

Renew My Church: Parish Conversation to Discuss our Future



Last Wednesday, the Grouping Feedback and Discernment Team (GFDT) from all 4 parishes had their grouping session #3. They met with Tim Weiske, Director of Strategic Planning and Implementation for the Archdiocese of Chicago and other RMC facilitators. Each parish was asked to share what happened at their parish session #1 (Town Hall meeting). The GFDT members were presented with 3 initial scenarios proposed by the Archdiocese for possible consideration. Collaborative discernment and feedback from the groups' parish sessions were considered for each of the possible scenarios.

Process Overview

Renewal requires envisioning, planning, and new means to bring Jesus Christ to others. There are nearly 100 groupings of parishes and schools across the archdiocese engaging in a process to address necessary questions of structure, how to work together across communities within each grouping, and to establish a strong foundation for vitality through focused evangelization and faith formation efforts. Supporting our parishes with the best structures enables us to breathe renewed life into our efforts to make disciples, build communities, and inspire witness.

Initial Scenarios

To initiate discussion, the pastors of our grouping parishes and a team at the Archdiocese Pastoral Center have offered a set of initial scenarios that show potential models of how our parishes could be configured in the future. These initial scenarios, which will be shared in detail at our next parish meeting, are conversation starters only. **No decisions have been made.** These scenarios reflect our grouping's local realities using a set of criteria determined using data across the archdiocese to evaluate how a structure would support vitality and ensure viability, such as:

Ministerial and spiritual needs of the parish: To enliven the work of evangelization, formation, worship, and pastoral care in today's time and culture, parishes ordinarily will build a strong a staff team to support the pastor. Staff teams will be professionally trained and justly paid. To support this staffing and basic operations, such as paying utilities, parishes generally will need operating revenue of \$750,000 or more (excluding rental income).

Parishioner count and Mass attendance: Based on the number of pastors expected to be available across the Archdiocese in the future, a minimum of 800 parishioners attending weekend Mass is needed to be assigned a full-time, resident pastor.

Balanced workloads for priests: It is critical that our pastors are supported with the resources and teams to support sacramental life, pastoral care, and parish administration.

Parish financial stability and facilities: Parish financial stability and adequate, accessible and safe facilities with capacity for growth and ongoing repair/maintenance.

School vitality and financial stability: A key measure is the **potential to enroll a minimum of 240 students in PK-8**, considering area demographics and parish student population; as well as ensuring quality education, strong student social development, and sustainable operations.

Parish Data:

Avg. weekend Mass attendance (October Count)				
Year	St. Hugh	St. Mary	Mater Christi	St. Pius X
Oct. 2019	390	960	422	459
Oct. 2018	387	1,011	456	496
Oct. 2009 (10-yr)	336	1,090	673	431
Oct. 1999 (20-yr)	504	1,406	958	578
Church seating capacity	300	371	280	400
Annual church operating revenue, excluding rental income				
Fiscal Year	St. Hugh	St. Mary	Mater Christi	St. Pius X
Operating revenue, excluding rental	\$229,758	\$1,052,123	\$345,611	\$554,156
Rental income	\$13,594	-	\$96,600	\$49,251
Total operating revenue (does not include extraordinary income such as bequests)	\$243,352	\$1,052,123	\$442,211	\$603,407

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Note on Foundational Principles in relation to the challenges posed by COVID-19

The foundational principles written above remain the benchmarks against which to consider the viability of structural scenarios. Parish data will need to be compared against the foundational principles considering both pre-COVID data (i.e., Fiscal Year 2019 financials and October 2019 Mass attendance) and how COVID has impacted the financial sustainability of each parish and potential scenario. What is important is how those financial implications affect the future. Short-term financial challenges should not significantly influence decisions. However, where it is clear the effects will continue into the future, that reality will need to be included in evaluation of each scenario.

Parishes

Below are the initial scenarios for our grouping, which consists of St. Mary, St. Hugh, St. Pius X, and Mater Christi. There are three initial scenarios for how the parishes could be organized differently from today – possibilities to bring together resources and leadership to enable new methods for carrying out our mission in the grouping. The scenarios refer to a combined canonical parish: a model in which two or more current parishes become one parish – with one pastor, budget, staff, Finance Council, etc. – but that can have multiple active churches.

Each scenario below notes the weekend Mass attendance (based on October 2019) and church operating revenue (based on Fiscal Year 2019) that would be brought together under each canonical parish to grasp the scale and scope of what could be. As we review the scenarios, it is important for all us to do so prayerfully keeping in mind that the spiritual and structural renewal to which we are called to foster are connected. The best and most effective and efficient stewardship of our resources (structural renewal) can allow us to invest more into the ministries that directly work toward making disciples, building community and inspiring witness (spiritual renewal). Just as Jesus asks us to pray always, He also invites us to trust always. Together, we pray for the guidance of the Holy Spirit to determine how Our Lord will use existing structures to create new ones that bring more people into relationship with Him.

Scenario 1: 1 parish, 4 churches

- All four parishes unite to form a new united parish, continuing to use all four campuses.
- St. Mary would serve as the administrative center for the united parish and formally be designated the parish church.

Scenario 2: 1 parish, 3 churches

- St. Pius X joins a Berwyn grouping to continue discernment. St. Pius X would discern its future structure with the parishes in Berwyn and Cicero to the north and east. That area is scheduled for its discernment process in 2021.
- St. Hugh, St. Mary, and Mater Christi unite as one parish, continuing to use all three campuses.
- St. Mary would serve as the administrative center for the united parish and formally be designated the parish church.

Scenario 3: 2 parishes, 4 churches

- Parish 1: St. Mary and Mater Christi unite as one parish. Both churches continue to hold a regular Mass schedule. St. Mary is designated the parish church.
- Parish 2: St. Hugh and St. Pius X unite as one parish. Both churches continue to hold a regular Mass schedule. One of the two churches will become the designated parish church.

Your input is needed! Again, these initial scenarios are conversation starters only. **No decisions have been made.** We are asked to provide feedback on the initial scenarios from the Archdiocese and propose alternative scenarios and configuration models.

Up next, the GFDT Session #4 will be held on Wednesday, September 23. During this meeting the GFDT members will continue processing scenarios and consider alternative scenarios that have not yet been proposed. Your feedback is needed for the GFDT members to continue to prayerfully discern what is best for the entire faith community.

As always, for more information, visit RenewMyChurch.org, or contact Father Matthew or any of the members of the Mater Christi GFDT. Please continue to pray to the Holy Spirit for guidance for the Mater Christi GFDT and the GFDTs of our grouping parishes.

The San Damiano Cross Keeps Our Focus

A while back, we shared the story of St. Francis hearing Jesus call to him from the San Damiano cross. Praying before this icon of our Lord, St. Francis of Assisi heard Jesus call to him: “Go repair my Church, which, as you see, is falling completely into ruin.”



At first, St. Francis initially took this to mean he was to repair the church buildings of San Damiano. However, he eventually discerned that Jesus was calling him to rebuild the spiritual life and vitality of the entire earthly Church. Likewise, we must see that the future of the Catholic Church is bigger than any of our parish buildings.

This icon of Jesus helps us remain focused on three very important realities as we renew our faith lives, parishes and the archdiocese:

It portrays Jesus speaking to us even though he is dying, which serves as a reminder that we need not be afraid to take up this work even if it costs us something, for Jesus is with us always.

Jesus is surrounded by others, highlighting the fact that, as we take up the challenge of renewal, our unity should not be diminished but strengthened.

Jesus is also featured as the Risen One at the top of the cross – a sign of hope to us that in this renewal, which will require us to die to ourselves and familiar patterns, Jesus is offering us new life and vitality for the future.

The Prayer before the Crucifix at San Damiano

By: St. Francis of Assisi

We adore you,
Lord Jesus Christ,
Here and in all your Churches in the
whole world,
And we bless You,
Because by Your holy cross,
You have redeemed the world.

Amen.

