

Merger Committe Meeting
August 22, 2007
Rev. Greg Jacobs

A meeting of representatives from all four churches met with the Rev. Greg Jacobs from the Boston Diocese and Rev. Cheney our consultant. The meeting opened with a prayer by Rev. Cheney at 7:05 p.m. A brief statement was made by Dave Higginbottom regarding the progress so far. He read a letter from the Engineer, Julian Freedy, conducting the evaluations of all the churches. The evaluation will be complete by October 15, wherein a meeting of all parishes will be called to discuss the decision. Dave said that the evaluation was very thorough.

Brother Andrew gave a report of the Worship Committee that plans to meet with all four clergy on Sept. 8, 2007 to plan the liturgy for the common joint parish services beginning in October. They will meet at the Partnership Rectory. All future joint services will be held at 9:30 a.m. Rev. Cheney suggested that this be published in all four churches so that there will be no misunderstandings. The first joint service will be on October 14, 2007, 9:30 a.m. at the Ascension.

Rev. Cheney asked what progress the Church School Committee had made. Donna Slaiding said she had called all the teachers to discuss the lesson series used. St. Mark's is using the David Cook series and the other three churches are using the Good News series. Each host church decides what to do during the church school. Each church uses their own series when in session. We have to agree on one series to use.

Communication is very important at this time. Keep the congregations informed of what is happening and what progress is being made. Rev. Cheney warned that the closer the time to merger the higher the anxiety levels.

St. Luke's reported that the decision to merge is split 50-50.

SEARCH: A question was raised by Br. Andrew regarding the search...How do we prepare a search profile? Rev. Jacobs; It is a process-mission-identity; Unified goals to achieve; 4 goals agreed upon. What we want the congregation to look like united. Work toward becoming one identity. Where we've been and where we are going (transition); discernment-the clergy matched with our church in goals.

A SEARCH CONSULTANT can advise us during the search process to get an idea of what it is all about and what we want to be.

A SEARCH PROFILE - put in a narrative form.

A CHURCH DEPLOYMENT OFFICER (CDO) - The profile should outline 4-5 goals of the church. This is forwarded to the National Church which then matches the profile with a clergy person.

A TRANSITION MANUAL- Outlines the transition ministry process. An interim priest is appointed in charge during the transition period.

The Search Committee should consist of committed individuals in this spiritual exercise. Human Resource types are not required. Discernment-linking Called person's gifts to the parish.

Rev. Cheney- the transition manual can be customized to each search committee.

The Search Committee receives its marching orders from the Vestry which is the driving force. It must make clear to the Search Committee what they are looking for in a priest. The Vestry sets the budget and makes the final decision. The Search Committee makes a recommendation to the Vestry, but the Vestry has the final word.

The interview process first consists of a telephone interview, then a visitation to the nominee's parish. The manual provides job descriptions, sample budgets and interviewing tips.

Br. Andrew pointed out that three of the four clergy are ready to retire or already have, when do we start the process? We have to identify what the body will look like. People are asked to be on the Search Committee-submit names of possible members. There is a job description for Search Committee members. There are three (3) components important to the process; Interim, Search Consultant and Search Committee.

Wally and/or Pat Gober have been or will be asked to continue on as interim priests. Normal interim period takes 6-8 months for them to get to know the parish which is important. Wally and Pat already know the parishes more or less. The interim should have no connection to the search committee. His/her job should be to guide and hold the church together during this transition period.

The mission statement was well received by Rev. Jacobs, a job well done. Rev. Jacobs will return to meet with the vestries for further updates.

The building evaluations are well underway; which brings up the subject of the Procedure for Selling Church Property. There are recommended steps. A Property Committee should be established to ready the property to be sold (all documents needed). Chris Meyer-Conveener of Church Property should be contacted for advice such as a good real estate agent who has experience in appraising church property. Julian Freedy can help in finding an appraiser or real estate agent. A question was asked of the selling time in Massachusetts. It depends on where the church is located. There may be immigrant groups looking for a church to buy. There may be more of a commercial interest in the church other than for church purposes.

The proceeds from the sale generally go to the General Operating Fund of the Diocese, but there is a growing sentiment that the funds should go back to the congregation to be used for the ongoing support of its ministries. We could request money from the Diocese to build a new church. The Diocese can be in partnership with the congregations.

Clergy Compensation Package: A recommended full time clergy enhanced salary package is quite expensive. The Diocese will help with the package components.

We are trying to make our own liturgy. The Worship Committee has been meeting and trying to come up with a service that we can call our own which includes the Cambodian members in some form. The Committee has decided to change the service time to a uniform 9:30 a.m. whenever we travel from church to church to cause less confusion; but this is not set in stone.

The joint vestries met in the spring and came up with multiple time lines. We want to bring our resolution to the Standing Committee for 2008-merger.

The Diocese is just overwhelmed by what we all have accomplished here in Fall River. We should be proud and happy and listen to the Spirit and it will happen in good time.

David Higginbottom expressed that Wally and Pat Gober's contracts are up in December. Rev. Jacobs suggested that new Letters of Agreement can be drawn up for either Wally or Pat to be interim. The interim and the consultant should start at the same time and the Search Committee should be chosen.

St. Luke's expressed concerns regarding the Cambodians. They (the Cambodians) will stop coming if none of the St. Luke's priests are involved. What parts can Rev. Susan and Jim Hornsby play to interact

with them? This is an all parish issue not just St. Luke's. There are solutions to the situation; maybe an Associate priest can be on staff for the pastoral support of them either on a voluntary basis or stipend position. But a decision has to be made by the entire group.

How do we develop a ministry? We have to include the congregation in conversations with all issues of ministry; have special meetings confined to specific issues and build on the joint services; solicit people's ideas on how to proceed. There are congregation coaches that work with congregations on particular areas of conflict (refer to the Resource Guide).

Rev. Cheney suggested we wrap up with any questions and we set a date soon to identify the leadership group to lead the search. The Diocese will offer any resource available. It is an historic occasion when four churches come together.

The next meeting date is scheduled for 9/19/07 at 7:00 p.m. at the Rectory.

Meeting was adjourned with a prayer by Rev. Jacobs.

Respectfully submitted by Joann Baker, Clerk of the CommitteeDD