

## INTRODUCTION

The Diocese of Trenton has been blessed with many parishes which have served millions of people for more than 130 years. Today, given changing demographics, the increasing needs of the parishioners, the anticipation of fewer priests to serve the diocese, and the strain on facilities and finances, we are called to better steward our resources so that we can truly and in the best way possible meet the needs of active Catholics and share our faith with those who are marginalized or who have not yet heard the Good News.

As we look to the future, new models for parishes are needed. Cohorts of parishes are being asked to consider models related to the best ways to serve the Catholics in the diocese. An overall principle of *Faith in Our Future* is that parishes are more effective if they work together in ministry areas. It is envisioned that every parish community will collaborate with other parish communities where appropriate and feasible.

While six models are outlined below, it should be noted that, in many cohorts, more than one model will be suggested by the cohort of parishes as they prepare their Suggestions that are due in June 2016. All suggestions will be reviewed by the Diocesan Planning Commission as they prepare Preliminary Recommendations by late June 2016.

### MODEL ONE: COLLABORATIVE PARISHES

Parishes become collaborative when they enter into formal cooperative relationships with other parishes for the sake of jointly promoting the Gospel and the New Evangelization, preparing and garnering resources for in-depth prayer and worship experiences, presenting comprehensive life-long Christian formation practices, and being advocates for and serving people who are most in need.

One of the underlying values of Collaborative Parishes is being good stewards of spiritual, human, and temporal resources. Collaborative Parishes seek to avoid unnecessary duplication of staff, facilities, and services, so that they are able to expand ministry and meet needs that currently go unmet. Even parishes with ample resources or parishes with unique needs and ministries often consider the Collaborative model to enhance what they are already doing, or to develop new ministries which would be more effective if done with other parishes.

Some characteristics of well-functioning Collaborative Parishes include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Common training of catechists and liturgical ministers
- Parts of youth ministry programs held in common, such as service projects, retreats, and mission trips
- Jointly planned and implemented adult formation programs
- Sharing of some staff
- Developing priestly, religious, diaconal, and lay ministry vocation strategies
- Staff in-services, parish council in-services, etc.
- Joint outreach programs, i.e. food pantries, sharing space for AA meetings, etc., cooperative programs with Catholic Charities
- Mutually beneficial sharing of programs and other resources among and between urban, suburban, and/or rural parishes
- Training RCIA and various catechetical teams.

## **MODEL TWO: LINKED PARISHES**

Linked Parishes are formed when two or more parishes share a pastor. Linked Parishes do as many things cooperatively as possible, especially given that the pastor is striving to serve two or more separate parishes. This model may be one that is used occasionally in a unique parish situation where the pastoral needs are best served by having one pastor for two or more parishes. Linked Parishes may also be in collaborative relationships with other parishes in the cohort or beyond the cohort.

Characteristics of Linked Parishes include:

- The parishes remain distinct canonical and corporate entities
- The parishes are encouraged to work toward combining parish council meetings and to establishing common committees where possible
- According to canon law, Linked Parishes must have separate finance councils
- Linked Parishes do many things cooperatively, such as programs and in-services

Joint staff meetings where cooperative planning happens are marks of well-functioning Linked Parishes

## **MODEL THREE: MERGED PARISHES**

The merging of parishes is not an end in itself. The merger aims to create a new parish that is stronger and better equipped to minister to the members of the faith community and to reach out to the wider community at-large.

After parishes merge, they often develop cooperative relationships with other parishes to be more even more effective in mission and ministry.

When a merger occurs:

- Two or more parishes come together to form a new parish community
- There is a new name which represents the new community being formed
- Net assets and liabilities of the merging parishes go to the newly formed parish
- The parish may have more than one worship site

## **MODEL FOUR: IN SOLIDUM TEAM**

In accord with Canon 517, 1 the Bishop may appoint a moderator of a team of priests who will serve three or more parishes (often four or five parishes). Lay ministers, Religious and Deacons may work with the In Solidum Team to assist with the pastoral life of the parish. Though parishes under the care of an In Solidum Team remain distinct entities, it is encouraged that they cooperate with each other as in the Linked Parish model.

## **MODEL FIVE: PARISH LIFE DIRECTOR**

In accord with Canon 517, 2 the Bishop may appoint a Deacon, Religious or Lay person to be the day to day leader of a parish community. In some dioceses this person is called a "Parish Administrator" or a "Parish Life Director." When this appointment is made, the Bishop also appoints a priest who is endowed with the powers and faculties of a Pastor to supervise the pastoral care. This priest, or another, may be the sacramental minister for the parish. Parishes under the leadership of a Parish Administrator may also be in collaborative relationship with other parishes.

## **MODEL SIX: PERSONAL PARISHES**

In accord with Canon 518, as a general rule, a parish is to be territorial, that is, one which includes all the Christian faithful of a certain territory. When it is expedient, however, personal parishes are to be established determined by reason of the rite, language, or nationality of the Christian faithful of some territory, or even for some other reason.

Personal parishes may be in collaborative relationship or linked with another parish. They may be under the care of a Pastor, of an In Solidum Team, or of a Parish Administrator.