

From the desk of Fr. Brian...

Dear Saint Clare Parishioners,

The unfolding history of the parish turned a new page in January—a new chapter, perhaps. For several years now, the future of our churches and other facilities has been a controversial topic; especially so since 2014/15. There is a generally felt desire among parishioners to be “one,” but at the same time there has been significant disagreement on how, practically, to go about this. Some have favored building a new church as the basis for unity. Some have favored a general move to our current Wrightstown church as the basis for unity. And some have favored neither of those options. The parish has been gridlocked, unable to move.

As I prayed for clarity in direction, and for objectivity in decisions needing to be made, I reviewed again the Matousek Study done in 2014 (a survey mailed out to all registered parishioners). The findings of that study provided both the clarity and objectivity I was looking for. The **Matousek Study** found that:

1. 30% of respondents opted for building a new church as their 1st Choice.
2. 69% of respondents opted for either a general move to our Wrightstown church, or for an upgrade to our existing church buildings as their 1st Choice.
3. 62% of respondents were okay with the idea of being in one location.

Additionally, the **In-Pew Poll of Feb. 2017** found that:

1. 67% of respondents supported a move to hold all Masses, as a trial run, at the current Wrightstown church.
2. 55% of those most affected (that is, in the Greenleaf and Askeaton areas), expressed a disinterest in staying at the current Wrightstown church long-term, however.

With this (and more) “clear and objective” information, I asked a joint meeting of the Pastoral and Finance Councils to accept the findings of the 2014 Matousek Study as being both: the *general will* of St. Clare parishioners, and *our starting point* in charting the parish’s short- and long-term future. Both Councils accepted these findings as such, and began a new chapter in the parish’s history.

However, the Councils and I made note that the parish community itself, and the dynamics within the parish have changed somewhat since 2014. And so, we are planning a “re-survey” of the parish community—*not* with the mindset of “starting over,” but as a chance to *confirm* (or not) the proposed direction for our buildings and facilities, which is built on the findings of the 2014 Matousek Study.

Prior to the re-survey, there will be four weeks of informational presentations. The intent of these presentations is to give parishioners relevant and useful information about the proposed direction for St. Clare, so that their survey choices will be as “informed” as possible.

As the Administrator of Saint Clare Parish, I’ve committed myself to honoring (as far as possible) the general will of parishioners, regarding our buildings and facilities. While the re-survey is not legally binding, I will take its findings as my cue. Should the re-survey be inconclusive, the findings of the 2014 Study will be adopted as definitive.

On the reverse side, you will find an outline of: the proposed direction for St. Clare Parish, a schedule of the informational presentations, and information regarding the re-survey. Please take the opportunity to become informed and to “cast your survey.” Please contact me or any Pastoral or Finance Council members with questions.

Blessings!

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The Direction (based on the general will of St. Clare Parishioners)

1. To continue plans for building a new Parish Center (including: Offices, Pastoral Meeting Rooms, RE Center, Youth Center, Social Hall, Kitchen, Parish Library, History Room, Adoration Chapel), and also storage for parish picnic supplies.

The intent is that the new Parish Center would become the hub of parish activity outside of worship; including the parish picnic, socials, possibly wedding and funeral gatherings, presentations, meetings, sports, and so on. The new Youth Center, located across the street from the high school would, hopefully, be a convenient and fresh place for youth to gather.

Suggestions for building a new school have been brought up. Information regarding the idea will be brought up at the second informational presentation. The school is an unanswered question, but will be answered through the re-survey.

2. Upgrade our existing three church buildings for reasons of: accessibility, Safe Environment, lighting, interior freshening up, landscaping, restrooms, utilities, parking, and liturgical use, and so on. To not upgrade is not an option.

3. Table discussions of a new church building for the foreseeable future, until such time as there is a more generally-felt desire for it. The new Parish Center would be built to accommodate the addition of a church, should the parish community desire it in the future.

4. The re-survey is intended to confirm that this proposed direction is in line with a significant majority (that is, 66%) of parishioners. If such a re-survey would come back as inconclusive, the above proposed direction would be accepted as definitive (since it's based on the 2014 Study), and we would move forward with it.

The Informational Presentations

Each live presentation will be given *twice*. The information presented will be also be available in paper, and on the parish website via video or pdf.

Presentation 1 **TOPIC: Parish Dynamics, Demographic Trends, Finances, and Parish Identity**

Monday, Feb. 12, 5:30-7:00pm @ Greenleaf cafeteria

or Sunday, Feb. 18, 11:15am-12:45pm @ Wrightstown church hall

Presentation 2 **TOPIC: Overview of the New Parish Center, Information about St. Clare School**

Tuesday, Feb. 20, 6:30-8:00pm @ Wrightstown church hall

or Saturday, Feb. 24, 12Noon-1:30pm @ Askeaton church hall

Presentation 3 **TOPIC: Overview of Upgrades to Existing Churches, New Church, Finances, Other Facilities**

Tuesday, Feb. 27, 6:30-8:00pm @ Wrightstown church hall

or Friday, Mar. 2, 5:30-7:00pm @ Greenleaf cateria

Presentation 4 **TOPIC: Architectural Symbolism, Ritual, Unity, Tradition & Progress, and Wrap Up**

Tuesday, Mar. 6, 6:30-7:30pm @ Askeaton church hall

or Sunday, Mar. 11, 11:15am-12:15pm @ Wrightstown church hall

The Re-Survey

Two surveys will be mailed to the home of each registered parishioner on Monday, Mar. 12. A sample survey will be given out at the live presentations, so parishioners will know ahead of time what they'll be asked (the sample will also be available via the parish website). Surveys must be received at the parish office by the end of the day on Wed., March 21. Parishioners must clearly write his or her name on the survey so a record can be kept; one survey per parishioner (the names will not be published). Results of the survey and the definitive direction for St. Clare will be announced at Palm Sunday Masses, the weekend of Mar. 24 & 25.