



[Renew My Church: Creating Vibrant Parish Life](#)

Last week we talked about the importance of renewal and the vision of Renew My Church. Over the past few months, the pastors from the parishes in our grouping, St. Mary's, St. Hugh's, and St. Pius X, gathered together to begin the process of figuring out the best path forward to a sustainable, vibrant and vital Catholic presence for our entire area. We have invited leaders from each parish to form a Grouping Feedback and Discernment Team (GFDT), made up of the pastor and five people from each parish. Details on their selection and responsibilities can be found below.

Creating vibrant parishes requires that we evaluate the business structures (how we operate), buildings, facilities, and financial requirements of existing parishes to assess where we can more prudently apply our resources to support and strengthen key ministry leadership roles, programs and activities. Ultimately, we must be good stewards of the gifts we have today to ensure they're able to support the faith lives of Catholics today and in the future.

The GFDT will meet beginning later this summer through the Fall to discuss and prayerfully discern the ministerial and operational strengths and challenges of the parishes and schools within our particular grouping. Eventually the team will provide feedback and information about our grouping for archdiocesan leadership to review and present recommendations to Cardinal Cupich so he can make final decisions regarding potential changes to school and parish structures.

Along the way, there will be opportunities for everyone in our own parish to learn about the details of those conversations, ask questions, and share their own points of view on the strengths and concerns of any potential changes.

Based on the experiences from the first 33 groupings (more than 115 parishes) that have progressed through the Renew My Church parish grouping process, it is clear that those on the GFDT are called to exercise tremendous leadership through very challenging conversations.

This team is not to be confused with our reopening team, who have dedicated hours to preparing our church to reopen in a safe and healthy way for all parishioners. I deeply appreciate the work of both teams to reopen our church building and renew our Church.

While the reopening team's responsibilities are fairly obvious (preparing the church for worship and ensuring all parishioners practice safe distancing while inside and directly outside the church), the GFDT team warrants further explanation about what it means to be part of the challenging work of renewal.

First, the purpose of our GFDT is to draw close to the Lord as a community of believers from across our grouping parishes. We also call upon the Holy Spirit as we prayerfully discern spiritual and structural renewal, or more specifically, models of collaborative parish structures that present the most viable scenarios to effectively carry out the spiritual renewal and mission of the Church in our area.

Second, the discussions the GFDT will have ultimately result in a feedback summary report submitted to the Archdiocese. This feedback will be vital input regarding how our parishes will be structured in the future.

Like you, all those who are part of the team have ideas, concerns, frustrations and hopes about what renewal can look like for our local community in the future. As our recent Sunday Gospel reading said, we must be the rich soil where seeds can be sown in order to hear with our ears and understand with our hearts. We must pray that, above all, we allow the Holy Spirit to guide our thoughts, our words and our actions in this important work.

As always, for more information, visit RenewMyChurch.org, or contact me via email at frmatt@materchristichurch.com or via phone at (708) 442-5611.

—*Fr. Matthew A. Nemchausky*