

Notes from January 27, 2010 Deanery Meeting

AS= Chapel of All Saints; GS= Church of the Good Shepherd; CC= Christ Church; SM= St. Mark's

I. Summary of Annual Meetings

A. Chapel of All Saints – Rick

Had an active annual meeting with lots of frank discussion; congregation realized the severity of the situation

Pledges are down for 2010; in units and total \$

Loss of rental income of \$7k

2009 \$5K expense to upgrade fire alarm system

2010 budget cuts back on clergy/pastoral care, secretarial and sexton

- Clergy – 40 Sundays of 2 services; 12 Sundays (summer) with 1 service

2010 projected budget deficit of \$9K; used savings accounts to pay for 2009 deficit, and will need to do so in 2010 as well

Congregation felt that they had good chemistry with GS during advent program

Discussed how to “solicit” the developments in Lunenburg neighborhood

Need more people

Something must change and need to go forward in a new direction

B. Good Shepherd – Dan

GS's difficult discussion was in 2009 – volatile changes were made. 2010 meeting was less heated and much quieter.

In 2009, GS cut about ½ of budget and ended up with a surplus, but will not happen in 2010 as cannot cut anymore

Pledges are down in 2010

2010 projected budget deficit of \$10K and will use all of savings to cover this deficit and will be “out of gas” at end of 2010

Feel strongly that it will take more than just one other parish, all 4 parishes need to work together with combined energy

Congregation rumblings that Deanery meetings were/are not transparent enough (note to all: communicate out that all are invited)

Congregation was wondering “when is a decision going to be made already?”

Positive things from 2009:

- People understood the urgency and showed up for the offered programs
- Made more \$ than thought with tree sale
- GS wants to stay together as a community of believers
- Sharing in Advent with AS was successful

Would like to do “something”, i.e. shared services during Lent

Average Sunday attendance is 42 (over 2 services) down from 63 when GS was “thriving”

Used to tape their Sunday service on put on Fitchburg Cable Access, is this still possible?

C. Christ Church – Jac

Annual meeting was calm

Rector, Jr. Warden and Sr. Warden all left abruptly in 2009

With no rector's salary to account for, 2009 budget came in well

2009 Accomplishments:

- Rebuilt organ
- Capital campaign
- Fund raiser for boiler work

Budget is balanced for 2010 (small deficit, but continue with supply priests, budget will balance)

Down 10-15% in pledging units from 2009, but average pledge is up

Focus on how to build faith and didn't focus on building issues – spiritual center

Church-wide viability study for Lent – bring back together with faith based purposes – want to open up to other churches

Lenten program – Wednesday evenings in Lent, Scripture Study: 6:45 – 8:30. Soup and salad served

Will have Wednesday noon service during Lent

Have been nurturing to selves

Youth Group is very active – combine with others? 1/3 of kids are from outside of CC

Mission trip to Canton, OH at the end of July with 14 kids going (+ chaperones)

Average Sunday attendance is 100-110; had 300 for their Christmas Eve services (2 services)

D. St. Mark's – Terry

Annual meeting is held as part of Sunday services

Previously some meetings had heated discussions, but since combining with Eucharist, quieter and only about 20 minutes is spent on business; Pot luck and slide show follows Eucharist/meeting

Fr. Jim gives his annual report on spiritual life

Fr. Jim does a slide show at the end of the annual meeting with pictures from throughout the year – people enjoy seeing themselves in various photos

June – May is SM's fiscal year

Lots of blessings; Relatively sound financially – not where they want to be but OK – “good but not great”

2010 Pledges: Goal \$134K; Budget \$124K; Actual \$120-122K

Congregation is very generous in \$ and other gifts

Have a full-time priest, sexton, etc. and can provide salary raises to staff

Borrow \$ from themselves when need cash – pay loans back within 5 years; have promised no more major loans until outstanding loans are paid back (used for 3 new furnaces and ½ of new roof); also use of unrestricted trust funds

Consistency and continuity: Fr. Jim 13 years at SM; prior priest 27 years; treasurer 35 years

May run a deficit of about \$5K in budget but have \$9500 in contingency fund to cover

Average Sunday attendance is 110-120 (35-40 8am; 80+ at 10am)

Wednesday night Eucharist at 7pm was started a few months back

Lenten series to be held at Leominster Library so non-church folks feel more comfortable in attending

Keep thinking and praying forward

II. What's possible for 2010

Can we get pictures of all the parishes so we can get to see each other?

2010 regional ministry grants \$ are still available if creative for parish development; deadline for applications is March 24.

- Grant \$ could be used for investigated prior merged churches
- RI diocese has several examples of merged parishes
- Cost Diocese of W. Mass. \$25K + when closed St. John's in Worcester due to dissolution of corporation with Commonwealth of Mass. Attorney General
- Adams and N. Adams parishes thinking of sharing a church as they share clergy; investigated RI
- Diocese of W. Mass. has little experience with merging – previously closed parishes were “Mission congregations” so not as formal of a process

Eliminate 8am Services? GS was going to announce at its 2010 annual meeting, but decided to hold off due to rumblings in congregation; AS indicated that elimination of 8am services was “not negotiable”. CC and SM also offer 8am services.

Have silent auction/joint fundraisers and split the profits? – in general support each others' fundraisers

Plans for Lent: Ash Wednesday (Feb 17)

CC: Noon and 7pm services

SM: Noon and 7pm services

GS and AS were waiting for this meeting to decide. Decided that GS will host Ash Wednesday service at 7pm and AS will host Maundy Thursday, with a commitment to try to incorporate “relaxed” Maundy Thursday traditions of GS

CC and SM have a Lenten Series – make other parishes aware

Sunday Services during Lent – shared services:

Both 8am and 9:30/10 am services to be moved

Lent 2 (February 28) – AS to host (8 & 9:30am)

Lent 3 (March 7) – GS to host – Bishop visiting! (Note: 8am service is Rite II) (8 & 10am)

Lent 4 (March 14) – CC to host with Youth group Corned Beef dinner fundraiser to follow (8 & 10am)

Lent 5 (March 21) – SM to host (8 & 10am)

Lent 6 (Palm Sunday, March 28) – back “home”

Holy Week: the 4 Sr. Wardens to decide together on possible sharing services

Next Deanery meeting: April 6 (Tuesday after Easter) at St. Mark's at 6pm with dinner and meeting to follow. St. Mark's will generously provide all of the food!