

IMPORTANT NOTICE — ARCHDIOCESE PASTORAL PLANNING

As you know, the Archdiocese Pastoral Planning Commission has proposed linking our parish with another, under one Pastor and a single staff that would serve both parishes. It is important that every parishioner become familiar with this proposal. Key documents can be found at the entrance to the Church, alongside the “Pastoral Planning” bulletin boards. They are also available at www.planning2012.com.

SOME PARISH FACTS

Over the past four years, our parish statistics show that we are growing:

- The number of lay people participating in various ministries has increased: i.e., Eucharistic Ministers, Lectors, Homebound Ministers, etc.
- School enrollment is up with an unprecedented 49% enrollment expansion
- Mass attendance increased 20%, Church income overall is up 22% as a result of an 18% increase in Offertory and 16% growth in Grand Annual
- Religious Education program expanded to weekly classes, rather than monthly, and has seen a 4% increase in students.
- Debt free in 2012 after resolving Archdiocesan debt balances of \$220,329 for the Church along with a settlement with the Archdiocese of unpaid school bills of \$244,141

COLLABORATIVE STATEMENT

The following statement, collaboratively prepared by representatives of our Pastoral Council, Finance Council and School Board, was read at a Consultation meeting held by the Archdiocese Pastoral Planning Commission on March 5, 2012.

- As parish leaders we have been actively engaged in this process. We have reviewed the documents provided and information on the planning website and watched and reviewed the various videos offered. Our Lady’s Parish consultative bodies such as members of our Pastoral Council, Finance Council, School Board, and Representatives from our various ministries have recently met to prayerfully consider all that you have put before us. We have encouraged parishioners to be engaged and we have met with representatives of the other Parish proposed for our collaborative.
- It is our collective belief that this process is moving too quickly and we are deeply concerned that a 3–5 year timeline could hurt not only individual parishes but the Archdiocese as a whole. The Archdiocese is not equipped to handle such a massive endeavor too quickly. What may be considered a slow implementation of any proposal by the Archdiocese is not considered slow in the eyes of the people in the pews.

- Further, with all due respect to the Commission, we believe the proposed model is flawed in that it assumes all parishes are in maintenance mode which is simply not the case, particularly regarding our own parish.
- At Our Lady Comforter of the Afflicted Parish in Waltham, our ministries are multiplying and flourishing. Our Mass attendance is up. We are financially sound and debt free. This has all happened over the last four years, the result of the grace of God AND an engaged, mission-focused Pastor who has reached out and engaged others by appropriately expanding the role of the laity at our parish and by priestly leadership.
- We are concerned that the data used by the Commission was not accurate, underreporting our Mass attendance and weekly offertory.
- We also feel very strongly that the proposed model does not give proper consideration to parishes with a school and to the significance of schools in growing our Catholic community for the future. A parish with a school needs a pastor who is able to focus on a school and is engaged in promoting its Catholic identity and Catholic education.
- Our School, Our Lady's Academy, has a strong Catholic identity and is financially sound. Enrollment is up 49%, again over the past four years, the result of an engaged and mission-focused Pastor and Principal.
- We understand the need to establish baseline criteria when going through a process like this and we are not opposed to the Archdiocese moving forward with implementation of this model for those parishes that believe it is right for them. That said, we sincerely hope that the Archdiocese will recognize, that as is, this model is not right for all.
- We strongly disagree with the proposal that ordinarily pastors within a cluster should be transferred to another assignment.
- In the spirit of transparency, we ask that the Commission make any key documents reviewed during the decision making process, available to all including reports pulled from Mission Insight, information on the other Pastoral Service models considered, and more information on the Training that the Archdiocese proposes to provided to members of Pastoral Service Teams. We would also like more detailed data regarding the projected shortage of priests in the short and long term.
- Pending any new information, we have significant concern that if the Archdiocese forces this model upon Our Lady Comforter of the Afflicted Parish, it will in fact have a negative impact on our financial well being and our ability to focus on mission.
- We want to conclude by letting you know that as we have begun to engage parishioners, many have stated that this feels like a done deal to them. As parish leaders we have shared the Commission's communication that this is not the case and we trust that the Archdiocese will truly consider the responses received and allow flexibility where the data provided supports a different model.