

Cluster #25

Meeting Minutes

April 14, 2008

Norm Belanger called the Cluster #25 transition committee meeting to order at 7:00 pm at Most Holy Trinity Conference Room followed by an opening prayer. The following members were present: Msgr. Rene Mathieu, Fr. Coleman O'Toole, Fr. Greg Dube, Fr. Kent Ouellette, Norm Belanger, Stephen St. Cyr, Joe Goozie, Paulette Millette, Jean Saunders, Anne Daly, Mark Sevigny, Paula Moses and secretary, Louise Beaulieu. Excused: Fr. James Brewer.

Msgr. Mathieu welcomed Mark Sevigny as the Most Holy Trinity representative replacing Nancy Bancroft. Also present was Paula Moses, the Business Coordinator of the Biddeford & Saco Catholic Parishes.

Subcommittee reports:

Faith Formation: Paulette reported that the Faith Formation group is gearing up for the First Communion & Confirmation ceremonies which will be held on May 24 at St Joseph Church with Bishop Malone presiding. There will be 3 ceremonies at 8:30 am, 11:00 am and 1:30 pm.

Parish Life: Msgr met with the Parish Life committee after our last cluster meeting. Msgr explained that their goal is to plan social activities for the cluster. An ice cream social for all cluster committee representatives will be held for Sunday, April 27 at St Joseph Church basement hall. This will get all involved in the cluster process together to meet each other and share their thoughts. The group has started gathering ideas for the Good Shepherd Parish celebration for this summer. Anne & Paula will be meeting with them on Thursday to see how they are proceeding.

Bill Shultz has asked Msgr if we would consider participating in a 2 hour workshop and test program regarding clustering and evangelization. All agreed to participate and it will probably be held on a Tuesday evening in September. Msgr will contact Bill to let him know that we are interested. Msgr suggested that we might want to survey parishioners at Masses before Memorial Day to find out their birthdates in order to give us a better idea of the age brackets of Mass participants.

Social Justice & Peace: Anne reported that Sr Mary Morey is interested in offering workshops to educate parishioners on health issues. Some of the topics could be diabetes, osteoporosis, etc. Workshops could start in September – a survey of parishioners should be done to see if there is an interest. There will be a blood drive at St Philip on May 31 and the group is looking into planning a Seder meal with a rabbi for next year.

Communications: Steve reported that they are now looking into the Good Shepherd website and wanted our input. Should we have one website with a different page for each parish or should the Good Shepherd website have links to each existing website? All agreed that a page for each parish is the way to go. Mark mentioned that a map of parking options for each worship site should be included on the website. Searching for parking at a church that parishioners don't usually attend is a challenge, as we saw during Holy Week.

Evangelization: Fr. Greg reported that they will be meeting this week to finalize the date for the reflection day.

Buildings & Ground: Jean reported that Holy Week services were a very moving experience for committee members – worshipping together was a positive event. Because of this, the last meeting of B&G was very productive. Jean passed out the B&G recommendations and the WBRC architect report on St Luke. The report reiterates each goal from the June 2006 Cluster #25 report to the Bishop and the B&G recommendations for each goal.

Goal 1: B&G recommends that MHT be maintained as a worship site and the parish hall be retained and upgraded with the kitchen equipment from Our Lady of Victory Hall and that the MHT kitchen be brought up to current fire codes. For now, administration offices will be at MHT while Faith Formation will remain at Biddeford Catholic Center. Usage of the MHT rectory for office space should be pursued. Paula feels that Sr. Angela and the Faith Formation group can decide how to staff their phones, days open, etc. at BCC. Paula wants to have a primary person on the phones and one back up for the administrative offices and she is looking into one telephone system similar to the one in Biddeford which will connect both offices.

Goal 2: The feasibility of winterizing St Luke's Chapel, building a hall with adequate parking was studied by WBRC architects of Bangor. They presented 3 models that in B&G's opinion were more disappointing than the other. Model 1 would cost \$6 million while Model 2 & 3 were in the \$7 million range. St Luke is neither cost effective nor feasible due to the wetlands. As a reference, Msgr. reported that Calais is building a new church that will seat 350, hall for 150 people, 4 small classrooms and one small apartment for \$3.6 million. B&G recommends we sell St Luke in 2010 and keep St Margaret open year round since St Luke has no heating, has inadequate plumbing and bathrooms are not handicap accessible. Based on how many attend Mass in the past year at St. Margaret & St Luke, St Margaret is large enough to hold the summer & winter crowd. They also recommend selling the St Margaret rectory in 2010. Parking is still an issue at St Margaret especially if we sell the rectory.

Goal 3: Recommendation is to sell Notre Dame Church, rectory, convent and hall and to move the Perpetual Adoration Chapel and Notre Dame de Lourdes shrine. B&G committee feels that if the pews at MHT were refigured there would be an increase seating by as much as 150 to 200 seats which would bring the seating at MHT to 700 seats. Mark mentioned that the sound system has delays in it which may have to be adjusted if we reconfigure the seating. B&G also recommends pursuing the purchase of a 7 acre piece of property on North St now owned by the city of Saco as an investment for the future especially if we can buy another 8 acres from General Dynamics which would achieve the 15 acre property size as recommended by the Diocese.

Goal 4: St Joseph Church be maintained as a worship site and not sell St Joseph rectory since it is now serving the priests of Good Shepherd parish. Bishop requires that younger and older priests live together and St Joseph rectory is large enough for them plus visitors and renters. If we can keep the rectory filled then it is worth keeping the building. There are a lot of repairs to be done and parking is an issue but the rectory would probably be hard to sell because of its neighborhood.

Goal 5: Recommendation is not to buy land on the Pool Road since St. Andre Church may be a viable worship site. (See Goal 6)

Goal 6: B&G recommends that St Andre Church should be retained. Independent engineer, Wiss, Janney, Elstner Associates proposed an alternate way to fix the tower at a price tag of \$250,000 instead of \$1 million as recommended by the Diocese. Diocesan's proposal is a 100 year fix while the \$250,000 is a 10-20 year fix. Recommendation is to demolish St Andre rectory for 30 additional parking and approach the elderly housing again for possible parking spaces during Mass times.

Goal 7: Recommendation is to sell St Mary church and rectory before the winter season. All agreed that heating and plowing for next winter will be hard on the budget – we should consider closing St Mary Church either this November or next November. Paula reminded everyone that 90% of St Mary's parishioners are not tied to St Brendan and closing St Mary in the summer would not be beneficial. Parishioners would understand if it had to close before winter sets in. An effort should be made to offer St Mary volunteers a chance to move to another church before the closing is announced.

Goal 8: Recommendation is to keep St Philip as a worship site and pursue expansion of seats if the population increases.

For the next meeting, Norm wants us to consider which recommendations we will implement, how to implement them and to set up a timeline. Msgr suggested that we focus on 10 weekend Masses by 2010; possibly 6 in Biddeford & Saco, 2 at St Philip and 2 at St Margaret.

Msgr will make the following announcements in the bulletin for this upcoming weekend.

1. Pastoral office to remain at Biddeford Catholic Center and Administration office will be at Most Holy Trinity in Saco.
2. St. Luke is neither cost effective nor feasible as a worship site due to the wetlands.
3. Since St. Luke is not viable, we need to expand seating at Most Holy Trinity.
4. Moving Notre Dame de Lourdes Shrine and perpetual adoration chapel.
5. Acquiring land on North St in Saco.

Steve offered to write up an explanation of the above points for an insert into the bulletins. A colored insert showing the map of the wetlands at St Luke should be included to give parishioners a visual of how much wetlands there is at St Luke's site.

Next meeting, Monday, May 5 at 7:00 pm at Most Holy Trinity Conference Room. Meeting was adjourned at 8:40 pm after closing prayer.

Minutes submitted by: Louise Beaulieu