

Newsletter from the Pastors of the Parish Pastoral Planning Team

“Putting the Conversation in Black & White”



Following the meeting held on Sept 22, 2018

Next Meeting: Nov 10

MEETING CONTEXT AND SYNOPSIS:

First and foremost, we started with prayer. A committee representing eight area parishes from Tilden to Ewing and Neligh to Petersburg, along with their pastors and representative of the Archdiocese of Omaha, met at St. Boniface Church in Elgin on Saturday, Sept. 22. We met to discuss implementation of the Archbishop’s Pastoral Vision and long-term parish planning.

The Committee’s Role

This committee is advisory to Archbishop Lucas. The plan that we are charged to develop among ourselves for our future brings together eight different faith communities in Neligh, Tilden, Elgin, Raeville, Ewing, Clearwater, Rural Clearwater, and Petersburg. We will have to balance three different sets of concerns... those of the parishes, of the archdiocese, and those of the priests. A successful plan for the future rests on addressing these.



It’s not unlike a three-legged stool.

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| Leg 1: Parishes’ Concerns
Leg 2: Archdiocese Concerns
Leg 3: Priests’s Lifestyle Concerns |
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Timeline for Committee Work

This was the first of four meetings between now and March 2019 that will be facilitated by the Archdiocese of Omaha Pastoral Planning Office, yielding a plan for execution that requires Archbishop Lucas’s approval.

Deacon Luna opened the meeting. The group became introduced to each other. Deacon Luna also explained how the previous planning meetings and these are connected. He was clear that ‘not choosing to do anything different’ than what we currently have was not an option. The planning office projects a net loss of 17 priests across the archdiocese in the next 5 years. For each deanery, this means **one less priest in two years** and **two less priests in five years**. Deacon Luna also spoke that parish statistics and area demographics are indicative of area communities getting smaller.

Archbishop’s Pastoral Vision

ONE CHURCH: Encountering Jesus, Equipping Disciples, Living Mercy

Priest Projections in the Archdiocese

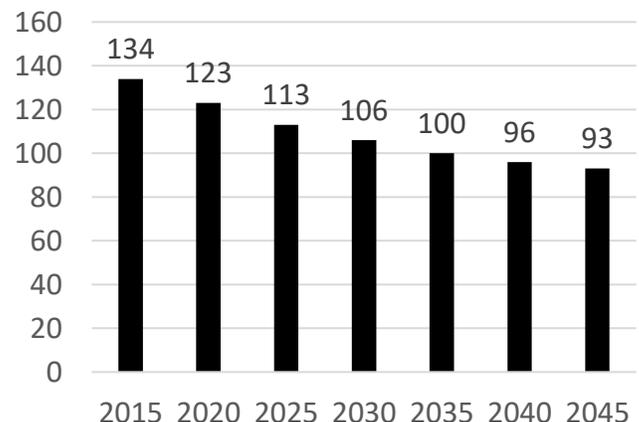
The Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate (CARA) out of Georgetown University studies priest trends and ordination projections for the United States. In 2011, we had the information applied to our archdiocese specifically. This information helps with long range planning and projections. The projections below have been holding true.

The 2011 CARA assumptions are: The priest retirement age is 70. There will be 3 ordinations every year (the expected ordination rate). Some priests continue to serve after the age of retirement.

Fr. Norman gave a presentation on Archdiocese priest projections based on the 2011 CARA projections. He showed some statistics:

- We have 140 parishes and missions
- There are 45 Metro pastors/administrators
 - covering 51 parish locations
- There are 44 Rural pastors/administrators
 - Covering 87 parish locations
- **In 2045, of the 93 priests, would be 53 pastors**

CARA Projections (2011)



Our Future is Interconnected

Our Future is a 'Together' and Requires Conversion

When the first draft of a pastoral plan was received and released from the Meitler consultants, the Archbishop heard lots of feedback that this was not what was wanted and that this was not good for the life of faith in our communities. Now, we are challenged by the Archbishop to put together a plan that increases our sense of mission, our call to evangelization, and increases the vibrancy of parish life in our faith communities...even while recognizing that long-term we may have one less priest working in our area. *Conversion* means that I have to be open to the change that God wants to do in my life. If our structures adapt because of the invitation of God, *conversion* allows me to see him at work in our parishes as well... even though this means **change**.

Changes can be made by following a plan, and changes can be made by the Archbishop for pastoral needs. **Petersburg** will transfer from Albion's cluster to Elgin's cluster. **This change is anticipated for July 1, 2019.**

Looking at two qualities will help us see the difference: **faithfulness and fruitfulness.**

Our parishes have focused on *faithfulness* in meeting our responsibilities, having Mass, paying our bills, providing Religious Education, keeping up our facilities, etc. We can be quantitative... checking boxes... I have a church, I went to Mass, My kids go to CCD, We can pay the furnace and light bill, etc.

Our current challenge is to focus on *fruitfulness* flowing from parish life. This is a qualitative questioning... Are the parish liturgies vibrant and engaging? Are there the servers, lectors, EMHCs, musicians, ushers needed? Is my life changed by my experience of Mass? Am I growing in my relationship with Jesus? Do I have a deep-seated knowledge or experience of God's love for me? How do our facilities assist us in sharing the Gospel? How do they hinder us? Do my children know Jesus more deeply through Religious Education or Catholic School? How do we allow our parishes to be more fruitful?

What Can the Future Look Like?

This planning process is not intending to close any parishes. However, to accommodate this, the way that parishes act completely independently of each other, often duplicating work, will need to change.

Priests currently spend a lot of their time taking care of 'quantitative' concerns like paying bills, making sure church facilities are maintained, ministry events happen, etc. and less on 'qualitative' concerns. Priests spend a lot more time on office work and administration and a lot less time on ministry work than we should. The administrative work could be pooled and consolidated. Some examples from the education world were the use of ESUs across multiple school districts for contracted services and the way that a Unified School District shares personnel and expenses.

Organizational structures have to be studied more closely. There are rules to follow in both church and civil law.

Members of the Planning Team

Priests on the Planning Team

- **Fr. Kevin Vogel, Pastor**
 - St. Boniface in Elgin
 - St. Bonaventure in Raeville
- **Fr. Mark Tomasiewicz, Pastor**
 - St. Michael in Albion
 - St. John the Baptist in Petersburg
- **Fr. Pat Nields, Pastor**
 - St. Francis of Assisi in Neligh
 - Our Lady of Mount Carmel in Tilden
- **Fr. John Norman, Pastor**
 - St. Peter de Alcantara in Ewing
 - St. Theresa of Avila in Clearwater
 - St. John's Church of Deloit in Rural Clearwater

Archdiocese of Omaha

- Deacon Steve Luna, Process Facilitator
Director of ArchOmaha Pastoral Planning Office

St. Boniface in Elgin

- Mr. Ben Meis
- Ms. Linda Mitchell

St. Bonaventure in Raeville

- Ms. Joyce Pelster
- Ms. Joan Stuhr

St. John the Baptist in Petersburg

- Deacon John Starman
- Mr. Alan Temme

St. Francis of Assisi in Neligh

- Ms. Amy Baker
- Mr. Bob Eggerling (absent 9/22)

Our Lady of Mount Carmel in Tilden

- Ms. Cindy Decker
- Ms. Debra Navratil

St. Peter de Alcantara in Ewing

- Ms. Kathy Arens
- Ms. Becky Kaczor (absent 9/22)

St. Theresa of Avila in Clearwater

- Mr. John Mlnarik
- Mr. Jarod Bearinger

St. John's Church of Deloit (Rural Clearwater)

- Mr. John Knievel
- Ms. Janette Kerkman