

Portland Cluster Meeting

March 19, 2006, 2 – 4 p.m.

Minutes

1. Welcomed by Ernie Lebel, representatives introduced themselves in order from Sacred Heart / St. Dominic Parish, St. Joseph's Parish, Cathedral Parish, St. Peter's Parish, St. Pius X, St Louis Church, St. Christopher's Parish, St. Patrick's Parish. The group included cluster representatives and others in various leadership positions from each parish. Lori Arsenault was introduced as the communicator for the group. A full roster was not taken.

2. Ernie Lebel led the group in a recitation of the Prayer for a New Evangelization

3. Discussion of the agenda raised numerous questions and open discussion. The group present felt that the history of the clustering process was already available in past documents, and that questions, answers and discussion would be more beneficial. A suggestion was made that the group present decide before leaving what the cluster form would be, but it was clarified that that would be the role of the cluster planning committee, consisting of two representatives from each parish who will make their proposal to the bishop. Names were taken at the end of the meeting of cluster representatives from each parish.

Adjusting to a new paradigm of leadership

Clarification of Ernie Lebel's role, which is to get us going... "stir us up and get us thinking for ourselves." Not a facilitator, but a coach.

Process:

Break down into the cluster-planning group

Gather hard data, contained in all of the parishes, and at the Chancery: Financial reports, sacramental information, buildings & maintenance, schools, hospitals, outreach sites, etc.

Restate the mission of the Church in Portland, and of each church in the cluster

Identify goals and objectives to serve as a guide

Identify a leader to coordinate the Portland Cluster

Clarify terminology used in the cluster planning process

When do we need to be finished? *Ernie will ask the bishop.*

Who are we, and what makes us who we are?

What is the configuration of the Portland Cluster? Is it our decision? Ernie Lebel answered that we have the opportunity to suggest to the Bishop what it ought to be and why. He said that it was thought throughout the diocesan planning process that Portland would be one cluster. If the recommendation is for several clusters, a compelling justification should be given.

What are the objectives of the reorganization?

To make the Portland church better and more able to do its mission

To make priests more available for pastoral ministry, and less encumbered by administrative duties

To better utilize active involvement in the operation of the church by the laity

Additional information provided:

- Diocesan planning committee proposed 27 clusters. Cluster Committee can propose another arrangement, to include justification.
- There has been discussion between the Chancery and the religious orders – several meetings have taken place. The Capuchins are committed through 2008, and some other service after that. The Jesuits have expressed an interest in staying in Portland, and to become more involved and have more people assigned. Timetable is for the bishop to make a decision and announcement. It could be soon, but timing is yet undetermined.
- Father Larry Smith, pastor of St. Pius X and Jesuit superior provided an explanation of the differences between diocesan priests and religious priests with the concept of ownership, and employment, the religious priests being "owned" by their order, and employed by the diocese, while the diocesan priests are "owned" by the diocese. He indicated that with the numbers of

Jesuits now in Portland, they could probably handle more parishes. He did not indicate that it would be some of the large numbers that have been suggested.

- Cluster planning group for the diocese proposed in their December report that a separate planning committee be established for the schools. Clusters would be responsible for the schools within each cluster. Recommendations about the schools should be made to the bishop.
- There seems to have been a misunderstanding about whether the cluster planning committee would be convened by the diocese, or convene itself. It is now the understanding that the cluster planning committee is ready to be convened, self-directed, facilitated by a communicator.

Unanswered questions:

- What piece do we need to determine how many clusters.
- Can any of the three Portland schools accept more schools so that some could be combined?
- How will the education of children be funded who are from parishes outside the cluster that owns and pays for the school?
- What has already been decided by the bishop for the Portland cluster? In the interest of respect for the time of those in the planning process, it will be helpful to know this in advance of the committee's work being started.

Additional observation:

The group present felt at a disadvantage, that this meeting was premature, while at the same time they were concerned that there seemed to have been little or no activity in the process since the initial announcements, a lack of information and communication, and no forward motion. The hold up has either been the discussions with the various orders of priests, a decision yet forthcoming from the bishop about the structure of the Portland Cluster, or a misunderstanding or miscommunication of who would lead the process. The resolution may be in the understanding that the Cluster Planning Committee should now just convene and begin the process.

Plan of action:

- Minutes will be e-mailed and posted on the Web site
- Ernie Lebel will ask the bishop to indicate to the Portland Cluster committee and parishes what has already been decided, and whether the bishop will ultimately make the decision about how many clusters will be in Portland, or whether it will ultimately be the decision of the planning committee. He will also ask what the timeframe expectation is from the bishop of the Portland Cluster.
- A Cluster Planning Committee meeting is tentatively set for 2 p.m., Sunday, March 26, 2006 in the parish hall at St. Patrick's.
- Pastors should be available
- Chair should be elected
- Ernie Lebel asked Lori to facilitate that meeting.
- Lori will compile the names of cluster representatives from each parish, ask the group for corrections to the list when the minutes are distributed, announce the March 26 meeting, take RSVPs, and facilitate the first meeting.

Objectives of the March 26 planning committee meeting:

- Appoint a chair
- Define terminology
- Make a list of the hard data that is needed
- Establish an acceptable meeting schedule.

Minutes submitted 3/21/2006

Lori Arsenault

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Portland Cluster ~

Delegates as of 3/19/2006

Please send corrections as soon as possible to
loriaam@maine.rr.com

Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception

Msgr. Paul F. Stefanko, Rector
Delegate: Peter Lancia
Delegate: Gene Fetteroll

Sacred Heart / St. Dominic Parish

Rev. Richard-D. Bertrand, S.J., Pastor
Delegate: Ray Rier
Delegate: Glenn Perry
Alternate 1: Christine Thibeault
Alternate 2: Ursula Slavick

St. Christopher

Rev. Frederick H. Morse, Pastor
Delegate: Peter Donnelly
Delegate: Susan Hanley
Alternate: Chris Hoppin

St. Joseph

Rev. Peter Kaseta, O.F.M. CAP, Pastor
Delegate: Eduard VanLoenen
Delegate: Sylvia Harlow

St. Louis

Rev. Ireneusz Chodakowski, M.I.C.
Delegate: Bob Konczol
Delegate: David J. Deprey
Alternative: Joseph Radziucz

St. Patrick

Rev. Thomas M. Murphy, Pastor
Delegate: Ted Borduas
Delegate: Paul Lablonde
Alternate: Michael Sweatt

St. Peter

Rev. Kieran Monahan, O.F.M., Pastor
Delegate: Barbara Linnehan Smith
Delegate: Gregory St. Angelo

St. Pius X

Rev. Lawrence C. Smith, S.J.
Delegate: John Bowman
Delegate: Andrew Lichter

Communications:

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I'm very easy to reach. Please reserve my work phone for emergencies. Home phone is best after 9 p.m. E-mail is the best, most reliable way to contact me. I will usually respond fairly quickly.

Suggestions are always welcome. Criticism is often helpful. Please try to be kind. ☺