

**COMMENT CARDS  
OCTOBER 3, 2013 – TOWN HALL MEETING**

My advice is to find out what every site (parishioners) really feels.

My advice is keeping the new church centrally located.

We have been talking about this for four years. Let's get started for one center.

Move study on St. Paul's remodeling.

With a majority of parishioners agreeing – one site with one school would be ideal.

Listen to the majority of the people.

Could the committee re-look at St. Paul's site as our new St. Clare Parish?

My advice to parish leadership is to really look at remodeling before building. Let's utilize what we have and then go from there.

What advice to Parish Leadership? That many hours are spent in front of the Eucharist in preparing the decision. Regular Eucharistic Adoration.

The people are the church. Let's be innovative in drawing in new and/or young members. Keep the school. Let's build or remodel in Wrightstown.

Run, Forest, Run.

If you want to build community you need to build a new church. The traditionalists need to realize that this is not working. **BUILD A NEW CHURCH!**

Advice – 1) Keep involving people in volunteering school, social concerns, Total Education, etc. 2) Think of pooling resources with other parishes. Let the good will radiate and involve others – reach the 70% not practicing.

My advice to leadership...Build school (if you build church) right away. Don't want to get forgotten about. A new church may attract younger members to add to church. Love the parish!

...to remember that being a church community can happen anywhere. The walls of a structure don't determine our faith, our values or our sense of community. Don't let this, these buildings, fog what is important.

Buy land and build – Wrightstown could be more friendly. 26 acres across the road from this school.

Move slow and look to the future.

My advice is to build a new church. I think it would build a greater unity.

I think to unite everyone together at an even keel a new church should be built and we can incorporate windows, etc. as a memory from St. Paul's, St. Mary's, and St. Pat's.

Definitely keep the school. Possibly close one site and operate two to save money. Research every remodel possibility.

1. Consider all options at the St. Paul's site because of the space. 2. Share financial goals per family to make this happen. –What contributions are needed?

Build (1) church so everyone will come together!! Then everyone will learn to get along not have so many bosses to tell other people that we have to go to their church!!

If we have room for both church and school at Wrightstown for the next 70 years, I am for it. Also to use river frontage for Masses, weddings, etc.

1. Try to find most financially feasible solution. 2. One site (whether remodel or new) will help to strengthen the sense of community. 3. With better sense of community, maybe we can re-activate the parishioners who have fallen away to get re-involved.

Don't spend more than we have.

My advice would be to get a cost to build new church and a cost to do the renovation of the St. Paul site/or St. Mary site.

We do need to plan for the future. Need a clearer picture of remodeling versus new build.

Will you get pledges for those people to commit \$ to the project?

Will we always have a priest for services on the weekend?

Seriously consider the renovation of the St. Paul Site.

Do we really have a voice or is all cut and dried? If we do build new can some of the windows, statues, etc. be used?

I think we need to keep St. Paul's as the main parish and renovate it to comply with what is needed. Visitors that come to the parish always comment on what a beautiful church we have.

Try to renovate the Wrightstown site (see how feasible it would be).

Would like to see one worship site with 4 Masses – new or renovate – do what is affordable. I think we have lost many parishioners already.

Just as townships have centrally located town halls – land should be acquired that is central to the parish – enough for a church – a school – safe parking. Hire staff that is “of the parish”. Hire contractors that are “of the parish” and only hire “outside of the parish” if no qualified staff or contractors are in the parish.

I feel we should use the stained glass windows from St. Patrick's church. We should use materials from all three churches and combine into one whatever that may be. We should have 3 Masses.

I feel we should stay as we are.

Keep Wrightstown site as parish and school.

Let's consider all voices, not just the loudest. If we renovate, we also need much money. How do we decide? Before we have the funds?

The parish also comes together if they like the priest. Father Bob brought the younger kids in. Father Dennis drove them away.

Ask one question of the parishioners – Will the people in the pews pay for a new church? Without 85+% agreeing – will not work.

Look deeper and move thoroughly in renovating the Wrightstown site. Take another look at maintaining Wrightstown. Your numbers are unrealistic.

Renovate the St. Paul site and add a gathering space on the left side of the existing church.

How do you plan to finance new building? Renovate Wrightstown site because it will take 5 to 10 year to build. In the meantime go deeper in debt.

Let's create one worship site. Let's not let the potential loss of 10-15% parishioners (who do not find the need to worship as a new community) override the needs of the other 85%. Need to carefully evaluate renovating the St. Paul site. Didn't appreciate the ultimatum by Rick regarding the school. It may not work long term and his passionate statement was out of bounds.

1. Make sure there is a consensus on everything! 2. Remember that if you pray together, you stay together. 3. If the school is done in a phase, please don't make it the last one.

My advice to parish leadership is see how much it will cost to build new and how much to renovate one site. How much cost for renovating a school for our children also.

My advice is bring everyone together into one parish. I believe building a new parish is the way to go. As hard as it will be to start over we need to do something. It has been 4 years going through this. We need to just make a decision.

Consider age groups and percentage of money paid. Project what will be there in 10 years. Young people are not active.

My advice to leadership is to go ahead and start looking for land. Prayer is needed.

If one site is chosen, how welcoming is that site to the other parishioners.

Let the voice of the people (ALL the people – not just the loud ones) guide the decisions.

Move slowly, be honest and open – feels like we are being “pushed” into a new building – the committees have not seemed open to maintaining 3 sites – Did they bother to visit St. Katherine Drexel – 1 parish/3 sites. If not, why?

My advice to parish leadership is: Think of the people of the parish through prayers and worship.

I think we need a new set of buildings. There is not enough room to remodel any site. The Wrightstown site which is the largest does not have enough room to accommodate large funerals in the basement and the kitchen is very outdated. Where is there room for parking? How are we going to get young people involved?

What is the area we serve? How many of our parishioners are East and how many West of the river? What is the center of our parish area?

We need to build a new church in a neutral site.

If the St. Paul church was in Greenleaf the Wrightstown people would attend. Why won't the Greenleaf people come to Wrightstown? (Lois Lamers)

One church – one building – new – no steps.

To check out St. Mark Lutheran Church and School – in De Pere (West) on Scheuring Rd. The service w/music and the simplicity and beauty of the church and enthusiasm of people attending.

Need to take consideration of the younger people of the parish – they are the ones who will have to pay that debt. Seems as though we are not strong on that generation in our parish. I don't think a huge new church is the answer.

Just make the decision!! No matter what there are going to be hurt people. No matter what is decided – you need to let people know what amount is expected from them. This “give what you can” doesn't work!!

Change is always difficult but by offering forums such as this members are allowed to voice their opinion. Thank you.

Can't we have more people like Ken Kabat to do the things a regular priest does so we can keep all 3 open.

If we sell the sites we still need to maintain the cemeteries, correct? Is the school financially good? Does tuition support itself? My advice is ask 45 years old and below. They will be paying for whatever is done!! People need to understand there will be change – accept it and move on! Our money needs to stay at our church until we can support other needs.

Have a parish vote to see for sure what is wanted.

Have a parish vote – find out who is going to support a new church.

How do you get young people in?

With prayerful consideration, please close Askeaton and Greenleaf sites. Have Wrightstown as our St. Clare site and possibly add gathering area. New offices and funeral/wedding area at Wrightstown site.

Please close Askeaton site and Greenleaf site and celebrate at Wrightstown site.

If we can only afford to remodel, Wrightstown site would be the most likely choice. One key structural problem that makes me not want to invest further there is that all foot traffic crosses the road for the parking lot. If this cannot be re-routed I think we all have to commit to a new church and school, even if that means running the school out of an existing site for a few years until a new one can be added to a new church site.

My advice to parish leadership is: Go slow with decision making; keep listening and giving opportunities to talk like tonight; evangelize! People need to be proud and committed to Mass attendance – this is where the unity happens.

Advice for Leadership: Get as many people as possible on board for whatever you are leaning toward doing.

Right now, having 3 separate churches (sites) and trying to operate as one is not working and cumbersome! Never worship as one. Like having 3 in family, and not getting along, always one out. The diocese set us up trying to combine 3...not fair. Two parishes trying to combine would have been much more feasible. But that's water over the dam. If parish can raise money, the best would be to build a new church in neutral area, east of river on land with some space. Need gathering space with ample room for functions with kitchen facility, e.g. funerals, coffee/donuts. Also need accessible for disabled. Do not remodel St. Paul Church...many from St. Mary/Askeaton would go to other churches parishes.

My advice to parish leadership is: We will never be unified "one family" parish unless we come together in a neutral place. That's just the history here. (Mary Geurts)

My advice for Parish Leadership is: Try to find a compromise that would satisfy most of the present parishioners and attract new ones.

Expand the Focus on Catholic Education – grade school, RE, Adult. Dare to dream of an expanded grade school program. One worship site at St. Paul location.

My advice is to keep a school and provide a large gathering space in new building.

Start the fund drive and build new east of Wrightstown.

Whatever we decide to do, it will be better than what we have now – resources that are stretched too thin – monetarily and our human resources. The school has to be strongly considered.

My advice to parish leadership – I know it would be easier for everyone involved but I don't want to see our Askeaton St. Pat's closed.

St. Clare must build a new facility – Please do not renovate – there has been enough division amongst the three sites. People (that I've talked to and my own feeling) will feel if Wrightstown gets a renovation, then Greenleaf and Askeaton was always on the back burner for consideration. We do need to make a decision though. I've been going to these all-parish meetings for too long and they are all the same – same conversation – please make a decision soon. Thank you.

New church centrally located with a school, but I will go with the majority.

Renovate St. Paul's church site.

Prayerfully consider renovating the Wrightstown site and uniting all in one place.

We need one neutral (new) site, so everyone feels welcome there. If the site is Wrightstown, we do not feel welcome there and will be leaving the parish. Tired of hearing "This the way we do it!"

We need one new site, not affiliated with any of the three we have now. None of the sites are big enough to handle our needs. As much as I am in favor of a Catholic school, if we do not have enough money to run one, we should close it. My dream would be to build a new church first and hopefully add a school next. Renovating St. Paul's site is only a temporary fix.

My advice is to first try and make the Wrightstown site do-able.

I think it would be a good idea to use the Wrightstown site. I think it would work.

Let St. Paul's site as it is. Close St. Mary's and St. Pat's. Get rid of all the real estate. The only time the church is full is at Easter and Christmas.

My advice to parish leadership is: 1) Be as forthcoming as possible with all information to build trust in the process. 2) Answer all the questions that have been asked tonight as well as others you are hearing in general. 3) Be open to all ideas that are shared. It does feel like a decision has already been made about a new site when it really may not make sense. (Jenny Binsfeld)

1) People are still grieving the loss of "their" parishes. They need more help to express the sadness they feel. 2) Have as many meetings like this as possible! 3) Share, share, share information! Constantly!

My advice to parish leadership is...work in truth and for the greater good. Think about future. Honor the past. Do what is "right". Remember a "church" is not the building but what is inside.

My advice to parish leadership is...Keep an open mind to the options – renovate one site or build; Be fiscally responsible; Seek consensus if at all possible – pleasing the majority will go far; The school is the backbone, AND FUTURE of the parish. See it for the ministry it is and continue it for the future of the parish; Communicate to the parish the progress of reaching a decision; thank you for your service!

My husband – use St. Paul site. Add on...Sell off St. Mary's and St. Pat's. My advice is to have one site with all parishioners and parish services together. We need to look to the future – especially have enough room for the school and RE. Have faith & pray!! I'm not set on renovation or building – waiting for more specifics.

I would advise to keep Wrightstown site open, put in air conditioning and a gathering center and respectively close down 2 sites.

Keep St. Clare and the school is very important. Raise at least 75% of the money before you do anything. Very important not to go so far in debt that we lose our church. Also remember it is about faith not socializing.

Keep going and use and do what the majority of what the people want.

Build – in location of most parishioners are living and close 2 churches up as soon as possible 1 month if building to prove unity of one.

I feel that the Wrightstown church should be remodeled as necessary and could provide enough space for worship, the parking can be enlarged.

We need to keep the Catholic school updated to encourage growth at the school. I would guess that 80% of the active members of the parish attended a Catholic school. The school is the future of our parish, without these young adults the parish will diminish.

Build a gathering space. Then in time build a church "Build it they will come." Build the people first – Bring them together – first, then the church. Otherwise you will loose instead of gain.

Please do not spend a ton of money on old buildings only to end up with old buildings. Please look past the near future and envision our children and grandchildren and their needs just as our parents and grandparents did. (Bernie Van Eperen)

Need to keep school going forward. My advice to parish leadership is to have a priest that can say more than 3 Masses in weekend. Also make use of the gifts we have. The Wrightstown site is large enough to handle the future.

It all starts at the top. The priest who is the leader of our church needs God given skills to encourage us to come together and make our church a great place to worship God.

Stay with one site (Wrightstown site) – will be large enough to support all three parishes. Renovations can be made to Wrightstown site in future – if needed.

We need a new leader. Fr. Dennis is not a friendly people person. Keep one church and remodel.

Improve the St. Paul site.

My advice to the parish – find out how much financing is going to come in.

With the priest shortage as it is today, is there any consideration of treading water at one site until they all close? What is max distance to travel to Brillion, Kaukauna, De Pere Lourdes and St. Mary? I don't get the feeling people support building. (Tom Artz)

A renovation of St. Clare (St. Paul site) to accommodate all.

Wrightstown Site.

Be sure we can raise the money to build a new church. As of now, using the St. Paul site makes the most sense.

One community is great, but we have to be realistic. Cost is an issue and what we need to raise will be an issue, so we can't "Dream" too big.

I'm not in favor of the new church. It's never full when I get there except on Christmas or Easter.

St. Clare parish has a golden opportunity to make a decision regarding the future of the parish. The question is new versus renovation. I think we should talk to St. John Lutheran church to see if we could go together and build a worship facility. Also, what's important is that any decision needs to come from the 1,100 families within the parish.

If you go to one site instead of building a new, you will alienate 2/3 of the parish. Go new!!.

Here I am a poor man with a large family on a fixed income. How much more will this cost me? Did you ever do a survey on how many people live on fixed incomes, how many senior people are still working, how many are middle age and how many young people do we have? What is pay percentage of each group? (Jack Cornelissen)

Don't borrow money to do whatever is decided.

I think every member of St. Clare Parish should have to vote on this project. (Vern Meulemans)

We need to agree on what to do.

My suggestion is renovate St. Paul's church. The school is there already. There is land behind the church to increase parking. The old priest house and nun's home could be taken down. Perhaps expand the church in a cross shape. Priest home could be above ground under one wing – Administrative offices under the other wing.

I think we should explore renovating the St. Paul's site. We can achieve all our goals: maintain history, good worship space, gathering space, unity, accessibility. Can we preserve the history of our other church buildings? Some way? Some how?

Keep doing what you are doing. Keep God in our hearts. 3 parishes as one! School included! The Trinity

Please listen to the contributing members of the parish. It is easy to vote yes if you aren't paying for it. I really feel we can make the St. Paul site work. We have 5 cemeteries now and adding a new one isn't necessary.

Keep St. Paul's the solo church and school.

Keep the Wrightstown site as the only church and school.

I would like to keep St. Paul church open. I would like the St. Pat and St. Mary church closed immediately. And I don't want to build a new church. Just keep St. Paul and St. Paul School.

Keep St. Paul's church open and school. Close St. Pat's and St. Mary's church immediately.

I believe that St. Claire and St. Paul's Parish can be renovated to make that site more appealing to new people – gathering, gym, more classrooms. My kids are very involved and would like more involvement.

I think the best advice is to close St. Mary's and St. Pat's and enhance Wrightstown St. Paul's site. Thank you!

Close the St. Pat & St. Mary locations to conserve costs. Add enough Mass times at the St. Paul site for the 3 parish congregations to worship together. Look at remodeling/adding on to the St. Paul location, both church and school.

My advice, - to make sure that you have construction costs and what you want done in order. Once construction starts, the more you change, the more it will cost after construction starts.

My advice is renovate St. Paul site and it will be big enough for all and close the other two sites.

Focus on the future of the community – not buildings.

Change the focus on parish life and community versus how many people attend Mass and parking.

My feeling is to investigate what we have and get the fullest use of what we have.

We could take the sister house and priest home down for more room. Denmark has 6 parishes together and they do not have a Mass every weekend in the smaller mission churches.

I feel we need to upgrade St. Paul's church to accommodate everyone who will be staying. We have many elders who won't be here forever. You can rest assured 50% or more of the St. Mary's people will not join St. Paul's. Amen!

Can we afford to build or remodel? How much for each family?

I want to make sure that if we decide to build new and sell the 3 sites, are there any "conditions" on those sites like the land. Possibly was donated and if there is no church does that land go back to the family?

My advice to leadership is: to find a way to get the parishioners in Wrightstown to welcome Greenleaf and Askeaton and stop being so unwelcoming. We are one parish whether they like us or not.

I feel that historic buildings add a sense of stability to a community and would love to see the Wrightstown site utilized if at all possible.

I have been a member of St. Clare/St. Paul site for 16 years and have been a member of many other parishes in my lifetime, so I do not have a life-long allegiance as many others do. But I do see the awesome beauty in the church in Wrightstown that could not be duplicated in a new church. What a shame to destroy that!

Make sure we have the money and support before doing anything big.

As a parish we need to be fiscally responsible. While everyone has ties to a specific church, but realistically we cannot support 3 church sites. I would be in favor of remodeling the St. Paul site. This way we can keep the school. I don't think we can afford to build a new church and a new school. All things set aside it will come down to money and the best way to use it.

Between all three sites, there is not one site that will work – due to space. Being split as we are now – is reducing our number of parishioners – est. 30%. Would a remodel be big enough in 10 years? \*We need to build new at a central location – build in phases. Sell existing property.

I feel one site would bring everyone together as a whole, whether new or remodel.

I am very torn whether to build a new church or to spend the money to renovate one of the churches (St. Paul's site).

I believe the leadership needs to keep the majority of the community in mind. The location as far as distance to get to Mass needs to be considered as well as the cost. What can the parish really afford?

Do what's best for all whatever that may be.

Hard to give an educated comment without pricing on new or remodeling. I feel St. Paul site would be great with additions to the right and left with ample room including requirements for church and Mass. 1) I would like a small chapel for lighting candles. 2) I would like to keep stained glass windows. 3) Most of all I would love to keep a crucifix in the front of the church.

My advice for our parish leadership: 1) Financial realities make purchasing land and building a new church – in my opinion – unrealistic. 2) Changes to the liturgy are driving some of this. Future church/Vatican leadership could change the liturgy again. 3) Consensus is critical. A significant majority must agree or any proposal will not succeed. \*I personally recommend renovating the Wrightstown site and not building new. Thank you and God bless. (Brian C. Mathu)

My advice would be to look mainly at the St. Paul location to add on as the structure, as I understand, is good and has value as I see it and there is plenty of property and the school and parking room is already there.

Overwhelmed by number that believe the decision is already made. -☹️ Would like research into both options but firmly believe a change must be made. We cannot continue as we are and truly become St. Clare Parish Community!

Try for 1 year at Wrightstown site only and see how it works.

My advice is to see how much money we need to get and how long it will take.

Everyone would like to keep their church, but the St. Paul site church is beautiful and big and it would be sinful to destroy it! (Lots of people have expressed that). Some people from Green Bay said, "We come here just to pray because it's the nicest church in the area". Thanks to the Exploratory Committee for all your work and time! If a new church is ever build, I'm not in favor of a central altar.

My advice is do things that make sense and have true backing of our community. **STRONG LEADERSHIP CREATES STRONG FOLLOWING. WE NEED TO FOCUS ON TRUE NEED.** (Travis Coenen)

Assess best economic feasibility – old vs. new site.

Parish leadership needs to formulate a consensual plan that incorporates our parish mission.

If we are really looking out for our children, grandchildren and future generations, is it fair for us to fix a 125 year old church that will need more work in the future? Our future generations would still have an old church and huge mortgage for improvements made to an old building. How many of us are living in 100+ year houses? Even some of the people who were so vocal about fixing the old church have new homes.

My advice is to come prepared and know the facts, as there will always be someone who has done their research. The feeling is that you are not being transparent, but always had the intention to push for one new building. As no other option has been backed and has been the only focus (1 building). Make sure that all ideas and decisions are fiscally responsible!

Take survey (after a site for a new church is established) of how many parishioners would stay with St. Clare.

How about getting the younger people involved. You sure don't see them in church.

If you build a 1000 seat church and you get 300 or less people at a Mass – empty, empty not good.

I think you should look at renovating St. Paul's site. It can meet all needs both now and in the future. When we are at full capacity then we should have the discussion of a new building.

My advice: Listen to what the people are saying and not what a few people have already decided would be good for all.

In order for everyone to call this our parish it needs to be a new building.

My advice is: Once a Mass time is set DO NOT change it for a Packer Game. Do you meet the budget now, if not don't go ahead. What are ways of not turning people away for a certain site.

Build new; in center of parish on 12+ acres.

Build new and center of parish.

My advice is to keep St. Paul's and renovate as needed – Do not destroy a good church.

Jesus Christ was born in a barn. I don't think we need all these bells and whistles. I think that people should just be good to one another. I would rather give to those who have no food than have a fancy church.

I would like to know why nothing has been mentioned about St. Patrick's or St. Mary's parishes.

No new church. St. Paul's should be updated and the only church. If a new church is built we will leave the parish.

We need to remember we are here to do God's work not ours.

Wife: 1<sup>st</sup> choice – St. Paul's – lower church to 1 level – no basement – then add on. Husband: St. Paul church and remodel. Re-route street so parishioners do not cross in traffic.

I am very unhappy with this meeting. Everything was St. Paul. I belong to "Paul" for 37 years. Consider the people from St. Mary & St. Pat traveling time – their memories. This was a one sided meeting. We need a central location. Ask Dave to figure that question out. He is very biased.

My advice is to build a church at a neutral site, centrally located.

Biggest problem is changing attitudes of "traditional" people whose ancestors built the brick and mortar. I want to see school preserved. Modern – not necessary.

My advice to parish leadership is: Get 50% of the money raised before you do anything.

We have a great big church in Wrightstown that could be made to work. Let's use it.

We can save money by not having to pay extra priests every weekend. Cut down on number of Masses.

Remodel Wrightstown.

My advice to parish leadership is: To unite as one group where there will be 1 of every committee and all to be under 1 leadership.

Build new – but not as big as Prince of Peace – more like Brillion. No repairs for 15 years.

Just keep the Wrightstown site, so we can keep the school.

Keep in Wrightstown.

To make sure you can pay for a new church.

Hate to change.

A complete, comprehensive study to renovate the Wrightstown site to meet the needs of our parish must be done to weigh against building new. Our Catholic school must be included in both studies.

My advice to parish leadership is to send a questionnaire to each parish member asking  New or  renovate St. Paul site and go with the count, or an "Our Decision" .

To more thoroughly investigate renovation and addition to St. Paul site. Parking is not going to keep or bring people to church. How are you going to get a consensus?

Publish the answers to the questions presented on Town Hall Meeting, October 3. Send out a primary vote/ballot to all members to get a good idea if we want to build or close certain sites and remodel the St. Paul's Church/School.

We need one site. How energy efficient is any of the old buildings. We don't need extravagance. I have seen new churches with wasted space and a lot of things not needed.

My advice to parish leadership is our church is the people. You mentioned the issue of priest reduction – I see our church changing with the new pope – the role of Deacon should be expanded – I do not agree a new facility is the answer. We lost people with the merger and we will lose people if you close our three churches. Say prayers for the best outcome.

My advice: renovate St. Paul Site. Send out questionnaire to people who were not at meeting for their opinions on building new or renovating!

My advice to parish leadership is...attempt to engage the younger generation with their thoughts, opinions and what might help bring them back. Would the building make a difference?

Remodel St. Paul site, we already have the school and elevator.

Stay at St. Paul's – renovate. If you lose people – less to pay for it. St. Paul's too nice to destroy. Only 35% to 40% pay now, how are you going to get more to pay? Each person's cost.

I think St. Paul's should be renovated. It is too beautiful to destroy. Find out how many people will stay.

My advice to parish leaders is please take in consideration the history of each church before making a final decision. May God Bless.

We need two distinct proposals and specifics and cost to enable a vote. There is not enough info to make decision based on tonight. Two alternatives have emerged – renovate St. Paul, build new church.

1) Keep one unified site at St. Paul's – renovate – do not build new. Keep original look and feel as much as possible. School at St. Paul's site. "Memories" are to be built on not destroyed.

My advice is to remodel and expand St. Paul site to keep the school intact. We can't afford to build a new church. Tonight I saw very few young parishioners at this meeting. The job wages are diminishing, people working for \$15.00 an hour and struggling to pay health insurance.

My advice would be to keep St. Paul's site but if a new church is wanted how could the expenses be curtailed. When we visited Prince of Peace I saw so much waste. Also to not let the building be more important than the members as I've seen at Prince of Peace. (Mary Mancoske)

I feel it would be too big of a hardship to build new, especially the older ones.

I am from St. Mary's parish. I would like a new facility, but am OK with refurbishing St. Paul's site if dollar saving is enough. Need to start closing churches to save money.

My advice – don't overdo. We used the school for all our family and they all turned out great. We are now old and very poor but attend church always!

There is sadness and concern what will happen when all this takes place. At my age, we truly hate a lot of change. God Bless!

Tell it like it is – don't stretch the truth and much luck to make the best decisions! P.S. St. Paul's is fine!

Keep St. Paul and St. Mary open. Build on to St. Paul church.

1) Church needs to be centralized. 2) If you allow 1 church to stay you are letting that parish (church) win. 3) My advice is to build a new church.

It is critical to consider the feeling of young families – not just the "loud" traditional members. Please build a new church and school.

Would a survey be done to determine the number of people who would stay?

I feel adding on to Wrightstown is a mistake. It's still an old church and our goal is to bring community together. We need a new church.

In order for St. Clare to survive we need to be "one" site. Think with our head not so much our heart. Dream – build new facility. This can be achieved if we all work together.

Before planning on spending a lot consider the economy and what people can afford.

Try to keep in mind how much the church will cost. Consider the economy.

Keep in mind the current economy, jobs kept and to be lost over time. How much can we "budget" people for a responsibility.

Will one priest be able to say all Masses even if one building. Wrightstown site seems to be avoided by Fr. Dennis.

Take a census, not a pledge on money available.

My advice to parish leadership is: Get a rough plan for building up St. Paul's and cost. Get a rough plan for a new parish elsewhere and cost.

Do you think there is a chance that anyone would donate the land?

No matter what choice – there will be some who decide to leave – so make the decision for the future generation. If we are St. Clare, we cannot be St. Pat, St. Mary, St. Paul. To hold on to one of these would be a mistake – even if remodeled. I'd like to see us build new – somewhere east of river – include the Askeaton windows and if possible the Nativity window and St. Cecelia window from Greenleaf. It would be a mistake to go away from using our saint images. There seems to be a "return" to our images in our identity. I worry about money – but I worry about money just to maintain – so I say go for it – set the goal and go for new. To keep several sites would be crazy – so much work and things "doubly" done when staff and services have to serve many sites. To remodel costs \$M makes no sense – go straight to new. CRAZY to think of renovating Wrightstown. There won't be room for a blade of grass! In this what we want?

How large is our bill for postage? Every week I get a letter from St. Clare Parish. I attend Mass every Sunday and the bulletin is where I look for news in the parish. The people who pay NO support to the church and those who do not attend Mass are not interested in the workings of the parish, so, why all the mailings?

Please make note of who will use the envelopes and those who don't. Sending envelopes to everyone is a waste of time and money.

Our church had NO financial problems for over 150 years. Why are we paying a business manager full time employment? How many others are getting full time salary for part-time work?

St. Clare Wrightstown can take care of everyone. We don't have enough to handle all the activities CCD – janitors? (not sure this is what they meant – couldn't read it)

Can the school exist if church is located in another site. Can we come together as one in Wrightstown and then consider a plan for new or rebuild – or even two sites (St. Mary & St. Paul). How much from how many – what might be asked.

Don't tear down any churches and don't build a new church. Do maintenance on the churches we have. We need a priest that respects us.

Father Dennis has driven our three parishes so far from where we once had been. I dislike the services he leads so much I often go to other parishes just to get the passion in Mass our church once had. We have a beautiful parish in Wrightstown with so much history, it would be a dreadful waste to eliminate it. We need to keep the Wrightstown parish. The church and the school are very beautiful and sound buildings that need to be kept. The offices, the previous St. Mary's school, is no longer needed. Saint Pat's church has the lowest attendance. Keep the St. Paul's parish alive both in structure and in the faith it gives so many members. Get rid of Father Dennis.

My advice for the parish is to: tear down St. Mary's site school and move the parish office to Wrightstown. As a 35 year member of St. Mary's School/Parish I no longer see the need of that building and paying for all those expenses is

financially stupid! Build up the three churches as the members want to pay for. Wrightstown members have asked to pay for air conditioning the last three years and the priest and office personnel told the members they weren't allowed to go ahead. Greenleaf site has a roof to be repaired, if we had a decent respectful priest this would all have been taken care of. From what I see, the first thing is the priest needs to go, then the parishes will move ahead.

During the planning process will one or more of the parishes be closed before the decision is made. What happens if we decide to sell the churches and build new and no one buys the existing churches. Are all questions asked at the meeting and written on cards going to be answered and sent out.

Why are we worried about putting an addition onto an old church that is right next to the street. If we can't afford the school shut it down. Build the church, then if we can afford it the school will come next. The young people that move in would rather come to a new church rather than an old one that is all pieced together! Some people say we will lose 20% of the people. The people from Wrightstown just don't care. They rather just go deeper in debt. They only want Greenleaf and Askeaton to help pay their bills! Audio system is bad in Wrightstown. You can't hear the Mass!! Some people do have hearing problems.

Safety – when coming away from the meeting on Thursday nite, the only thing that wasn't talked about was the safety of the people when coming or leaving the church. I think most people got the general idea that the Wrightstown site was the only thing that really mattered! What people neglected to say anything about, the people leaving the church, having an accident, or getting pushed into the street, etc. The church is right next to the street! If anything happens who is going to be responsible for it? Doesn't anyone care about the safety of the people? Are people that blind? Or they just don't want to think ahead? When you have more people, it will be more congested.

### **Observations on A Place of Congregation**

To: St. Clare Exploratory Committee  
From: Ed Byrne

Dear Explorers,

My plans to attend the town hall meeting this evening (Oct. 3) at the high school were dashed by work assignments. Since the bulletin suggested offering ideas in writing, I'll take that option.

My personal feelings on the issue of a parish place of congregation are pretty wide open. Back in the late 1970s, I took a graduate course of Church Art and Architecture at Mt. Angel Seminary. I lucked out because the instructor, Fr. Frederic DeBuyst, OSB, was one of the leading architects developing models for new church buildings that reflected the reforms of the Second Vatican Council. I found his observations exciting. So building new has some attraction for me, personally.

Several years later, when St. Anne Episcopal Church in De Pere was designing a new church building, a member of that church, Tony Walter, asked for my opinions on church architecture. I had known him through the news media (he worked for the Green Bay Press-Gazette at the time) and we had talked about church design. Tony was on the committee charged with designing and building the new church, and he asked for my ideas.

I offered a number of ideas, all taken from Fr. DeBuyst's class. Several of them were used in the final design of St. Anne Church.

However, at this time, rather than address church design or church architecture, I would like to raise concerns about more practical and more preliminary considerations, especially focusing on the feasibility of various options I understand are under consideration.

#### **1. One community, one altar**

Several people have mentioned to me that the parish needs one church building with one altar so everyone in the parish can gather around it. This is presented as a requirement for unity, but this representation is actually somewhat flawed - even bogus.

Even with one church building, there are likely to be at least three Sunday-obligation Masses scheduled. In reality, then, you don't have "everyone gathered around one altar worshipping in union." I've spoken with people from Wrightstown and Greenleaf over the years and am well aware that different people favor attendance at different Masses. Even with one church building, there will not be "one community of worship" unless there is only one Mass opportunity. [Anyone who has

ever worked three different shifts at the same factory knows that each shift has its own identity and culture.]

Two years ago, I spoke with the Rev. Randy Ott, pastor of Zion Ev. Lutheran Church in Morrison, about the growth of his congregation. Zion has one Sunday worship service, and I asked him if there were plans to add another service. He said “no” because then you would essentially have two different congregations using one church. I think he is probably correct in that assessment.

## **2. Merger experiences**

In our area, there are three situations that we need to be aware of where churches were merged or linked. Each is somewhat different and each deserves its own reflection.

### **a. Manitowoc merger**

In Manitowoc, all of the parishes were merged into one parish and several of the church buildings were closed. About a year after the merger, in the Herald-Times-Reporter, the pastor of the merged parish - Fr. Dan Felton - was quoted saying that about 40 percent of the members of the merged parishes left the church.

At a basketball game at Roncalli, I spoke with a man from Manitowoc and asked him about the merger and the story in the newspaper. He said that the majority of those who left the church were people who had attended Mass at the churches that were closed after the merger became effective.

In the Manitowoc merger, it is important to note that the churches which remained open were large enough to accommodate all of the people from the merged parishes. Because of that, there was no need to raise funds to erect a new church building.

The Exploratory Committee needs to study the Manitowoc situation and ask: What percentage of people left the church because of the closure of some church buildings? What impact did that have on sacrificial giving to the new, merged parish?

### **b. Holy Family Church in Brillion**

Holy Family Parish was created by the merger of St. Mary Parish in Brillion, St. Mary Parish in Reedsville and St. Patrick Church in Maple Grove. All three communities knew that the plan was to build a new church for the merged parish. However, how the process played out had a significantly negative effect.

A group of parish members developed an option on some rural land, just north of U.S. 10, halfway between Brillion and Reedsville, which they planned to donate as the site of the new church. Instead, a wealthy family in Brillion offered to donate land and a significant amount of money if the church was built on the west side of Brillion - where the new church is now located. That site was far from the locations of the two other communities (Reedsville and Maple Grove) and was/is convenient for people in Brillion, but not for people in Reedsville and Maple Grove. The unspoken message: “This is Brillion’s church and you people from Reedsville and Maple Grove have to come here to worship.”

As a result of the decision to allow one family from Brillion to dictate the site of the new church, a significant number of families from Reedsville and Maple Grove left the new parish. Some attend Catholic churches in Whitelaw or Kellnersville. Others simply stopped going to church altogether, or joined churches of other denominations (primarily the Lutheran churches in Reedsville and Wayside).

The loss of those Catholics was not fiscally significant because the Brillion family subsidized the construction of Holy Family Church on the west side of Brillion. Community groups purchased the Maple Grove and Reedsville church buildings, which are no longer used for Catholic worship. One Mass a year is celebrated at Maple Grove - under a tent outside the church building with a priest from Milwaukee as celebrant.

The Exploratory Committee needs to look at the Holy Family situation and determine: What percentage of total parish membership was lost as a result of the merger? Had the Brillion family not subsidized the construction of the new church building, would the new building have been financially feasible after the loss of some Reedsville and Maple Grove parish members?

The Holy Family case is important to us because the merger was of three parishes. The difference is that St. Clare does not have a member/family that has millions in expendable resources from a successful industrial business to subsidize the

construction of a new church.

### c. St. John and Sacred Heart in Calumet County

Four churches in northern Calumet County share a single priest. They are in Stockbridge, Hilbert, St. John and Sherwood. Sacred Heart in Sherwood and St. John in St. John are merged into a single parish. When that merger took place, a study was conducted to determine whether the smaller church, St. John, should be closed. The study showed that some people from St. John would go to St. Mary in Hilbert or Sacred Heart in Sherwood, but a significant number would leave the Catholic Church altogether. As a result it was decided that St. John should not be closed, but reduced to one Mass per weekend. The commitment to keeping St. John open is significant; the church was remodeled and repaired at considerable expense and Bishop Ricken re-dedicated it this summer.

The Exploratory Committee should obtain a copy of the study that considered closing the church in St. John to determine whether any of its lessons are worth considering at St. Clare. How significant would be the losses of parish members be if St. John had been closed?

### **3. Relevant themes**

In my informal conversations with people from St. Clare Parish, several themes have emerged. I will share them in the form of paraphrased statements:

- a. "If St. Mary's in Greenleaf closes and St. Paul's in Wrightstown is the only church for the parish, I'll probably go to church in De Pere instead."
- b. "If St. Patrick's in Askeaton closes, I'll go to Brillion or Hollandtown or Kaukauna."
- c. "My wife/husband is Lutheran, and so we would probably go to a Lutheran church."
- d. "If all three churches were closed and a new church was built somewhere in the middle between Wrightstown, Greenleaf and Askeaton, I'd be cool with that. But if they close St. Pat's and St. Mary's and keep St. Paul's - I'm out."

### **4. Eucharistic crisis**

I have also heard, from many people, that "the Catholic Church is dying because there aren't enough priests." This is usually called the "Eucharistic crisis" in church circles. This is the elephant in the living room that everyone talks around when a priest is present, but talks about openly with other Catholic lay people.

I have had several extended conversations with people about the priest shortage and there are common themes in them.

- a. "When families had 10 kids, you encouraged one of your sons to become a priest and one of your daughters to become a nun, but when you only have two or three kids, you want them to get married and give you grandchildren."
- b. "In the old days, a lot of priests were homosexual men and everyone knew it. For a gay kid, becoming a priest was a 'socially safe' option but now there's no shame in being public about his sexuality. You don't have to become a hairdresser or a priest any more."
- c. "Celibacy isn't natural or normal. If any of my children wanted to become priests, I'd tell them to become a Protestant minister, get married and have kids." [We have had several young people, confirmed here, who went to college and became members of evangelical denominations and engaged in their ministries.]

### **5. The crisis at home**

The lack of priests in the Roman Rite in the U.S. seems to be the direct result of mandatory celibacy for priests. The Eastern Rites of the Church (all in communion with Rome) have optional celibacy for priests and those churches have no "Eucharistic crisis." The rule of mandatory celibacy for Roman Rite priests has been fragile in the U.S. from the beginning, so much so that the church does not allow married Eastern Rite priests to serve in their own churches in North America, lest the example bring mandatory celibacy for the Roman Rite into question.

My guess is that the rule of celibacy for priests will end when it becomes a fiscal issue. Rome depends on the largesse of Catholic churches in developed countries. As the U.S. churches of the Roman Rite lose priests, close church buildings

and lose people (.i.e. financial contributors), the financial resources available to the church will also fall, forcing a serious reconsideration of celibacy at the highest level - probably in a General Council similar to Vatican II. In fact, as Bishop Wycislo told me at a Bishop's Charities Game dinner, priestly celibacy was removed from the agenda at Vatican II because the shortage of priests was not so acute as to threaten the existence of the church.

That is something far beyond our parish's control or mission. It will likely be addressed well after I take up cemetery residency! But we also need to ask a serious question about future priest staffing in the Diocese of Green Bay. It is clear that a diminishing number of priests has been the sole reason for the merger of parishes (just as the declining number of religious sisters produced the mergers or closures of Catholic schools).

It has been somewhat softened by the willingness of retired priests to continue presiding at parish Masses. I have a deep appreciation for elderly men of faith being willing to serve us in that way, but their gift to the people of this day is time-limited. Those retired men are also dying off or becoming physically/mentally incapable of continuing to serve. That will exasperate the critical shortage of priests. As a friend of mine at St. Mary Church in Stark told me this summer, he attended a gathering of diocesan priests recently and said it was like walking into the dining room of a nursing home. To use his words: "It was a sea of gray hair."

We know that the shortage of priests is behind the merger of three parishes into St. Clare Parish. The Exploratory Committee was charged with finding a local solution to the worship challenges with three worship sites. The goal is to find a way to provide Masses with only one priest and no help from retired priests.

[As an aside, former parish Business manager Mary Marquardt, at a meeting in the basement of St. Patrick's Church, said the parish should have not developed a dependence on retired priests and should have had only one Sunday-obligation Mass at each of the three sites. She said the use of retired priests was a case of delaying the inevitable. She compared it to fixing your car with used parts.]

Even if there was only one Sunday Mass at each church, or if a new church is built to replace the current three, or if two church buildings are closed and the third becomes the sole worship site for the parish, the solution may be short-lived. I have heard no discussion about that. However, a friend of mine who is a resigned priest (married with kids) told me recently: "What they aren't telling you is that this is only 'round one.'" Even with the current mergers, there will not be enough priests in 10 years to staff all of the merged churches, and it is likely that each church will have a reduced number of Masses and two or three "merged parishes" will have to share a single priest.

So, as painful as this current process is, it may be only the beginning. Lay people need to know what the diocesan priest census looks like now and that it will look like in five, 10, 15 and 20 years. We need to know if we will still be paying off the mortgage on a new church and yet have no priest to serve it.

## **6. No easy decisions**

These are all very complicated issues that I've addressed here. That said, if the decision is to build a new church, I'd welcome the opportunity to have input into its design. But for that to happen, the parish needs to ask the tough questions of all current parish members, and then report the survey results:

- a. "If we decide to close all three current churches and build a new one, will you remain a member of the unified parish and help pay for the new church?"
- b. "If so, how much would you be willing to pay monthly to help pay off the mortgage of the new church building?"
- c. "If we close Askeaton and Greenleaf and keep St. Paul in Wrightstown open and remodel it to reflect Vatican II standards, how will that affect your membership in the parish and your financial contributions to the parish?"
- d. "If a new church was built, what general site area would win your endorsement? What scenario would be unacceptable to you?"
- e. "Is leaving the parish for a different parish an option you have considered or would consider if the parish's decision on worship sites is not amenable to you?"
- f. "Is leaving the Catholic Church altogether an option you have considered or would consider?"

The other concern is about the process used by the Exploratory Committee. Several people have told me that "the deck is

stacked” and “you know what they’re going to recommend.” This is a significant hurdle to overcome. One of the comments I’ve heard frequently: “There is only one person on the committee who wants to keep all three church buildings open and he/she is drowned out by the others.”

Last spring, Sr. Celine - at Evening Prayer in Askeaton - offered a petition that “the parish be unified with one church and one altar.” She was a member of the Exploratory Committee at the time. That offended several people so much that they discontinued coming to Evening Prayer. As one woman told me: “She’s here for a year and has all the answers. Well, when she’s gone, the people here will be stuck paying for everything.”

Good luck sorting this all out. I do not envy you at all.

I prayed a lot about this before committing these thoughts to paper. Despite that, all of the spelling and grammatical errors are mine alone.

Ed Byrne  
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I would like to see if additional property in Greenleaf could be purchased so as to build a new church. I would suggest the school buildings in Greenleaf be used as offices and educational rooms. The rectory would stay as housing. I would keep the school at the Wrightstown site to stay as is. (Mass could be said at the school weekly). Property purchased would be the least required with perhaps an option for more later. (Nancy Leick)

I would support the building of a new church but, will not support a move to the Wrightstown site. I have no desire to sit beside anyone who calls themselves a Christian while calling our devoted priest, Father Dennis, uncaring and other worse things. We would likely leave the parish.

Thoughts about the church: Something obviously has to be done, we need to get going on this, it’s going to upset people, but like a Band Aid it needs to be pulled off and done. Once the cost of the church (new, old, remodeled, what have you) is figured out a cost needs to be presented as to what each “unit” needs to pay set that amount and a higher amount to be on a beneficiary board. This “pay what you think” is not working. Did anyone notice there was about a handful of people UNDER 40 at Thursday’s meeting – hum aren’t they the ones that will be carrying on this parish for future generations. As far as people leaving because of what is going to happen (new, old, remodeled, what have you) to the church they are basically looking for an out? My favorite Father Bob homily – a Priest was traveling east as settlers were traveling west as he approached a wagon train they asked what kind of town are we approaching, the Priest replied what kind of town did you just leave? Oh, Father the people of our last town were mean, backstabbing, hypocrites. The Priest replied yes that is what you will find in this town. The next group of settlers approached the Priest asked the same question receiving the same response from the Priest. However, their reply was the towns people from their previous town were friendly, caring, loving. The Priest replied yes that is what you will find in this town. Moral of the story if you are looking for bad you will find bad, if you are looking for good you will find good. If we are looking for this to fail it will fail if we are looking for this to succeed then it will. What I think should be done – Make Wrightstown the “church” of choice – knock down the priests house make it a parking lot, knock down the nuns house make that the narthex – leave Father at Greenleaf priest’s house, as sand and heartless as it seems – knock down the Greenleaf and Askeaton churches once again the Band-Aid effect. Two masses on Saturday and 2 on Sunday. NO more rent-a-priest’s. And my last comment – if the only reason we are going to church is for the “church” then we have problems, if we are looking at this as one parish is going to “win” then we are not practicing our faith very well are we? Maybe play the song “they will know we are Christian’s by our love” every mass until we get this right.

I would like more study done on using existing facilities for economical and practical reasons, before abandoning these for new construction.