee has blessing of Archbishop – one voice does not accept that is so
- Committee here to receive feedback
- Quite strong in saying that there is no support including financial for lay ministers
- Concern: having people minister who are acceptable to the people



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QUESTION #1 CONT.

- Question: reduced number of priests – how do we address this in next 5 to 10 years?
- Challenge about whether the people of the Committee are being paid – Chair indicates this is not so
- Real question: why will they not let priests marry – why is it acceptable to have lay ministers but not married priests?
- Strategic planning Committee – notes this is an issue outside the ability of this Committee to address
- Need to be measured in our tone – in charity
- Could be more financial transparency in Church – what does it cost to run the church – what do people contribute to the cost – what happens re subsidizing the parish if there is a shortfall – where does that money come from
- Scarcity of priests? Is it exaggerated – problem of distribution of priests not the number of priests, married priests, increased age of retirement, better use of retired priests
- Regarding married priests – would bring other issues (cp. Anglican priests), ordain deacons – why is this not done? Another male order?
- Do we have to have a priest for everything?
- Every parish in Toronto has paid lay ministers, usually women lay ministers – recognize larger parishes with more money – found lay minister very helpful to the church – led many programs in the parish very successfully – enabled priest to do parochial things – question: where would money come from?
- What about fund raising – education of the laity, example: presiding over funeral rites like the Vigil
- Make more use of church buildings – not many people going to Mass in churches here – many not going to church but they do support the parish – scandals in the church have turned many people from the church – what is happening now will turn others from the church – let nature take its course
- No one is doing anything about youth – in the parishes or in the Archdiocese



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QUESTION #1 CONT.

- Should try to get young people back to church – is there anyone under 30 years of age on the Committee – yes, there was one person who moved to Alberta and another who was in university and had new family
- Challenge – how do we get young people and other people back to the church and seeking ways to do so
- Challenge to the committee – get out to speak to young people
- How do we replace or find sufficient members of clergy 5 to 10 years from now?
- Make women priests! However, Pope has said no
- Thank You for coming to hear our concerns – our priest and our parish are important to our community life
- Suggests adding Chantelle to Committee
- Having priest in our area, far from other parts of Archdiocese – almost an island parish – present priest very welcoming – central to our church life
- Did not see shortage of priest in Rome
- Finances – highest support of any parish in the province, allow our churches to be maintained beautifully
- Status quo is not acceptable – something has to change – do not need open churches need active churches – 22% of people going regularly to church, attend just one hour a week, do not respond to needs such as food banks, “feeding the hungry greater than raising the dead”
- Hope that the Spirit is present – help the present volunteers become more active and more supported



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QUESTION #2

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

- NO – not for this area, too large, geography too wide, leave it the way it is!
- Bad experience of “strategic” plans – examples of moving highway depot out of the zone, introduction of centralized health system – all examples of services being moved away from the area and with added cost
- We are fine as we are out here
- This is the zone concept – setting up office in Placentia – we get the leftovers – with government we had no choice – different re church – money comes directly from us and will not go to Placentia
- Whatever happens has to be signed off by the Archbishop – this is a proposal for the Archdiocese
- What happens 5 to 10 years' time?
- Cannot go back to 1940s or 1950s when we had to wait for the priest to come from Placentia
- Committee has met with the priests on a number of occasions
- Do the priests agree: some yes and some no but all know that something has to happen – we cannot keep it the way it is now
- Need to consider the Cape Shore road and its challenges
- Will we have the right to back out of the zone if we do not agree? This is the purpose of these meetings – to seek the input of the people
- Deal with the parishes who have financial troubles – leave us alone
- Know there is shortage of priests – priests here know the culture – is it that the Archdiocese does not want to get foreign priests?

b) Would some communities be better placed in another zone?

- None noted



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QUESTION #2. CONT.

- c) **Would some communities from another zone make more sense in your zone?**
- None noted

QUESTION #3

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

- Appears that there is not support for the concept as presented
- Already have well educated people who teach the children, visit the sick under the guidance of parish priests – not the same as paying for the lay ministers – that changes everything – not acceptable as presented in the proposal
- If we pay lay people, it will cost more money

QUESTION #4

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

- Leave things here as they are
- We raise a lot of money – if priest goes from here, we will not send the money to the Archdiocese
- Has this been tried elsewhere – a similar proposal was made in the late 1980s and 1990s without any changes being made. Dioceses across Canada and the world, dramatic changes are being made also. We are actually slower in responding than most dioceses – no plan exists for this Archdiocese
- Need to plan for St. John's – churches out here have been maintained by the people out here without any help from the Archdiocese – we are in the black – the Archdiocese takes money from here to pay bills in St. John's



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QUESTION #5

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

- What will happen to the priest's house if the priest goes – why are we raising money to maintain the house?
- Father Devas only here for one year – what happens then? Decision by Archbishop to decide what plan will emerge
- What happens to the meeting notes – all notes will be posted on the website after all the meetings are over
- Encouraged to go to website – good response even now from individuals by letter, email and telephone
- Committee wants to hear the voice of the parishioners
- From 1999 – 1849 – resident priest for 167 years = 32 priests, want that to continue, people living here will pay their way, many people who left here for work have returned to retire – do not want to see any change
- Are any lay ministers now being trained? Fair number of people who are doing or have completed studies who would be prepared.
- Is there anyone on the Committee planning to become a paid lay minister? No
- Where would the priest(s) in the zone be located? That would be the decision made within the zone – fear that the bigger vote would make the difference even if they do not pay the larger amount of money
- Shortage of priests – why? They took prayers and the crucifix out of schools – need to look at reversing this
- Previous consultant – we cannot afford to keep the church in Point Lance or Patrick's Cove. The people made a different decision and the churches were kept open
- Loss of Catholic schools has been a tragedy –this is an issue right across Canada, not limited to this Archdiocese



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QUESTION #5 CONT.

- Catholic schools maintained in Ontario – yet still concerns about reduced numbers attending church there. Special programs being introduced there, e.g., Family of Faith program
- Eucharist is highest form of prayer – thus the hope that there will always be a priest to have Mass, to preside at Funerals and marriages
- Commend Committee for coming to listen
- How many priests are in this proposed zone – 3 today. Is this number being guaranteed in the future?
- Even though, we had a parish priest in the past, he was in Placentia and not always available
- Recognition that changes have happened in the society – this will not be undone
- Inequity throughout the Archdiocese even today – some get one Mass per month while others get Mass every day – does not seem fair and must be addressed
- No future if we do not bring religion back to the schools
- Should be a plan, but how to get people back to church
- If we are part of the zone as outlined, we will end up in the same situation as some parts of the Burin Peninsula with one Mass per month
- Drifting away from church happened before we lost the Catholic Church
- Our presence today validates the commitment to Church in this parish

QUESTION #6:

WHAT SHOULD BE THE NEXT STEPS IN OUR PLANNING PROCESS?

- Do not maintain Zone 8 as outlined
- Lesson in futility if we do not get the children back to church



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QUESTION #6 CONT.

- This plan will probably go ahead in the next two years – if so, we should be Zone 8A – Sacred Heart Parish – this would keep things as they are which is what we want – recognizes geographical spread and respects parishes as they are
- Past experience when lay person had to preside at funerals because there was no priest – lay person can gather people to say the Rosary when someone dies if there is no priest, lay persons also educate the children at Christmas/Easter/Sunday – we already have that experience – do the Stations of the Cross, celebrate Remembrance Day appropriately – led by lay persons always accompanied by the parish priest
- There are plenty of foreign priests who want to come to Canada
- In Corner Brook, there had been lay ministers but the new Bishop ended that practice, putting priests back
- Already there is a Deanery in place which in some ways reflects the zones – why change
- How do we bring back people to the church – we all must do this together – we have to find the way – many changes in society are happening

OTHER GENERAL COMMENTS

- None noted