

Cluster Reorganization Planning Process:

In response to Bishop Malone's call for a "New Evangelization" amongst the Catholic Christian community in Maine, and in order to address the decline in the number of active priests, shifting member population (rural northern and eastern parishes have different demographic circumstances than larger southern and southwestern parishes) and financial factors (population declines have had a negative impact on the financial stability of some parishes), the Diocese has determined that the current 135 parishes in Maine will be clustered into 27 groups. In order to accomplish this goal 27 Cluster Planning Committees have been formed throughout the state to analyze the issues and prepare recommendations.

Cluster #11 includes church sites located in Bar Harbor, Northeast Harbor, Southwest Harbor, Islesford, Ellsworth, Blue Hill, Green Lake and Winter Harbor. The Diocese plans to assign two (2) priests to this cluster, one to serve as Cluster Pastor and the second to serve as Parochial Vicar or Senior Priest. Consideration will be given to assigning a deacon to the cluster to provide service and ministry.

The Cluster Planning Committee, which is comprised of laity and clergy from each parish in the cluster, has been charged with researching and writing a report for Bishop Malone with a detailed recommendation on how the reorganization should happen locally. The Committee has met monthly since the fall and in March held parish information and input meetings at St. Joseph and Holy Redeemer. The report is to be completed by June and submitted to the Diocese.

The Cluster Planning Committee wishes to thank everyone who attended one or both of the parish-wide meetings in March. Your comments and questions were very informative and will be extremely useful to the committee in its deliberations. Thank you!

Cluster Models Explained in Detail:

"In order to continue to spread the message of Christ in the Diocese of Portland, we need to make effective use of all resources. As part of this effort, new parish structures will be established. Outlined below are the acceptable cluster models.

There is no "one size fits all" model of clustering. Determining which model is best depends on many factors including geography, relative size of parishes, cultural ethnic identities, economic and spiritual vitality, parish histories and traditions and the presence of special ministries.

The determination of which model should be utilized in a given situation should emerge from a prayerful collaborative planning process that involves parishioners, staff, parish councils, pastors and the diocese. We ask that Model I be given serious consideration because of its significant administrative advantage."

(From the Diocese Cluster Process Manual)

Model I: One Pastor – Merged Parish – Centralized Team & Council

- One parish with multiple worship sites
- One pastor who works with one staff
- All councils, committees, finances and sacramental records are merged together to create a new canonical parish with multiple worship sites
- Core staff (including all financial staff) are centrally located at one site (administrative center) in service to multiple worship sites
- Individual worship sites may have support staff
- Individual worship sites may or may not have a priest in residence
- One Parish Pastoral Council
- One Parish Finance Council

Model II: One Pastor – Separate Parishes – Centralized Team & Council

- Multiple parishes with one centralized administrative center
- One pastor who works with one staff
- Core staff (including all financial staff) are centrally located at one site (administrative center) in service to multiple parishes
- Individual parishes may have support staff
- Individual parishes may or may not have a priest in residence
- One Cluster Pastoral Council (with representation from each parish in the cluster)
- One Cluster Finance Council (with at least two members from each parish)

Model III: One Pastor – Build & Close – Centralized Team & Council

- One parish with one worship site (a new larger and/or centrally-located church is built collaboratively by previously separate parishes)
- One pastor who works with one staff
- All councils, committees, finances and sacramental records are merged together to create a new canonical parish
- Core staff (including all financial staff) are centrally located at one site (administrative center)
- Existing churches are closed and properties sold to provide funding for building a new church
- One Parish Pastoral Council
- One Parish Finance Council

Model IV: One Pastor – Combination of Models – Centralized Team & Council

- One pastor who works with one staff
- Core staff (including all financial staff) are centrally located at one site (administrative center)
- Some existing churches may be closed and properties sold to provide funding for building a new church
- Individual parishes or worship sites may have support staff
- Individual parishes or worship sites may or may not have a priest in residence
- One Cluster Pastoral Council (with representation from each parish in the cluster)
- One Cluster Finance Council (with at least two members from each parish)

Components of the Cluster Planning Report to the Bishop:

1. Recommendation regarding reorganization model
2. Implementation timetable for reorganization
3. Proposed schedule for Masses, administering of sacraments and other liturgical activities
4. How we will provide pastoral care for hospitals, nursing homes, colleges, prisons etc.
5. Plan for addressing social justice issues within the cluster
6. Programs for fostering community within the cluster
7. Plan for parish staffing (paid and volunteer) and for training that staff
8. How we will provide religious education and faith formation for children, youth and adults
9. Five-year plan for maintaining the physical facilities of the cluster

10. Financial planning with regards to paying salaries, sharing resources in the cluster etc.
11. Strategies for informing and educating parishioners about the forthcoming changes

Cluster Planning Committee Recommendation Decision & Report-writing Process April & May 2006

Objectives:

- Carefully consider parishioner input & collected data
- Discuss & decide on a reorganization model
- Communicate with parishioners regarding progress towards the decision & report
- Address criteria established by the Diocese with regards to the model recommended by the committee
- Complete the report to the Bishop by June

Communication with Parishioners:

- Post information on parish web pages and in parish offices regarding tangible and intangible assets as well as the report-writing process for April and May.
- Insert updates in parish bulletins at the beginning and middle of May to update parishioners on the committee's decision (its recommendation to the Bishop on which reorganization model would work best in the cluster) and the rationale for that decision.
- Individual conversation between parishioners and committee members

Tentative Meeting Dates & Deadlines:

- Throughout April: Individual thought and prayer by committee members, conversations with parishioners and informal small group meetings amongst committee members about cluster reorganization models
- Discussion and decision regarding model recommendation by Cluster Planning Committee – April 30
- Draft outline of report to the Bishop (and insert in parish bulletins) – Week of May 8
- Draft report work by the committee – Week of May 15
- Draft report work by the committee (and insert in parish bulletins) – Week of May 22
- Final draft of report to the Bishop – Week of May 29

Special Notes:

- The process outlined above is tentative and subject to change.
- Parishioner comments may be submitted to the Cluster Planning Committee throughout the month of April by mailing or emailing your Parish Office (which will pass you communication on to the committee).