

## CRITERIA FOR GROUPING PARISHES INTO NEW PASTORAL COLLABORATIVES

### General Criteria

*The fundamental vision and purpose for grouping parishes into new pastoral collaboratives is to **keep parishes open and organized for a new evangelization**. Beyond this, the Planning Commission was guided by four general principles:*

1. **Fairness** - Given our limited resources, we wanted to create a network of pastoral service focused on evangelization and outreach and that was fair across the Archdiocese. This plan has guidelines that apply to all parishes and flexibility in the way these guidelines will be implemented.
2. **Partnership** - In the past, parishes functioned largely independent of one another. Parishes, unhappily, rarely shared time or talent across parochial boundaries. This plan provides a whole new paradigm for parish ministry, revolved around a “theology of partnership” and communion. All, but a few very large or remote, parishes will be partnered with other parishes so that we can be the welcoming, nourishing, thriving and evangelizing community we desire to be.
3. **Fewest Number of Financially Troubled Parishes** - In order to secure the Archdiocese and its parishes as centers for the new evangelization of Christ’s Good News, we have to be both more productive and more nourishing in order to reduce the increasing financial pressure on parishes. Parishes that will be able to allocate more resources for pastoral initiatives and less for maintaining facilities and programs that are growing less attractive..
4. **Avoid Redundancy and Duplication of Pastoral Services** - We all know that an Archdiocese with more than 200 years of history can accumulate a lot of programs or ways of doing things that no longer work effectively. By minimizing redundancy and duplication of services, and working together, we hope to create the resources and capacities whereby our parishes can to serve one another better and become welcoming, nourishing, thriving and evangelizing Eucharistic communities for both the traditional and the “new” generation of Catholics.

### ***(1) Geographical Proximity***

We have grouped parishes together that, most of the time, are in relatively close geographical proximity; in many cases parishes share the same town or zip code. We tried to link parishes that were contiguous with one another and made for easy access. Parishes that share the same town or school system were given a priority, recognizing that parents and children already attend the same schools and events and may share the same interests. We operated out of the belief that this sensitivity to “neighborliness” and geographical and social proximity would help parishioners join together to work on pastoral projects they share an interest in. We were also mindful of the distances that pastoral staffs might have to drive. We tried to do our best to see that linked parishes be accessible for parishioners and staffs alike. In most cases, the distance between parishes is between .5 and 1.5 miles. In some cases, the distances are greater, but are distances that are regularly pursued by people as a shopping radius. This proposal hopes that Catholics would come to identify themselves not only as parishioners of their particular parish, but also as members of the “Catholic community of their town or region.”

### ***(2) A Combined Weekly Offertory of over \$500,000 per year.***

The Cardinal’s vision is to move as many of our parishes as possible from maintenance to mission-based thinking and planning. As you know, an alarming number of our parishes are simply in survival model (or below), unable to do significant outreach. They cannot grow the Church because they are trapped in a vicious cycle of rising costs and flat or falling revenues. By consolidating pastoral staffs, minimizing redundancy and duplication of services across the parishes, parishes in a new pastoral collaborative has the potential to allocate resources to pay for a stronger pastoral team of ministers, focused on evangelization. With a combined weekly offertory of over \$500,000 per year, the parishes will, it is likely, to be able to pay the salaries and benefits of a new robust pastoral service team (PST), trained-equipped-and commissioned for a new evangelization.

### ***(3) Sufficient Other Income to Cover the Remaining Operating Expenses***

Our data shows that the highest costs in parishes today are found in salaries and benefits for pastoral staff members. They are not the only costs, but they are among the fastest growing costs. In most cases, the remaining costs of running a parish can be met by “other income” (sacramental offerings, rentals, bequests, Grand Annual, etc.) Healthy parishes enjoy a strong financial baseline in their offertory, so that they can provide for qualified professional pastoral ministers. Beyond that, they are able to supplement their weekly offertories with other sources of income. Those “other sources” of income in each parish, with or without offertory income beyond the 500k baseline must, in the ideal, be able to cover the remaining operating expenses of each individual parish in the collaborative.

#### ***(4) 1600 Mass Attendees per Weekend in the Pastoral Collaborative***

The Church envisions a close spiritual relationship between pastors and their people that allows priests to understand and respond to the needs of the people as effectively as possible. Looking at the number of priests we will have in the next 5-10 years and those we can project for the foreseeable future, we believe that the logical benchmark for a parishioner to priest ratio is 1600 Mass attendees to every 1 Pastor. A second full-time priest (as a parochial vicar) is probable when a pastoral collaborative would have about 3200 Mass attendees per weekend. The 1600 to 1 ratio should allow a priest to conduct the services, do the pastoral visits, and meet the ordinary and unexpected needs of parishioners, along with the administrative tasks required of him.

#### ***(5) Current Sacramental Index Numbers and Projections***

In considering how to link parishes for pastoral purposes, we looked at the “vitality” indexes of the parishes, i.e. the sacramental activity index (how many baptisms, weddings and funerals), and Mass count index (how many people attend Masses in these parishes.) With fewer priests available for Mass (noting that we are going from 346 priests available for parish ministry today to about 185 in about nine years’ time), we considered the level of sacramental activity of the parish. We asked—can sacramental programs be shared? Can new Mass schedules be developed that realistically provide for the needs and lifestyle issues of Catholics today? In this model, we linked parishes that we thought could be welcoming and nourishing centers of worship and would not be crushed by the weight of sacramental activities.

#### ***(6) Current Demographic Trends and Projections***

We also looked at the current and projected trends in population growth, educational levels, cultural and language shifts, family and household economic challenges in each area, as well as migration patterns, using the most sophisticated demographic tools available to us. We proposed linked parishes that we thought could handle similar trends and changes.

N.B. These criteria were not taken in isolation. No linkage was determined on one factor alone. Parishes were linked that shared a preponderance of these criteria.