

Dear members of St. Clare Parish,

As stated last week, over the next couple of weeks, our parish bulletin will contain inserts sharing information gathered and assembled for your review, by the Exploratory Committee. These inserts will be posted on the St. Clare website at www.stclareagw.org.

A "Town Hall" format meeting for your input will be held on Thursday evening, October 3 in the auditorium of Wrightstown High School as the committee prepares it's final report.

The Exploratory Committee is comprised of Russ Aerts, Father Dennis, Dick Geurts, Carolyn Green, Julie Rohan, Rick Roundy, and Karla Voss.

Insert Two **Physical Facilities**

In an effort to implement the parish facilities recommendations of the Long Range Plan, the Exploratory Committee defines our needs as encompassing the following components:

Liturgical, worship space

Narthex, gathering and social spaces

Accessibility Issues

Education, meeting spaces - Administration, office space

Land, adequate acreage, location, adequate parking

Each of these categories has been studied to incorporate safety issues, disability/accessibility needs, mechanicals systems, future upkeep & maintenance costs, availability of utilities, and future growth and expansion. Energy efficiency and technology options were examined as well.

Liturgical, Worship Space

The Exploratory Committee in touring other newly constructed, and remodeled churches, studied many components.

The location and liturgical significance of the altar, ambo, chair, Tabernacle, Baptismal Font, the Crucifix were examined. Design of sacristy furniture was compared and noted. Sight lines and elevation, building design and layout, exterior grounds and landscaping, lighting, sound systems, acoustics, and heating and cooling-efficiency were examined in detail. Also studied were family friendly areas, liturgical art quantity and placement, musician and choir location, liturgical season decorations relating to the colors and textures of the worship space. Private prayer areas were compared and noted.

Narthex, gathering and social spaces

The Exploratory Committee recognized the importance of the large narthex/gathering spaces at each of the churches, new and remodeled. These spaces serve to build community, allowing our members to gather before and after Mass, further utilizing this space for funeral visitations, and a multitude of social functions including SCRIP sales, coffee and donuts socials, sharing of information, and fellowship. Funeral visitation lines commonly form outside at some of our sites. Currently at all three of our sites our members gather outside after Mass in good weather and we leave immediately in inclement weather. Our social interaction as a parish community is limited.

The committee also explored social halls with adjoining kitchens at the parishes comparing seating capacities and kitchen equipment and capabilities.

Accessibility Issues – All Are Welcome

The Exploratory Committee studied the accessibility and safety issues at each of the churches toured. Items such as a covered drive-up entry, level entry for those in wheelchairs or those using a walker, cane or crutches, were noted. Level entry to the altar and sanctuary for lectors, servers and Eucharistic ministers was noted. Audio enhancement loops for the hearing impaired as well as audio/visual technologies available in remodeled or new construction. Among the many items the committee studied included access to lavatories, proper floor surfaces, size and location of elevators (if multi-level), and operating noise levels of heating /cooling equipment.

Education, meeting spaces - Administration, office space

The Exploratory Committee acknowledges the need for parish office space and meeting rooms as well as adequate acreage for future expansion or construction of school and religious education spaces.

Land, adequate acreage, location

As the Exploratory Committee toured other sites, attention was focused on the amount of land needed not only for our current needs, but future generations as well. The diocese recommends a minimum of 12 acres for a new church. The parking lot should have one space for every 2.5 seats in the church nave. None of our existing sites meet this standard.

If a new school is planned for the future, an additional 10 acres is recommended.

The site should be convenient and centrally located for the current parishioners and allow for future growth in the next 60 to 80 years.

As Pope Benedict XVI reflected, ““In every neighborhood where people live and work, the church wants to be present with the evangelical witness of coherent and faithful Christians, but also with buildings where they can gather for prayer and the sacraments, for Christian formation and to establish relationships of friendship and brotherhood and where children, youths, families and the aged can grow in that spirit of community that Christ taught us and that the world needs so badly.”

In the next several weeks, as more reports from the *exploratory committee* are published, please prayerfully consider each theme. This week in your prayer, we invite you to reflect on the ways in which a new parish worship site or total new campus can help us carry out our call to unity and our mission to evangelize in our parish and then to the broader community.