

## Summary of Table Responses from January 28, 2004 Meeting

### Questions/Clarifications:

#### **Are we to consider the impact changes in our cluster may have on a neighboring cluster and vice versa?**

No. We should be making recommendations to the archbishop based on our own cluster. The bishop and the advisory group which he will be convening will have the larger view and give consideration to those impacts.

#### **Are we talking about mergers or closings/suppressions?**

Parishes will be suppressed. New geographic boundaries for the remaining parishes will have to be redrawn. Families will continue to be free to register in whatever parish they wish. With the suppression of a parish, the assets of the parish revert to the diocese. Those monies will be used in support of poorer parishes and the various agencies and programs of the archdiocese.

#### **What criteria have been used in the parish to determine closings?**

Among other criteria, clusters were to consider: one priest for 1250 attending Mass and if the Sacramental Index were less than 100, consolidation was to be considered.

**Approach:** It is as important to ask why a given parish or parishes should remain open as it is to ask why one should be designated for closing.

We need to take a leap of faith and try to decide what is best for the people of Belmont and Watertown.

Think about the church we want to have. What would it look like in terms of space, involvements, programs, outreach, etc. Make decisions out of vision for the church we want to be a part of.

### Concerns:

Involvement in sessions such as these is essential and life giving.

Concern for staff in parish(es) which may close. How will they be assisted in seeking new employment?

**Criteria for decision making:** A variety of criteria were highlighted as important in the decision making process:

**Economic considerations:** Review of several years' worth of Operating and Capital Budgets; debt

**Geography/Accessibility:** How will we ensure that all can be served? Concern for elderly who walk to church. Provide transportation for them somehow. Adequacy for Rel. Ed, parish programs, Mass attendance. How close are remaining parishes to one another?

**Physical plant:** over all condition; adequacy of space for enlarged congregations, for social & educational gathering space, parking, consolidation of rectories

**Number of parishes to be retained** should be determined by considering actual Mass attendance, involvement level, Sacramental Index, finance, capacity for growth, access, physical condition  
Information available on census by age? Religious Education #s for past ten years to see trends

Public Transportation

Needs assessment of each parish ought to be conducted.

## **Specific Recommendations:**

We have too much capacity for the need. It is clear that reconfiguration needs to occur. Consolidate rectories as well as parishes.

Two parishes in Belmont and one in Watertown  
One parish each in Belmont and Watertown

In either of the above two suggestions, staffing needs would be greater since the same number of people will be served; but, in a smaller number of locations. It was believed that more than one priest would be needed. Some indicated that the names of the remaining parishes should be changed.

Need to be very aware of community building throughout this process and going forward.

Reconfiguration will call for a new way of doing things and not simply a change in number of parishes. Involvement of many is needed. Vitality attracts. How involve the fringe catholics?.

There should be consolidation of some parish functions e.g. One business manager for the collaborative; one religious education program; single maintenance staff.

Most important space to have available for a combination of parishes: worship space, shared office space, shared rectory, gathering space for social/educational events.

Must develop lay leadership.

Look at Religious Education # and consider declining # of priests.

Ground our selves and decisions in mission.

Some observed St. Patrick and St. Joseph seemed in best shape to stay open. Others pointed to Our Lady of Mercy or Sacred Heart closing.

Perhaps each area could keep one building open: rectory in one area, chapel in another for daily Mass, center in another, offices in another.

Capacity to grow is important; but what are the changing demographics of catholics.

All but St. Joseph's is sustained by rentals; but it is exhausting its saving within the year.

Cluster rather than each parish should meet the needs. Eliminate duplications and thereby increase services.

Consider phasing the closings.