

Polling Question	Answer	March 24 Saturday 5:00 p.m.	March 25 Sunday 7:30 a.m.	March 25 Sunday 8:45 a.m.	March 25 Sunday 11:00 a.m.	March 25 Sunday 5:00 p.m.	March 26 Monday 7:30 p.m.	Parish Total
What is your level of agreement with Cardinal Sean's exhortation that evangelization be the present and long term task of the Archdiocese?	Agree	32	9	6	3	11	12	73
	Disagree	0	0	2	1	0	0	3
	Neutral	5	2	5	4*	4	3	23
What is your level of agreement with the goal that we must grow the Church of Boston by bringing Catholics back to the practice of the faith?	Agree	34	11	15	30	13	12	115
	Disagree	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
	Neutral	3	0	0	2	2	3	10
What is your level of agreement with: "The strengthening of parishes should NOT be achieved by another round of closing 100 or more parishes/churches."	Agree	28	5	12	21	7	13	86
	Disagree	2	1	4	3	3	0	13
	Neutral	7	5	1	11	4	2	30
How open are you to having a pastor from outside your proposed collaborative become your pastor?	Open	21	8	7	13	4	6	59
	Not Open	6	0	7	6	6	3	28
	Neutral	10	2	3	15	4	6	40
Does this proposal of a Pastoral Service Team model take us in the direction you believe we need for the Archdiocese?	Yes	17	5	4	12	5	2	45
	No	3	0	3	15	2	2	25
	Neutral	17	5	7	2	7	11	49
If the Cardinal were to implement the Pastoral Service Team model, how do you think the implementation should take place?	At Once	11	0	1	0	4	0	16
	In Phases	23	9	11	6	7	14	70
	Not Sure	3	2	1	22	0	1	29

* Many participants needed to understand what is meant by evangelization in the context of the PST to be able to answer.

Highlights of the Discussions from the Pastoral Planning Meetings on March 24, 25 & 26, 2012

March 24, After 5:00 p.m. Mass

- If there is one finance council certain funds can be spent on each church from certain sources; how is that practical? Further point was made that the Pastor ultimately gets final call in appeal process. The group acknowledged this is a “hornets’ nest” and must be carefully studied as it could result in tension between churches.
- Initially there was a feeling from this group that this consolidation is inevitable.
- Will there be training for priests and those who will serve for the one parish? We should look for precedent to key off of and for best practices as a road map.
- Will this collaborative effort be a tight and rigid or loose? The thinking is that there is risk erring on either extreme.
- Overwhelming view that the issue right now is not consolidating parishes; instead it is creating a better vocation model: allowing women to be priests and allowing priests to marry. Strong comments that church is ignoring ½ of the population.
- When there is a disagreement between those from one church versus the other, who will have final say? How will this impact the parish?
- Having priests travel from one parish to another may not great. It can create a lack of unity and common bond. However, one person countered it could assist in diversity that younger people feel might be missing.
- A sense that a “trial” combination of councils would be a good idea before they officially merge.
- It would be productive to have parishes begin to interact socially so this is not an “all at once event.”
- How will the schools combine? Will the schools combine?
- A serious concern in that the reduction in masses for each church will reduce financial contributions
- Have we asked the high school kids what they think about this? Have we considered their needs by listening to them?

March 25, After 7:30 a.m. Mass

When asked if our pairing with St. Paul makes sense, most agreed it does and no one expressed major concerns:

- One parishioner who attends daily masses at another parish spoke in favor of the PST model, noting this parish shares a priest, religious education and secretarial services, but each has a pastoral associate and their own music and liturgy groups. There is help with masses from many other sources, so that the homilies and liturgical experiences are rich.
- You’d be amazed at what a parish can do by itself. People will need to take on more. Change is inevitable. We’ll figure out how to make it work. The unknown frightens people, but our two parishes are really very similar and it shouldn’t be an issue.

Question of Choosing Pastor for PST:

- With respect to having one of the existing parish pastors or a new pastor take on the lead pastor role, one parishioner thinks a new pastor doesn’t make sense. There would be an unnecessary double learning curve.
- In reply, other parishioners noted that favoritism and competition between parishes could be an issue, so a new priest might work better.
- Each PST should be unique and the plan for the Archdiocese should not attempt to find one single rule.

Finances:

- Separate finances don’t make much sense. Eventually, a PST should combine finances, especially if one is stronger/wealthier.
- If one parish is financially sound and the other struggles, it may result in division and negative impact on PST community. If weaker churches can’t sustain themselves, the result may be eventual parish closings.

Schools:

- Is there a gap in the blue print regarding parochial education? Especially since evangelization will be the mission, parochial schools will be critical. Has planning for schools been done to the same level as for parishes?
- Since our two parishes both have schools, what will happen? It seems crazy to have 2 schools in same town, but neither parish will want to give up their school.

Other Comments/Questions:

- How far out did analysis of decline of priests look and how does it match up with number of PSTs created? How long are these pairings valid? Will this need to be re-evaluated and done again after a certain number of years (11-20 yrs for instance)?
- To make this new PST model work, younger people (parents of school-age children) will need to participate. The parish will need to focus on reaching out to them and convincing them to take on more.
- Is there a criterion for the maximum number of people in a combined PST? Can't be too large or will end up like 1950's churches that were too large and impersonal.
- One parishioner expressed concern over whether nuns were polled.
- The Archdiocese runs a program for evangelization training (TINE) St. John should have some attendees.
- Isn't the best solution to allow priests to marry and ordain women?

March 25, After 8:45 a.m. Mass

- How does the evangelization piece get implemented? How does this relate to combining parishes?
- How does the plan impact schools?
- Will we be able to interview/know the history of the new pastor? Will he be from this area? What input will we have?
- What are the logistics of sharing a pastor with St. Paul's? Will there be a decline in the number of masses? Will there be other religious people other than the one priest? What role will lay people play? Will the sacraments be impacted?
- Has the diocese thought about bringing in religious people from other parts of the world in which there may be excess capacity? Can we use resources from other areas?
- Is this model going to work for a long enough timeline? Is this a Band-Aid approach?
- This parish has always served both Wellesley and Newton Lower Falls. Will Lower Falls residents, particularly new ones, feel welcome in a parish that has been defined as Wellesley/Wellesley? We need to have sensitivity to the geography.
- With regard to music direction, religious education staff, support staff: there could be an abundance of one resource in one parish, and a lack in another. How can we assure there will be flexibility and optimal allocation of talent?
- Our pairing has been based on geography. There are differences between the two parishes. Merging two cultures takes time.
- Transparency will be key. We don't want to lose any more parishioners.
- It feels so different and wonderful to be seeking parishioner input on this topic. It feels like a different Catholic Church.
- Are we sure the new model will save money?
- We don't want to present this as a corporate merger, focused on cost savings and efficiencies only.
- Through the course of this change, as was the case in Vatican II, we need to look at what we can gain. For the laity, we gain the opportunity to step up, assist with projects, and keep the parish alive, vibrant, and welcoming for all people.
- Did people leave the Catholic Church when their parishes got closed?

March 25, After 11:00 a.m. Mass

- 16% of Catholics are attending church. This is putting the cart before the horse. We need to know what specifically is being proposed before we can tackle this. It is like changing the language of the liturgy; that will not bring people back to the Church.
- Before spending time on this, what reasonable guarantee do we have that this will go forward should a new Archbishop be appointed?
- People are concerned that pastors will be taken from them.
- Has this model been tried elsewhere?
- Evangelization and bringing lapsed Catholics back doesn't have much to do with community. Pushing 2 parishes together with different cultures won't work.
- There is precedence for a time when the earliest communities did not have a priest, but were guided by letters and visits from the apostles. Allow time for parishes to take responsibility for those things the laity can do.
- Perhaps we should organize social activities to begin the collaborative process. Effort will be needed to make this work.
- We have a model next to us in two parishes joined in a collaborative, and it was a disaster. If we do this all at once, it will be a disaster.
- There is something like 300 parishes. We have heard that 100 are broke, 100 are almost broke and the remaining 100 are supporting the 200. How is that a viable concept? How can we not close parishes? Why should we be funding other parishes?
- Can we place on the table that ½ of the community is denied certain privileges within the Church because of their gender?
- What is the sense of urgency? Does the Church have the courage and time to try a couple of scenarios?
- This is not a matter of evangelization as much as survival. Some very painful decisions will need to be made about human beings. We will need a superman priest able to magically come in and take over.
- Community is crucial. There is much the laity can do. Within the laity there are a broad range of skills and abilities and a level of generosity.
- The following recommendations were offered by one parishioner:
 - o All meetings of the PPG, Parish Council and Finance Council should be open to everyone in the parish, and agendas should be published in the bulletin prior to the meeting and minutes posted after meetings;
 - o We need to strengthen our vision of what the Church should be in the spirit of community;
 - o We need to document every ministry that we have.
- One recommendation is we use the Church of South American as a model, in which one does not give ones heart to a single Church.
- The composition of the leadership group/team will be critical. A sense of the culture of each parish will be critical in selecting representatives each of from our parishes. Is there anything we can learn from the experience of the Church in Europe?

March 25, After 5:00 p.m. Mass

- Biggest issue is TRUST of the church.
- What choice do we have if we don't go with the PST model?
- Has this model been implemented elsewhere?
- Will results of this survey be published?
- Evangelization – Can we develop a new way of drawing young people into the vocation of priesthood?

- If we start to pull apart from the existing structure – feels that it will weaken our church for younger parents. They need to feel they can TRUST and rely on the parish priests as the older generations have been able to growing up in the church. The younger adult generation is not engaged and doesn't trust the church.
- There is a gap between goal of evangelization and practicality of structure changes. Planning group should think about ways to bridge the gap. It's a "marketing concept"? How do we roll out of implementation, how do we start it, and sell it to parishioners? Rely on examples, i.e. economies of scale, music as an example of how parishes could work together.
- cultural differences of parishes should be taken into account in forming the collaboratives.
- Fundamental issue is that the problems we are facing now are self-imposed secondary to only males being allowed to be priests. Absurd policy about priests not being allowed to marry.
- Will PST be formed and then pastor chosen; or will pastor be chosen then PST formed?
- PST makes sense but view this as a step toward "merging" parishes; individual identities of churches will "combine".
- If we have new priests in charge of both parishes, there will be a sense of lost relationships and a weakened sense of commitment to the parish. Do pastors have a say in any of this?
- Incorporate colleges into their plans. If there is a college nearby, have parish presence on the campus – even if not a Catholic institution.
- Incorporate St. James as part of this plan. Issue of "resolving" St. James needs to be examined.

March 26, 7:30 p.m.

- Need to document and preserve what is special and "good" about our community as we move toward PST. How do we do that? What is the plan from this point?
- Regarding proposal that our two parishes will still operate separately and retain our own identities: i.e. one Finance Council, one Parish Council...but does this mean one Music Director? Isn't "separate but equal" contrary to merging the two communities? Difficult to understand what the true benefits are if we really aren't combining the parishes.
- PST's appear to be radical to many, but we are at a point where we need to do something radical.
- PST's are still a concept, hard to assess things without the details. What is the timeline?
- Proposal says it is to "address" challenges presented, but really identifies them only.
- Important to stress that any plan needs to be flexible enough to allow for the individualities of our parishes – i.e. a localized action plan.
- Can we assume we get to provide feedback and then again after a revised proposal is presented?
- Does PST imply more laity staffing or more non-laity? Where does the funding come from for staffing?
- We have a vibrant church...communication between parishes will evolve naturally as times move on
- Regarding PST Pastors: Uprooting pastors? If, for example, our Pastor becomes an assistant next year that would be a shame. No continuity if we change all the Pastors now as part of proposed PST, why add to the chaos? Is there any consultation/support group provided for priests as they transition?
- Are we truly not a "Mission Oriented" church right now, but a "Maintenance Oriented" only church?
- Main issue is declining priests. Longer term solution should be a priority and the answer is growing the candidate pool (e.g. Episcopal Church as an example – allowing for Married Priests)
- Are there PST's deployed elsewhere? PST's are started in Brockton and Boston.
- Reference to a "Cluster" in Pennsylvania where serious issues arose around combining two schools.
- Lot of people have left church over a sense on having no influence. Need to have more meetings like this and communicate as much as possible. Confidence in having an influence will grow over time.
- We should open Parish Council, Finance Council and PPG meetings to entire parish and publish meeting minutes.