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

Meeting Date: March 26, 2007
Location: Church of St. Edward the Confessor
Facilitator: Kevin Harrigan

Participants:
St. Edward's Team: Joseph Berger, Bob Daly, Maggie Hume, Sue Karpovich, and Rev. Patrick Butler, Pastor
St. Mary's Crescent Team: Chris Conroy, Kathy Crouth, Andy Grebe, Jessica Mack, Laurene O'Brien, Normita Tibi, Sister Mary Christopher PBVM, and Rev. Tom Hayes, Pastor
Corpus Christi Team: Debbie Botch, Mike Hetz, Angela Krulls, Darrel LaVigne, Kelly Millington, Jack Sweeney, and Rev. Martin Fisher, Pastor

WELCOME / FACILITATOR COMMENTS:

- The meeting began at 7:00 PM with group recitation of "Prayer in Time of Change".
- Tonight's agenda was reviewed.
- Kevin distributed the sign-in sheet and introduced Sister Mary Christopher PBVM who was attending as an ad hoc member for this session from St. Mary's. Sister's position at St. Mary's is Pastoral Associate for Faith Formation.
- Sharing LPG meeting information with all parishioners was discussed. Our three pastors concurred that messages must be consistent and rely on meeting minutes and meeting summary forms. The February meeting minutes were posted and copies of the summary forms were made available at St. Mary's. Posting the minutes on the parish web site was being considered by Corpus Christi. It was encouraging to note that there have been no new reports of inaccurate meeting information being disseminated.
- An initial LPG Member Directory was distributed with minutes last month with only email contact information. Kevin distributed input forms to expand the contact information to include address and phone numbers. Kevin noted completing this information was optional.
- Kevin clarified that meetings **will** occur during the summer months and dates will be forthcoming.
- Kevin discussed imposing stricter time limits on individual discussion. This was suggested by several participants on evaluation forms. Kevin asked members to limit their sharings to about one minute. One member expressed concern that not everyone communicates ideas "speedily". It was agreed that some guidelines must be followed given the finite meeting time (2 hours) and the need to cover significant material. However, we will be respectful of all ideas and provide additional avenues for expanded expression.

FEBRUARY MEETING REVIEW:

Kevin reviewed the major points of discussion from last month's meeting on Evangelization and provided opportunity for further input as follows:

- An addition to the minutes was suggested for the category of "what we can do immediately to better fulfill the goals of evangelization" ….. to call together certain "Target Groups" (i.e. at-home mothers, newly married couples, new parish members, retirees, etc.).
- Members shared thoughts on how parishes should move forward with evangelization ideas and suggestions. Fr. Hayes offered that it is difficult to work on getting new programs started during the ongoing "Call to Be Church" process. New materials on new topics come out each month.
- The parish councils from Corpus Christi and St. Mary's reported that they discussed evangelization at their last meetings and plan to allow for time on their future agendas for "Call to Be Church" topics. This provides a means for further discussion and consideration of topics introduced at the LPG meetings.
- Some improvements have already occurred. The three parishes recently coordinated Lenten Reconciliation Services together. Also, it was mentioned that parishioners from all three

cluster parishes attended the recent retreat at Corpus Christi. Corpus Christi's Evangelization Committee has begun the process to re-institute a process they did about five years ago in reaching out to the unchurched. Individuals have already been approached by telephone and flyers inviting them to attend Easter Season services.

- Kevin reminded us that the CTBC process is a "circular process". He shared information he received from the March Saratoga Deanery Meeting discussion on evangelization. Each of the four Saratoga LPG's were talking about doing many of the same things. Reaching out by mail and / or personal invitations were the examples given. Fr. Fisher added that the clergy met at St. Clare's recently and focused on the "Call to Be Church" process.
- A suggestion was made that we need to develop a process for training facilitators for our evangelization target groups. Perhaps a call for help in bulletins would prove beneficial. In addition the three parishes should look to share expertise found in their respective parish with the other parishes (ex. Call on Corpus Christi' has developed expertise on retreats). No need to re-invent the wheel each time.
- Kevin reminded group the theme for training and education had come up before. Past LPG sessions have pointed to the need for more education to empower laity to take on ministry leadership roles. It was noted the upcoming Diocesan Spring Enrichment Program offers opportunities for leadership role training.

CALL TO PRAYER:

We proceeded to the Church worship space where Fr. Butler and the St. Edward's team members led us in a very moving prayer service, "We are SIGNED with Christ Becoming LIGHT for our World".

LARGE GROUP DISCUSSION:

When we returned to our meeting area, Kevin segued the prayer service to tonight's topic. He told us the prayer service was based on The Rite of Acceptance one of the rites of the RICA. We experienced this prayer ritual sensually through words, movement, water, light, and the signs of the cross we administered to each other. Similarly, the young child (this evening's focus group) experiences faith through this process. A child's experience of faith is not a thought process. It is all action as they imitate and respond to the actions of others. The child is a "tag along". The faith of the child is really the faith of the parent or another significant adult. "Ritual" is an important part of faith formation for them. Tonight we focus on the faith formation of young children and how we support their families / caregivers. In a large group format explored LPG Meeting Summary Questions #1 and #2 as follows:

1. What is available currently in our planning group for *children* from conception to age five?

- Children's Liturgy (Corpus Christi) at two masses all year except Christmas/Easter where children ages 3-8 are dismissed after opening prayer to daily chapel with catechists and return prior to Consecration. St. Edward's follows a similar procedure for children Kindergarten-Grade 5.
- Faith Formation (3 and 4 year olds) at St. Edward's during the week
- Nursery/Pre-K School at St. Mary's (has operated for 25+years). It was added that there are numerous other nursery schools in this geographic area.

2. List the current programs/services we have for *families* with young children.

- Parents/Tots Group (St. Edward's) meets weekly.
- Rocking chairs (Corpus Christi) to ensure comfort and inclusion of parents and young children
- Break-out sessions with tactile activities during Generations of Faith (Corpus Christi)
- Changing tables in restrooms (available in all three parishes)
- Babysitting available during 9:00 Mass (St. Edward's)
- Gathering space with couches and sound "piped in" from the Church proper (St. Mary's)
- Gathering area from where Mass can be viewed and heard (Corpus Christi)

SMALL GROUP TABLE DISCUSSIONS:

Following a short break where delicious refreshments provided by St. Edward's were enjoyed, members moved to three small discussion groups assigned by Kevin and proceeded to discuss LPG Meeting Summary questions #3, 4, and 5. A reporter was chosen at each table to record the group's comments/ideas.

LARGE GROUP FEEDBACK:

Individual small group reporters posted the collected comments/ideas and Kevin facilitated the sharing of these responses to Questions #3, 4, and 5 as follows:

3. List the *unmet* needs.

- Develop parenting resources (especially for young parents with no older role models for guidance)
- Establish a welcoming environment for the age group (tolerance and teaching)
- Establish welcoming attitude/views toward children/verbalize we welcome younger families, noise and all!
- Develop more family-friendly activities
- Focus on Target Groups (Baptisms, Interfaith Families)—young families lack opportunities to meet one another
- Incorporate families in Liturgical Celebrations (bringing gifts to altar, children extinguishing candles)

4. What we can/will do – *immediately*.

- Statement from parish/pastor that young families are welcome and reminding others to be welcoming and patient
- Invite all baptized during the year to attend a special liturgy and reception with their families on Holy Family Sunday.
- Institute/Continue Blessing of Animals.
- Church Fair with appropriate activities for toddlers, Easter egg hunts, Halloween Party, provide child care so young parents can shop, etc.
- Provide materials at Masses (bag/basket with paper, crayons, and books). Children can then use their senses to communicate what they experienced at Mass.
- Communicate better what is already available.
- Form groups to provide opportunities for young families to get together (working mothers, stay at home moms, expectant couples).
- Young parents' Mass (being careful not to be exclusionary—all parishioners will be welcome).
- Work to change attitudes (invite all to move towards the center to make room for young families).
- Solicit volunteers for all of the above.

5. What are some preliminary recommendations *for the future* from this planning group to respond to the needs of young children and families?

- Develop community service projects for young children.
- Provide a welcoming and comfortable area in all churches for young families with rocking chairs, quiet toys, soft books, etc.
- Children's Mass—age-appropriate music and children's Bible stories
- Education for children on rituals and Church customs (should include a parental component)
- Stations of the Cross for children (St. Mary's has done this program in the past)

WRAP UP / CLOSING:

- Kevin made evaluation forms available and invited participants to provide him with their feed back. This is also an opportunity for further meeting comment and input. The evaluation forms will be sent by email for members who would like more time to reflect on the meeting and what was discussed and shared.
- The meeting closed with recitation of the Closing Prayer from the final page of the March 2007 Participant Guide led by Father Butler.

NEXT MEETING:

- Monday, April 30, 2007, at St. Mary's Crescent, beginning with an opportunity for final thoughts on tonight's topic of early childhood formation. We will also review Deanery and Pastoral Council discussions on this same topic.
- The April topic will be Life Long Formation (6-18 years). Meeting materials are available from pastors or can be obtained off the Diocese's website (www.rcda.org) in the "Called to Be Church" section, under Meeting Resources.

Respectfully submitted,
Linda Ann Margitan, Recorder

Kevin Harrigan, Facilitator

**Additional ideas generated for the next meeting:

1. Younger altar server training (after First Communion) – Corpus Christi
2. Younger lectors