

**CHRIST OUR LIGHT CATHOLIC PARISH**

**PRINCETON AND ZIMMERMAN, MN**

**THIRD PROCESS MEETING – JUNE 14, 2016**

These concept statements are the result of a call for conversation on the possibility of building a new church for our parish. This conversation was initiated by Fr. Kevin Anderson and the pastoral leadership of Christ Our Light Parish with the assistance of Royce Yeater as facilitator and John Buscemi as liturgical consultant. This conversation is part of the larger and ongoing process of bringing together two communities into one faith family.

The first part of the conversation took place at meetings after all the Masses on two weekends. All were invited to attend. Those who did attend represented a cross section of parish ministries and outreach. The invitation to be an Advisor was extended to all in attendance. 68 parishioners accepted this invitation. Fr. Kevin also announced an open invitation to any member of the parish to join this group of Advisors. The role of the Advisors is to offer their best wisdom and counsel to the decision-making bodies of the parish, particularly the Pastoral Council. 73 people attended the first All Parish Workshop on May 24, 2016 and 97 attended on May 31, 2016. These meetings included an introduction to liturgical issues and a far ranging conversation to consider what the parish needs to move forward, the treasures that sustain us and the values we wish to express. The Advisors will gather at critical junctions of this project to offer ongoing wisdom.

The following concepts are the result of that extended conversation. These concepts are offered for the consideration of all the members of the parish. The process is not finished nor are the concepts final, but they do represent our best wisdom and form the basis for once again enlarging the circle of conversation. Our discussion explored a full range of options for a building project. All ideas were received with respect and seriously considered. These are the areas of greatest consensus.

## 1.) MOVING FORWARD

There was a general consensus among those attending the workshops that the work of bringing the two campuses into one had advanced far enough for the whole group to consider the next steps of acquiring land, deciding on the best way to dispose of the existing structures and to begin specific design work for a new worship space and parish complex based on realistic financial planning.

## 2.) PRIORITIES

Our discussions revolved around the three areas of needs, treasures and values. In prioritizing this input we can consider four general areas: the scope of desired facilities; the worship space itself and the celebration of the sacraments; the aesthetics of the spaces; the core values expressed in what we do.

## 3.) SCOPE OF DESIRED FACILITIES

By far the item mentioned most was for a multi-use facility with a dedicated worship space. Prime among the spaces is a large gathering space connecting to a general space for parish events. These events include parish dinners (necessitating a full kitchen), receptions, celebrations, youth activities and faith formation for all. Spaces accommodating parish administration and staff are also a necessary component. A chapel was also mentioned for daily Mass use and other smaller services. And, of course, there will never be enough storage space to satisfy everyone. For the exterior spaces there is a desire for a property large enough to have a wooded area or landscaping that gives a peaceful setting for a church with adequate parking that does not dominate the whole site. Open spaces are needed for parish festivals and gatherings and for the possibility of future expansion. Consideration could also be given for outdoor spaces for meditation, prayer, Marian devotions and perhaps weddings.

## 4.) WORSHIP SPACE AND THE CELEBRATION OF THE SACRAMENTS

The Eucharist, worship and sacraments are the core of parish life and vitality. Therefore, pride of place will be given to these areas in attention and resources. Care will be taken to respect liturgical guidelines and to seek the input of the Diocese of St. Cloud. The worship space will provide for the fullest celebration of the sacraments and the exercise of liturgical ministries, especially music. Essential to this is a space with good sightlines, acoustics, use of technology and, above all, barrier free access to all spaces for the congregation and the ministers. The fullest expression of worship must also pay attention to the many traditions of devotional prayer and practices, as well as spaces to encourage private prayer and meditation. Prayer with other faith communities is also a consideration.

## 5.) GENERAL AESTHETICS

The general aesthetics of both the interior and exterior of the worship space and, indeed, all spaces received much attention from attendees. A variety of words were used to get at the heart of this concern: conservative, traditional, practical, not a warehouse, beautiful, stained glass, wooden beams, etc. At the same time there was expressed a need for an open sanctuary, barrier free, tiered seating, overflow areas, use of technology, etc. It is clear from the discussion that the intent is not to build a museum church from the past, but to use the wealth of traditional forms to enclose a space, which meets the needs of today. We can take good counsel not only from architectural history but from other parishes who have explored this same concept. We can learn much from others about how to integrate the traditional elements of stained glass, stations, crucifix, Marian shrines, bells, pipe organ, frescoes, etc. into a new church. A consensus was far from clear in these areas but the conversation did reflect the importance people place on the aesthetics and decoration of the space, and how images of Christ, Mary and the saints are a help to their devotion and prayer. Along with an aesthetic that embraces the tradition, there is also a desire to incorporate the various pieces from the existing churches, which would serve well in the new space. Also attention is to be given for care of the environment and using environmentally friendly technologies.

## 6.) THE VALUES WE SEEK TO EXPRESS

Anytime we express ourselves we are communicating our values. When a congregation builds a church, care must be taken to let the building itself reflect our beliefs. Sadly, the message given by many church buildings is a focus only on the practical, the most cost effective and easiest to accomplish. We cherish those churches where beauty, craftsmanship and faith awareness are evident. This type of expression does not happen automatically, nor is it solely the task of designers and architects. A congregation is at its best when it can be a client able to express what it wants and how it desires to be known in the larger community. Buildings do communicate values.

From our conversations certain core values have been strongly articulated. Two stand out. We want to be known as a community strongly rooted in our Catholic traditions and identity. Second, we want to be known as a community that is welcoming, inviting and open. These two values will take us far in the planning process. The process of merging two communities has given us some wisdom for expressing these values. Other areas receiving strong consensus were: a strong music and liturgical ministry, embracing the social justice mandate of the Church, an ecumenical awareness, embracing all ages and a respect for both our history and our traditions. **Finally, with the example of our Pope Francis in mind, we affirm the value of being known as a community that seeks out and walks with all people --- saints, sinners, seekers and everyone in between.**

## RECOMMENDATIONS

A.) We recommend that the pastoral staff, Facility Building Committee and Pastoral Council continue their process. We affirm what has been accomplished to date as well as the next steps of acquiring land, hiring professionals in design and planning and moving toward fund raising. We also ask that those in leadership adopt these concepts as the counsel from enthused parishioners and let them form the framework for our planning process.

B.) We recommend that these concepts be circulated throughout the parish as the basis for more conversation and input from a wider cross section of parishioners.

C.) We recommend that sketches be made to show ways in which these concepts can be implemented. These sketches will be made in consultation with those who are knowledgeable on liturgy, structural engineering and code compliance. We further recommend that these sketches be only preliminary. More complete architectural drawing will be initiated only after a budget has been set and we know better the scope of a project we are able to finance.

D.) We recommend that the Facility Building Committee initiate this design phase. The designs will then be presented to the Advisors for further comment and refinement until a consensus of the whole is reached. They will then be presented to the whole parish for additional input, conversation and refinement.

**A WORD ABOUT CONSENSUS** Consensus is general agreement by the members of a group on an opinion, position, or proposal. The essence of consensus is intellectual agreement: 1.) Coming to a common understanding of a position and 2.) Agreeing to the validity of that position. Individuals may still see their position as more valid than the group position but they are open enough to see the merit of the group-supported position. Although not preferable to them individually, the group position has a validity they can both accept and support.

Consensus is the model of decision-making currently used by all leadership groups at Christ Our Light. Consensus is a method for arriving at a set of concepts and recommendations that will be presented to the Facility Building committee, Pastoral Council and the parish as a whole. Consensus is not about winning or losing; about right or wrong. It is about adults of faith gathering to find the wisest course of action for the good of the whole community. Consensus does not mean that we have to be in 100% agreement with every aspect of the decision. It means that we can see the logic of the process; we can acknowledge the general wisdom of the direction to be taken. If a person is struggling with a particular aspect, can he/she at least affirm the validity of this viewpoint? Consensus can mean that while we personally disagree, we can live with the recommendation for the good of the whole community. Consensus means putting aside the “them” and “us” strategies. While the final document may not be perfectly matched to our wants or needs, we can affirm it to be the best group decision possible. When we leave the table we hope to be able to say, “We recommend this.”