

Cluster 21 Planning Committee

David Deprey, chair
486 St. John Street
Portland, ME 04102

May 21, 2007

Most Reverend Richard J. Malone
Bishop of Portland
Roman Catholic Chancery
510 Ocean Avenue
P.O. Box 11559
Portland, ME 04104-7559

Dear Bishop Malone:

Thank you very much for your letter of April 23. The Cluster 21 Planning Committee is very pleased to learn that the planning proposal we presented for the parishes within our cluster has received unanimous support from you, your staff, the Presbyteral and Episcopal Councils.

As follows, we are providing the following response to the questions posed in your letter of April 23:

What planning has been done for the time when there are fewer priests in the cluster?

In the section of our report titled *Masses, Sacraments, and Devotional Prayer*, we have outlined considerations to be evaluated should there be a shortage of clergy to administer the sacraments and to celebrate Masses on the weekends and for Holy Days of Obligation. In short, we suggest that the cluster consolidate the offering of the sacraments and the celebration of the Masses into the larger parishes whenever possible.

The actual times and places the sacraments and Masses will be offered will depend upon the availability of clergy and the desires and needs of all parishioners within the cluster. Since we cannot foresee exactly what the future will hold, we have left the final schedule determination to the successor Pastoral Advisory Council to address in deliberations with the cluster pastor, the cluster business manager, and the cluster pastoral life coordinator as the conditions warrant in the future.

How do you propose to best utilize the churches and other properties in the cluster?

As described in the planning report section *Disposition of Non-Functional Facilities*, we suggest that a three tier consideration analysis be given to ascertain the best use of facilities that experience an absence of resident clergy. In short, the considerations in this regard are: (1) Can the property be utilized in some manner for the benefit of the cluster?, (2) Given no suitable cluster use, can the property generate income as a rental property for either a Diocesan purpose or for a tenant not in conflict with the mission of the church?, and finally, (3) Can the property be sold to an appropriate buyer?

So as not to tie the hands of the successor Pastoral Advisory Council, pastor, and hired cluster staff, we decided that the best course at this time would be to provide guidelines for disposition or use of such properties with the final decision dependent upon a careful examination of the situation at the time that a clergy shortage develops.

Is there a reason why you can't hire a business coordinator and pastoral life coordinator before July 2009?

Upon further review of the need to provide a smooth and effective transition from the cluster planning committee to the cluster Pastoral Advisory Council, we will work with the respective pastors of the parishes within our cluster to provide names of individuals who will be appointed as members of the cluster Pastoral Advisory Council no later than June 30 of this year. We anticipate this Council to be operational by October 1, 2007. The work of this group will be to begin the transition of all the parishes into a common cluster for both business and worship, and to determine the appropriate time to hire the cluster business manager and pastoral life coordinator before the year 2010.

Thank you again very much for the review and approval of our planning report.

Sincerely,

David Deprey, chair and
Members of the Cluster 21 Planning Committee