

Pastorate Planning Update

Spring 2019

The Pastoral Council for our pastorate, comprised of members of the pastoral councils from our two parishes, has been working since the fall on pastorate planning – beginning first by identifying what the parishes do well and what things they could do better or new things they could try. They have done this by each month looking at the Archbishop’s six Core Mission Priorities (CMPs) for pastoral planning - liturgy, welcome, encounter, accompaniment, sending, and mission support. They are identifying the opportunities for and challenges to sharing the Gospel in our pastorate, and beginning to think about how we can grow in both our discipleship and in our outreach to others over the next few years.

Using the work they have done thus far as a solid foundation, on June 1st the group got together to work with the Office of Pastoral Planning for the Archdiocese. Together they discussed the demographics of the people who live within the pastorate boundary; they talked about characteristics of those who not currently in the pews; and they worked on a SWOT Analysis of the pastorate’s current evangelization efforts. SWOT stands for Strengths and Weaknesses (internally focused), and Opportunities and Threats (outwardly focused). They made a list of items for each and identified three themes for each. This work lays the foundation for understanding where the pastorate is now. The next step will be to take that and move toward vision – answering the questions such as “What is God’s preferred future for this pastorate?”

PASTORATE PLANNING FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQs)

What is a “Pastorate?”

Archbishop Lori’s 2015 pastoral letter, “A Light Brightly Visible,” outlined why evangelization-based pastoral planning is needed in the Archdiocese and what he hopes to achieve as a result. Growing and evolving social outreach and pastoral care needs, rising religious disaffiliation, shifting demographics and impending clergy retirements have created a “new normal” for the church that requires a different way of carrying out the mission. Nevertheless, we must never lose sight of our fundamental call to make disciples for Christ, which puts evangelization at the heart of what we must be about.

In order to establish a stable environment in which evangelization-based planning can occur, parishes throughout the Archdiocese were organized into “pastorates,” *one or more parishes with a single assigned leader (pastor, administrator, pastoral life director) and a single leadership team who together are responsible for parish life and structures in the parish(es) that comprise the pastorate.*

Your pastorate has been activated - selected by the Archbishop to engage in a structured planning process - as part of a cohort of seven other activated pastorates in Phase IA. Activation as part of a cohort allows the pastors and their teams to be part of a learning community. It also enables the Office of Pastoral Planning to offer key formation opportunities in a coordinated manner and apply learnings from each phase to the next one.

What criteria were used in determining or deciding formation of the Pastorate of Our Lady of Perpetual Help and Our Lady of Sorrows?

The pastorate design evolved through many rounds of consultation that occurred between June 2016 and February 2017. A small group of pastors and archdiocesan staff developed the first model of pastorates from our existing parishes. That model then was shared with the priests who serve on the Presbyteral Council or are vicars forane (priests representing the different regions in the archdiocese); all the priests and pastoral life directors in the archdiocese; and representatives from all the parishes in the archdiocese. After each round of consultation, the design was revised to reflect the feedback that was received.

The pastorate of Our Lady of Perpetual Help and Our Lady of Sorrows was formed based on considerations such as geographic proximity, an existing working relationship that had emerged in earlier cluster conversations,

average annual Mass attendance, socio-economic similarities, and similarities in opportunities for evangelization. Some consideration had been given to retaining the three-parish cluster arrangement with Holy Family in Davidsonville, but the resulting size and geographic distance seemed less than ideal.

What is the role of the Pastoral Council during and after the "transition" phase?

The Pastoral Council is an advisory body convened by the pastor to provide consultation on pastoral activity in the parish(es). It is primarily a visioning and planning body, charged with prayerfully discerning needs, setting pastoral priorities, and calling forth the gifts of the faithful to participate in the mission of the Church. They undertake this through a three-fold responsibility to: investigate matters of pastoral significance; prayerfully reflect on their findings; and, recommend to the pastor on matters at hand.

As such, the Pastoral Council plays a significant role during times of transition. They can function as the bridge between what was and what will be, and should be able to discern both opportunities and challenges in the present and the envisioned future. The OLPH-OLOS Pastoral Council already has been engaged in some of this work as they have been discussing the six Core Mission Priorities. The Pastoral Council also has the responsibility of calling forth the gifts of the faithful so that others are empowered to be part of making the envisioned future a reality. This will be especially important for implementing and monitoring the execution of the Pastorate Plan.

What is involved in the planning process? How does it all come together?

Briefly, any strategic planning process generally tries to answer four main questions:

1. Where are we now?
2. Where do we want to be?
3. How do we plan to get there?
4. How will we know we are successful?

Answering these questions involves moving through three planning phases: **Assessment – Direction – Implementation**. Pastorate planning engages in these three phases in the following ways:

- **Assessment:** The pastorate planning team forms a good understanding of the pastorate's sacred purpose and the opportunities and challenges they have in fulfilling God's plan for the pastorate. Included in this is a review of the state of the pastorate (evangelization efforts, ministries, financials, facilities, staff/volunteers, outreach, etc.), the demographics of the community in their pastorate boundaries, and the understanding of the core mission priorities and the call to missionary discipleship.
- **Direction:** The pastorate planning team develops a strategic evangelization-based plan built around the Core Mission Priorities. They set objectives, identify critical success factors and barriers to achieving those objectives, and brainstorm and prioritize strategies for action.
- **Implementation:** The pastorate planning team identifies the people who will be responsible for keeping on top of their prioritized strategies and the ways in which they will monitor the successful enactment of the plan. By setting targets as part of the plan, the pastorate will be able to determine if they are moving towards the vision they identified as God's preferred future for the pastorate, or if they need to make any adjustments.

The planning process should be revisited after three years, to assess what changes the pastorate and community are experiencing and to plan for evangelization for the next three years. We will know if our efforts are successful by the fruit they bear – new faces in the pews, more people coming to confession, more comfort knowing and sharing our own faith journey, a greater willingness among people to give of themselves for others...but also greater awareness of who is missing among us, a stronger compulsion to bring love to the broken-hearted and healing to the injured, an unquenchable thirst for justice and rejection of intolerance.

For more information on pastorate planning go to <https://bemissionarydisciples.org/>