

Cleveland Heights/East Cleveland Cluster Update: May 16-17 2009

Over the last two years Christ the King, Saint Philomena, Saint Louis and Saint Ann parishes have been on a journey toward becoming church in a new and more vibrant way in our area. Over the next year, we will implement the recommendation that our cluster planning team made and Bishop Lennon approved. The recommendation included the following core vision -

“(B)ringing all four parishes together in one community with two campuses, one at Saint Philomena and one at Saint Ann. The two priests would reside at the Saint Ann campus. All administrative operations would be consolidated and would focus on 1) meeting the needs of the active parishioners at both church campuses and 2) enhancing the already-existing community service/social outreach programs serving both communities. The elementary school for the cluster will be preserved at its present location.” The recommendation also specified that Christ the King would close as soon as practical following the Bishop’s decision.

There is much work to be done in the coming months, and it is work we will do together. This is not a short-term undertaking; the creating of a new community will ultimately take not months but years. Below is an overview of key steps in the process we will follow, based on the diocesan consolidation manual.

May-June 2009	<p>Cluster leadership forms a Merger Transition Team (MTT), including an executive committee and subcommittees: An executive committee of the pastors and two additional people from each of the four parishes has been formed to coordinate planning for the merger. Now we are in the process of forming eight subcommittees to plan for specific aspects of parish life. Parishioners may be invited or volunteer to participate in a committee. Depending on responses, we may not be able to put all volunteers on a subcommittee at this point but there will be other opportunities to help later. The Merger Transition Team subcommittees will address:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Liturgy and worship 2. Parish ministries and outreach 3. Education/formation and youth ministry 4. Parish life and social activities 5. Internal and external communication 6. Finances, facilities and legal matters 7. Parish staffing and administration, and 8. Parish naming <p>A meeting to launch the subcommittees will be held at St. Louis on <u>June 24</u> at 7:00pm.</p>
	<p>Executive committee develops a process for ongoing communication with the parish and wider community. This insert and others to follow will keep you informed of progress. Each parish is also holding a gathering in May or June to explain what is to come, answer questions, and invite parishioner suggestions. The communication subcommittee may also plan additional communications.</p>
July – Nov 2009	<p>Subcommittees will meet as needed to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Review work that has been done in their focal area, including that done by the Cluster Planning Committee in preparing for the cluster recommendation o Identify key issues and decisions that must be addressed in their areas o Formulate recommendations to the MTT executive team for inclusion in a transition plan

	<p>MTT develops and writes a working vision for the merged parish.</p> <p>Executive committee and naming subcommittee gather parishioner suggestions for a name for the new parish. Top three recommendations are submitted to Bishop Lennon for his decision.</p> <p>Joint meetings of parish pastoral councils and finance councils are scheduled.</p>
Nov-Dec 2009	<p>Executive committee finalizes Merger Transition Plan recommendations for delivery to pastor of new parish.</p> <p>Town hall meetings are held at each parish to review the merger transition plan.</p>
Dec 2009 – Jan 2010	<p>Closing masses are held at parishes (Specific dates to be approved by the Diocese; Note that the masses at Saint Philomena and Saint Ann are to formally close the old parishes, so that the new parish can open at those church sites)</p>
January 2010	<p>New parish opening mass is held (Specific date to be approved by the Diocese)</p>
Spring 2010	<p>Parish pastoral council and parish finance council steering committees are formed to manage creation of unified councils for the new parish</p>

You will note that in this timeline the executive committee is planning for an opening of the new parish in January 2010. The team felt that this timing would allow the parishes enough time to prepare for the transition and ensure that we would have no difficulty meeting the Bishop's deadline of June 30. Since the Bishop wishes to preside at as many of the closing and opening masses as he can, he has asked that parishes not wait until June 2010 to implement these directives.

The executive team recognizes that there are many questions that our parishioners have about the process and how the merger will impact the lives of the parishes. Among these questions are such things as -

- ✓ How will the name of the new parish be selected, and its use coordinated with the consecrated names of the Saint Philomena and Saint Ann church buildings?
- ✓ What will happen to our current pastor/priests and how will the new pastor be selected?
- ✓ How can we bring together the current members of the four parishes into one community of worship?
- ✓ How will we merge the lay leadership in the Parish Pastoral Councils & Finance Councils?
- ✓ Will Saint Ann School retain its identity and its name?
- ✓ What will happen to the unused church properties at Christ the King and Saint Louis?

All these questions and more must be answered during the transition process. At this point we ask for your patience, your prayers, and your engagement in the process. Together we will deliver on the bold vision of a new parish endorsed by Bishop Lennon.