

To all parishioners within Cluster #25:

Attached is a copy of the proposal submitted by the members of our cluster committee to the Bishop as required as part of the New Evangelization. It has just been submitted to the Bishop and as such he has not yet had the opportunity to review it. This proposal therefore is subject to his review and comment. The committee felt it was important that this proposal be provided to you at the same time as it was being submitted to the Bishop. Any revisions requested by the Bishop shall be reviewed by the committee and acted upon accordingly. We will keep you informed as the process unfolds.

As you will see in the attached, it is the committee's recommendation that the parishes within the cluster combine to form one parish. This does not mean one church building. Many current parishes have more than one worship site and the new parish will likewise have multiple places of worship. The committee proposes the formation of a transition committee to facilitate the move to a one parish model and we provide a vision for the new committee to utilize in that process.

We thank you all for your input and prayers throughout this process.

The Members of the Cluster 25 Committee

To: The Most Reverend Bishop Richard. J. Malone, Th.D.

From: Cluster Planning Committee, Cluster #25 (Most Holy Trinity of Saco, Notre Dame of Saco, St. Andre of Biddeford, St. Joseph of Biddeford, St. Margaret of Old Orchard Beach, St. Mary of Biddeford, and St. Philip of Lyman)

Dated: June 23, 2006

We the members of Cluster #25 committee respectfully submit this report of our recommendations for the New Evangelization of our cluster.

Model Chosen

The committee recommends the use of Model 1 for our cluster. Though all four models were reviewed and discussed, it was the consensus that the one parish concept would best tear down the emotional walls between the current parishes and create a group that could work cooperatively to best meet the needs of all the parishioners of the cluster. It was belief of the group that the one parish model would best produce a sense of community beyond the individual worship sites and best utilize the limited resources in an efficient manner. The committee believed that part of the New Evangelization was a recognition that our call to ministry goes beyond our local church building and the one parish model best served this goal. The committee considered paring down the number of parishes to two, but determined that such an approach would be more divisive and might impair the ability to work together to meet cluster-wide needs.

Given the geographic scope and the number of parishioners to be served, it was not felt that three priests could be asked to continue to provide services at seven full time worship sites and two summer worship sites. Later in this report the committee provides a vision for achieving the reduction in the number of individual worship sites.

Implementation Plan

A committee with representation paralleling that of the current committee (i.e., two representatives from each of the seven parishes) should be appointed immediately. That committee would oversee the implementation of the transition to one parish utilizing the vision described below as its template. In the short run, all current worship sites would remain without change. A subcommittee would be formed to determine the financial feasibility of the proposed renovations and new buildings discussed below, taking into account the financial gain from the sale of existing facilities. This subcommittee along with those described below would enlist the help of members in the various parishes within the cluster, to draw upon the available expertise, create cooperation and allow for the most efficient implementation. A time line for implementing the transition would be established. An achievable and realistic phase in of the transition will have to be established and modified as needs change and new information arises.

The new cluster committee would be charged with implementing the transition to a new parish Pastoral Council and Finance Council. It is hoped that the creation of one new parish for the entire cluster, the appointment of a single pastor, and the establishment of the Pastoral Council and Finance Council would occur as soon as reasonably possible. Pending the establishment of the new parish councils, the new cluster committee would also be charged with creating subcommittees designed to implement cooperation among the current parishes for the delivery of pastoral needs such as youth ministry and catholic education and to determine the best structure or structures to provide such services for the entire cluster parish. It would also be charged with determining the structuring of local worship site committees for those ministries which are best performed in a less centralized manner. The new cluster committee would continue the standardization of financial policies among the current parishes as well as gathering the current parish policies and proposing centralized policies for the entire cluster.

Mass schedules would be set by the Pastor with the assistance and input of the cluster Pastoral Council. Until a cluster Pastoral Council is established, the new cluster committee would assist the worship sites and the priests in setting mass schedules as changes occur in the number of priests assigned to the cluster.

The two catholic grammar schools in the Cluster, St. James and Notre Dame, would be funded in accordance with School Task Force Cluster Planning Committee Report. Therefore, there will be one school board which will govern both schools with representatives from each worship site within the parish cluster. There will be two principals who shall each report to the same School Administrator who in turn shall report to the Pastor and serve as Executive Secretary of the School Board. A School Task Force would be appointed immediately to guide the transition from the current two separate school structure to that envisioned by the School Task Force Cluster Planning Committee Report.

The cluster Pastoral Council and the cluster Finance Committee would each initially have fourteen members, two representatives from each of the original seven parishes. As consolidation occurs among the various worship sites, the representatives from the former parishes will serve out their current term. Terms on the councils will be staggered three year terms, but shall always have two representatives from each of the worship sites.

Long Range Vision

The committee after much prayer and investigation determined that maintaining all current worship sites would not be economically feasible nor would the parishioners in the cluster be optimally served by three priests with seven worship sites. (It should be noted that it is the committee's expectation that summer worship sites will be served by retired priests living within southern Maine; and perhaps retired priests will also serve the French speaking Catholics.) The committee faced the daunting task of determining how to utilize the current worship sites, maintain parishioner allegiances, expand the pastoral needs of the cluster, all while recognizing the cultural diversity and needs of the various communities. The committee determined that this would best be accomplished with a plan which involved shared sacrifice while maintaining some part of each of the current parishes' heritage. The committee realized that it could not answer all questions nor foresee all contingencies in determining the best manner to implement the changes to a single parish with the optimal number of worship sites. On the other hand, the committee did not want to shirk its responsibility to provide guidance on how to achieve the transition in a compassionate and efficient manner. Though not a detailed plan, the following recommendations

should serve as a vision for guiding the cluster in its transformation from the current parish structure to the new one parish model. Therefore the committee recommends the following long term goals to be used by the implementation committees discussed above:

1. Most Holy Trinity Church in Saco would be maintained as a worship site and its Rectory would be retained. Its hall would be converted to offices which would serve as the central administrative offices for the new cluster parish.

2. The feasibility of remodeling and winterizing St. Luke, St. Margaret's summer mission, should be thoroughly investigated. (It was initially designed with the ability to be winterized.) Assuming this could be accomplished, St. Margaret's Church, Hall and Rectory would be sold with the understanding that the parishioners currently served by that site would be served at St. Luke. A new parish hall would be constructed on the property to serve the needs of all parishioners of the cluster parish, including the worshippers from the Most Holy Trinity worship site whose parish hall would be taken for administrative offices.

3. Assuming the remodeling and winterizing of St. Luke is viable, Notre Dame Church, Convent, Rectory and the Our Lady of Victory Hall in Camp Ellis would be sold. To the extent feasible the current Notre Dame grotto as well as the Perpetual Adoration Chapel would be moved either to the newly remodeled St. Luke worship site or a remodeled Most Holy Trinity site. The choice of location should be based upon the desires of the current parishioners of Notre Dame as well as financial and other relevant factors.

4. St. Joseph Church would be maintained as a worship site, but the selling of its rectory should be considered, especially if the new site described below includes a new rectory.

5. The financial viability of purchasing a new site in the southeastern portion of Biddeford preferably in the area somewhere between Pool Road (Route 9) and West Street, an area of growing population with no nearby worship site, should be thoroughly investigated. That site would include a church, parish hall, rectory and possibly a new school complex.

6. Assuming a new site is viable, St. Andre's Church, Rectory and Catholic Center would be sold. As much of the stained glass and other artifacts as can reasonably be removed and retained should be incorporated in the new Biddeford worship site. Decary Field would be retained by the new parish.

7. Assuming a new site is viable, St. Mary's Church and Rectory would be sold. As much of the stained glass and other artifacts as can reasonably be removed and retained should be incorporated in the new Biddeford worship site. Depending on the proximity of the new worship site to Biddeford Pool, St. Brendan's Church might also be sold.

8. St. Philip's Church, Rectory and Hall would be retained. As growth occurs in this part of the cluster parish, the church could be expanded to seat more parishioners and the parking could be expanded.

The proposed sales are based upon the assumption that the proceeds from the sale of the buildings within the cluster would be retained by the new parish for use in the new building and renovations discussed above. It is expected that the opening of the new Biddeford site would be timed to coincide with the closing of St. Mary and St. Andre. Likewise, it is expected that the remodeling of St. Luke and Most Holy Trinity would be timed to coincide with the closing of Notre Dame and St. Margaret.

The committee recognizes that this plan may need to be modified as further investigation is undertaken, but believes that it is an appropriate starting point for the transition to a workable future for the parishioners in our cluster.

It is the hope of the committee that this approach will re-energize the parishioners in the cluster by providing a plan which takes away some of the doubt and uncertainty about the future. While the plan involves shared sacrifice, at the same time, it provides a plan to work together for a new future. It is our sincere hope that the Holy Spirit will guide us through these difficult times and lead us to a new and exciting faith community.