

CALLED TO BE CHURCH
Pastoral Planning
Saratoga Planning Group No. 2

Meeting Date: February 27, 2007
Location: Corpus Christi Church
Facilitator: Kevin Harrigan

Participants:

Corpus Christi Team: Debbie Botch, Rev. Marty Fisher Pastor, Mike Hetz, Angela Krulls, Darrel LaVigne, Kelly Millington, Jack Sweeney, Susan Wieczynski RSM

St. Edward's Team: Joe Berger, Rev. Pat Butler Pastor, Bob Daly, Rich Evans, Maggie Hume, Sue Karpovich

St. Mary's Crescent Team: Chris Conroy, Kathy Crouth, Andy Grebe, Rev. Tom Hayes Pastor, Jessica Mack, Tim Mack, Laurene O'Brien **Excused:** Normie Tibi

WELCOME:

- The meeting began with the singing of a hymn. The group was led in prayer by Father Marty Fisher and the Corpus Christi team members.
- A sign-in sheet was passed around and introductions made for those who were not part of the 1/23/07 meeting.
- Kevin distributed a copy of the February LPG Meeting Summary form to show the group what output was expected to come from this meeting. This form is to be completed by our recorder and submitted to Pastoral Planning Office in Albany as well as to be distributed to our three pastors and the Saratoga County Dean (Rev. Tom Connery of ICC in Glenville).
- Kevin also handed out a copy of the notes he had received on the February Saratoga County Deanery meeting. These notes were in regard to feed back from the four (4) Saratoga LPG's on the January meetings. These notes came from the facilitator (Meg Bergh) for the pastoral planning portion of the Deanery meeting. Meg also facilitates the Saratoga LPG # 4 (St. Joseph's Scotia, ICC – Glenville and Our Lady of Grace – Ballston Lake). We should get similar notes on the Deanery meeting discussion each month.
- Kevin also described tonight's agenda.

DISCUSSION ABOUT LAST MEETING:

- Father Marty expressed a concern regarding information coming from the LPG meetings. He was on retreat and unable to attend the January meeting. It had gotten back to him that our LPG group had decided that there would be one active pastor and two retired priests serving the three parishes in the future. Father questioned, how do we stop the spreading of such incorrect rumors? The meeting notes did mention that particular staffing scenario as a possibility (given the projected numbers of priests who would be available). However, it is not our LPG's role to determine whether active priests or retired priests will minister to our parishes
- Communication to the parishioners was then discussed with the idea that every parish should do the same thing. It was suggested that the minutes be posted at each parish.
- Following the clarification on the LPG role in regards to priest staffing the question was raised about what limitations we were operating under in pastoral planning for the three parishes. For example could the possible model of operating as one parish be considered? We need to know what we can talk about and what is our role? Kevin responded that he was not aware of any limitations. In fact, the LPG's were being encouraged to "think outside of the box" and to consider "church" to be a larger geographic area than in the past.
- Although not off the table, it was a group consensus that we are not far enough along in the pastoral planning process yet to consider any consolidations at this point. We are not expected to make formal recommendations to the Diocese until June 2008 regarding the various topics we will be discussing over the next 18 months.

OPENING COMMENTS REGARDING PRE-MEETING READINGS

- Kevin explained that tonight's session will focus on the three goals of Catholic Evangelization – how parishes are implementing them, how to develop or strengthen them and how to integrate throughout our Diocese. Kevin summarized the three evangelization goals as having to do with: Self (Goal I), Others (Goal II), and Actions (Goal III). Before moving to this part of the agenda comments were solicited regarding thoughts coming from the pre-meeting preparation readings or any other general thoughts on the topic of evangelization.

- Comments made are noted below:
 - A lot of people feel the Church is too exclusionary—divorced don't receive Communion, etc. We need to find a way to welcome the inactive back in a better way than we are doing now. It is responsibility of church going people to make others feel more comfortable.
 - Are we truly welcoming people to the message of Jesus? The inactive / unchurched are currently disconnected from the Gospel message. Difficulties with issues / doctrine in the Catholic Church do not help with evangelization effort.
 - What is missing is the sense of reaching out and welcoming, inviting individuals – and to feel comfortable doing that. Catholics are not good at reaching out.
 - We have to be different if we are going to bring people in.
 - They (the inactive / unchurched) are worried about being welcomed, not about doctrine.
 - TOLERANCE. INVITE. BE DIFFERENT.
 - A lot of nondenominational churches are more comfortable with the Word of God because they study it all the time.
 - SOCIAL FUNCTIONS. They are always available socially for each other. Youth functions draw in families. They are there constantly for every aspect of their lives.
 - WITNESSING in a public group is encouraged. They have an expectation that their faith means something to them.

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION:

- Attendees were seated at three separate tables with members from different parishes mixed with others. Kevin asked each table to follow the Participant Guide and use the discussion focus questions for Goal I. A reporter was chosen for each table to capture the comments / ideas. Small group discussions took place for 10-15 minutes.
- After a 10 minute break, where great hospitality snacks were enjoyed by all, a similar small group discussion process ensued for Goal II and Goal III.

LARGE GROUP DISCUSSION:

Attendees came together to report from their discussions, tying the three goals together.

Goal I: Calls us to give priority to our own spiritual renewal and to deepen our own relationship with Jesus.

Goal 2: Its basic mode is invitation and calls us to hone in our skills for outreach to make our communities more welcoming and hospitable.

Goal 3: Calls us to foster Gospel values in our society, to actualize our faith in the every day.

How are these goals already fulfilled and lived out in our parish communities?

- Scripture Studies
- Parish Retreats
- Community Outreach
 - Food Pantry
 - Service Umbrella at St. Edward's
 - Reach out to families in need
 - PROVIDE fund to help needy
- Hispanic Ministry (3 parishes already cooperating)
- Literacy Services
- Small Faith Sharing Groups
- Nursing Home Ministry
- Emergency and Transportation Services
- Birth Right Ministry
- Stewarding grants for local non-for-profits
- Outreach ministry, communion and prayer to assisted living communities
- Divorced and Separated Ministry
- Intergenerational Faith Formation

What skills, training, and resources do we need to develop them more completely?

- Develop youth center near school campus (Shenendehowa)
- Social functions together (more)
- Joint music program (establish)
- Joint house building function
- Open invitation to three Bible Studies
- Need for more volunteers
- Skills training on how to recruit volunteers and to be more inviting
- Personal invitations to parishioners
- Improve communication in general – technology, publicity, common website

What can we do *immediately* to better fulfill the goals of evangelization?

- Take the best of what each parish does and open it to each other.
- Get better publicity on what we are doing right
- Parish Retreat (develop more)
- Enhance Spanish Ministry
- Connect coordinators of different outreaches to each other
- Social functions (develop)
- Parish Directory (develop)
- Youth group among three parishes. Through school activities like sports they are already working together.
- Improve / combine transportation network to get people to our churches

What are our preliminary recommendations for the future of this planning group to better fulfill the three goals of Evangelization?

- Establish and perform a Habitat project sponsored by all three parishes
- Establish a Youth Center sponsored by all three parishes, at St. Edwards and funded by three parishes
- Consider a Youth Mass
- Develop a Come Home Program, to invite inactive / unchurched back
- Share Mass schedules
- Create a single website

MEETING CLOSING:

- A request was made for a LPG distribution list to be shared to allow for LPG members to better communicate with each other. Kevin volunteered to prepare a list with everyone's email address and to distribute with minutes.
- Evaluation sheets were distributed.

NEXT MEETING:

- Monday, March 26 at St. Edwards, beginning with review of tonight's ideas.
- Topic will be Early Faith Formation (Birth – 5 years). Meeting materials are available on the Diocese's website (www.rcda.org) in the Called To Be Church section. Homework is to research this topic in your own parishes. Talk with parents asking how does your parish nurture their family and their children's faith formation?
- The meeting closed with prayer lead by Fr. Fisher.

Respectfully submitted,
Mary Jo Brown, Recorder

Kevin Harrigan, Facilitator