

## LPA 12 Meeting – May 17, 2008

### Notes

Meeting opened with a prayer. Reviewed agenda for today's meeting.

**Ground Rules:** One person speaks at a time; respect each other's remarks. We have had four good meetings, starting last September; want to continue.

**Comments:** process and meetings have been very enlightening; productive; made us more aware of the situation and its complexity. Wonder what pope and American bishops discussed recently during pope's visit to U.S. Hopefully, the discussions included the situation of declining priests.

**Reporting Out:** at end of last meeting, each of the four parishes (St Mary's, Our Lady of Lourdes, St. Ann's, St. Michael's) were asked to go back to their parish/leadership and decide between the E1 and E2 options of clustering and report to today's attendees.

- St. Michael: chose to cluster with St. Ann reasons being size, geographical location and current growth pattern in the Goochland area. It is not reasonable to cluster two large churches (i.e. St. Mary & St. Michael). Next alternative would be to cluster Our Lady of Lourdes & St. Michael. There is still a large concern when clustering a large church with another church. It was felt that an international priest, serving as an assistant pastor, would be needed to assist the pastor of the two churches.
- St. Mary: can not support clustering St. Mary's with any other parish. St. Mary's needs to stand alone. Reasons are many: size, school, debt, location. Of the three cluster options : St. Michael's is too big; Our Lady of Lourdes has its own school and St. Ann's has said it would not want to cluster with St. Mary's. There were several critical points/hot buttons which need to be shared: 1) LPA 12 does not include right parishes, 2) feel we don't have all the information, 3) bishop needs to close smaller parishes first and then cluster remaining parishes, 4) do not build a new parish in Goochland. Based on these items, we need to start over. Ranked concerns 1) impact on priests, 2) debt, 3) LPA 12 make-up.
- Our Lady of Lourdes: wants to cluster with St. Ann's as this is a better fit. St. Mary's and St. Michael's are too large , St. Mary's has its own school and St. Michael's is a different socio-economic parish than Our Lady of Lourdes.
- St. Ann's: wants to cluster with Our Lady of Lourdes: not willing to cluster with St. Mary's. Clustering with St. Michael's not desired because St. Michael's is so large and is a different socio-economic parish than St. Ann's. Our Lady of Lourdes is a better fit and parishioners already go to Our Lady of Lourdes for Sunday liturgy when they can't attend church at their own parish (same with Our Lady of Lourdes parishioners).

#### **Discussion on Reports:**

Given the inability to reach consensus between the two options, further discussions were held. Topics covered included:

- What do we put in the report to the diocese? Should we enter both E1 and E2 even though there are parishes that can not accept the option(s)? This was not felt wise because if we put in an unacceptable option then the diocese may go ahead and choose the option anyway. Re-discussed the idea that we have an opportunity for input and we don't want to miss the opportunity. Regardless, in the end, the diocese will decide something.

- Could/should we recommend a stand-alone parish given the bishop's desire for all parishes to be clustered? What is risk?
- Discussed idea of recommending starting over. Is there a risk? We are at the end of a process started in September. This is late to suggest starting over now. However, if we do need to start over, then we need to say so.
- LPA's need to be reconfigured, especially the LPA involving Richmond-area parishes. Risk here is that reconfiguring one area has a ripple-effect on other parishes which at this point may have already decided their clustering options (we are asking them to start over as well....will they be receptive at this point).
- Again discussed the particulars of clustering Church of Vietnamese Martyrs with other parishes. The difficulties for all parishes involved; how best to utilize resources given cultural/language differences.
- The need to bring in international priests as parochial vicars, to assist our diocesan priests.
- The current efforts at clustering are our best efforts given the current situation. The focus has been fairly short term oriented with the idea that models will be reviewed every five years or so. Where decisions on clustering can be changed over time, we need to think long-term. Clustered parishes, if working under a 'this cluster can change within the next five years' mentality, will be hesitant to fully explore long range plans of clustering.

**Consensus (this is the information that will be in the report to the diocese):**

- Clustering of St Mary Annunciation, Immaculate Conception and St. Jude.
- Clustering of Our Lady of Lourdes and St. Ann
- Stand Alone parishes would be Church of Vietnamese Martyrs, St. Mary and St. Michael.

The above plan would require five priests not four. It is felt that only having four priests in an LPA that includes two large parishes (one with a school, both with building debts and high growth areas) and a parish serving our Vietnamese community is not realistic.

As such, it is strongly recommended that the allocation of four priests in LPA 12 be re-examined as a part of a review of all LPAs. The review of LPAs would include diocesan-level (not LPA level) decisions on the opening and closing of parishes and availability of international priests as parochial vicars.

Once this step is completed, then LPAs membership would be constructed and the option/model process would be reinitiated. Once the cluster has been determined, then the individual clustered parishes would meet to decide the best model for their particular cluster.

The diocese has the responsibility of shaping the church of the future – which appears to be mega churches. As such, there need to be long range plans in place to move the diocese towards building these mega churches. Smaller parishes need to be closed. A building committee needs to be reviewing current facilities and approving parish building campaigns which support the future mega church.

**Summary:**

Frank and Andy will prepare the report (from page 25) and share with LPA 12 members. The report will be forwarded to diocese by the deadline on May 31