

Saints Peter and Paul Church Retreat: March 17, 2002

First Table Conversation: 1st Reporting Group
"What drew you to this parish, and why have you stayed?"

Drew

- It's been my family's parish- Have roots and history here
- Pity: Felt sorry for the church and felt I could help
- Grandfathers parish attracted grandson and rest of family followed
- The neighborhood church when family moved to the parish
- Parish I went to as child. Geographic parish

Stayed

- Habit: Hate to see the church "go". Maybe I can help
- I got involved and wanted to
- Saw potential for growth
- I liked the people and thought I could make a difference
- My nine year-old child is attached

2nd Group Reporting

Drew

- Preparation for marriage and the commitment to attend church during preparation and then after marriage
- Geographic location in childhood
- Invited to attend by Craig Bullock
- Friendship with Craig- Patti L. had influence when I decided to come back to church
- Past experience in a small church drew me back to a smaller church where there was a tight-knit community

Stayed

- Other parishioners
- A thoughtful community and caring
- People committed to church

3rd Group Reporting

First Table Conversation:

"What drew you to this parish, and why have you stayed?"

Drew

- Proximity
- Barb, Dan Hoffman, Craig invited at a session
- Craig invited, knew Barb and Dan, felt a warmth about it (not Catholic by tradition)
- Geographic, but Déjà vu, SSPP in Depew, NY
- Joined in 1982 as a volunteer, Christian social action

Stayed

- Special worship space, experienced enriched daily life, like parish and neighbors
- Liked what we saw, felt like home, comfortable (hadn't fond that feeling elsewhere, like the Bavarian Rye at St. Paul's Table)
- Like the feeling of acceptance, diversity (different views but we come together), now lectors at SSPP (hadn't done SS elsewhere), "uni-verse" of religious accepted here (Eastern religious thought), love adult education programs (relevant), "socialness" parish
- Church as part of community, serves people of the neighborhood, administrator (people like him)
- Stewardship of buildings in service of neighborhood

4th Group Reporting

Drew

- Welcomed into the church family- people interested
- Born into family at this church- Went elsewhere but roots are here
- Came through marriage, have made good friends
- Came with a friend, liked the atmosphere and friendliness, especially outreach to the immediate community
- Married here and lived in neighborhood
- Healing circle

4th Group (continued)

Stayed

- Have skills I can use
- I like it-will travel far to come here even though there is a church down the street
- Great potential
- Moved away but came back because of a number of people and outreach opportunities-chose over another parish

5th Group Reporting

Drew

- Parishioner inviting me
- Older church, small Christian community
- A job opening
- Craig-traditional physical church and the warmth and love of community
- Felt love

Stayed

- Place to bring our gifts, also receive
- Preserving tradition yet being on leading edge
- Openness, love and giving
- Close, friendliness of parishioners
- Parish affiliation, Catholic church in urban setting
- Hope for Catholic church

Second Table Conversation

"We Believe"

1st Group Reporting-----

Strengths

We believe...

- We are important to this neighborhood
- Homilies are rich and diverse
- Volunteers are gifted and skilled
- We will survive no matter what
- Diverse parish

1st Group Reporting (continued) Strengths

Be believe.....

- We need to prepare for expansion
- Craig Bullock was catalyst for parish
- We've made much progress in last 2-3 years

1st Group Reporting Weaknesses

We believe...

- Music needs help
- Finances are fragile
- Need more professional administration
- Rectory use needs resolution
- Need to advertise
- Youth program needs work
- Focus on family life
- Need more involvement with cleaning and decorating
- Need communication about volunteer/helping opportunities
- Trash control outdoors
- Fix Brown Street entrance

NB: Group 1 noted ambivalence about the current staffing by priests. They liked the current group but believe the parish needs its own

NB: Group 1 also noted ambivalent feelings about the Rectory use

2nd Group ReportingStrengths

"We Believe

- There is a family atmosphere
- A special "positive energy"
- Numerous untapped gifts
- A potential to grow (in members and as friends)
- Strong outreach programs
- Variety of priests

2nd Group Reporting.....Weaknesses

"We Believe.....

- Many members are reluctant (for reasons not known) to open up and share gifts
- Conflicts are occurring between older/newer or between traditionalists and moderns
- Lack of openness to entertain new ideas and allowing others to take charge

3rd Group ReportingStrengths

We Believe....

- We are a loving community of parishioners
- Administrator doing a good job
- Diverse beliefs are respected
- Our campus is suitable to take us into the future
- Mixing a strong worship community with social activism and serving the neighborhood is healthy for the parish

3rd Group ReportingWeaknesses

We Believe.....

- The people who come to the soup kitchen have not transitioned into the worship community
- Parish finances
- We live in fear of being closed
- Loss of current priests would cause concern
- Parish life (involvement) doesn't go beyond 1 hour per week for worship for some
- Day to day concerns distract administrator and takes time away from spiritual/development of parish issues

NB: Group three noted a relationship between "women and priests" The word "woman" was written in middle of page in strength section. The word "priests" was written in middle of page in weakness section. The two were connected but without comment

4th Group Reporting.....Strengths

We Believe....

- Called to be an urban church
- We are open to the spirit
- We are rich in desire for expansion
- We are called to be "one" in God
- We are a welcoming, loving parish

4th Group Reporting.....Weaknesses

We Believe

- We need more connection with the neighborhood
- We are still struggling with fears of community's cultural differences
- Financially vulnerable
- Rotation of priests creates unpredictable worshipping environment
- Part-time spiritual/administrative leader(s) is not enough for our parish.
- We need more youth ministry

5th Group Reporting.....Strengths

We Believe....

- Many people are involved
- Fantastic interest on the part of people
- 2000 year tradition (good parts of Catholicism still under discussion)
- Diversity of worshipping community (geography, economic, racial)

5th Group Reporting.....Weaknesses

We Believe...

- The money is fragile
- Ordained presence lacking
- Administrative duties NB: a vote of 4 to 2 in that not all agreed with the weakness in administrative office

NB: Group 5 also noted mixed feelings about the diversity of priests linked to the church. They saw pluses and minuses to the arrangement

Third Table Conversation

"Trends" A= Diocese of Rochester/ B= Neighborhood

1st Group Reporting

Trends Diocese of Rochester

- Non conforming churches are excluded i.e. Corpus Christi (*inter Spiritus Christi*)
- Retired priests are getting married
- Size of parish determines diocesan attention
- A real emphasis on suburban parishes
- Small parishes and those parishioners feel threatened about closings
- Priests begin ^{being} accused of past sexual misconduct
- Inconsistent diocesan stand on gays (backlash and reversed stand)
- Absence of any vision for urban Catholic churches by the diocese

1st Group Reporting

Trends in Neighborhood

- Positive, neighbors united
- City/County rebuilding Brown Street, bringing in partners, i.e. Habitat
- Everybody knows St. Peter's Kitchen
- Increased volunteerism in helping on "Green space"
- Cosmetic improvements- bridges I-490, art in spaces
- Increased home ownership
- Drug houses have been closed-store demolished (homocide)
- Limited businesses working with neighbors united
- Sculpture and public art going up on corner of ? and Brown (4/2002) *JEFFERSON* FAMILY STONE
- Community Garden at Essex, Silver, Housing on 700/706 and Carriage *at MATTHEW P. BROWN GARDEN*
House and ? restored. *(maintained by SSA)*

1st Group continued

Trends = Neighborhood

- West Main Street visioning /revitalization, focusing on historic architectural components
- New community money in Bullshead

2nd Group Reporting

Trends = Diocese of Rochester

- Diocese worries about numbers: money and people
- Declining number of priests
- Trend towards physical appearance
- Parishioners not attending church regularly (declining numbers)

2nd Group Reporting

Trends = Neighborhood (Bulls Head)

- Variety of Faiths present
- Financially depressed area/many minorities
- Perceived as an area of increasing crime by suburban population, although strides are being made to change this

3rd Group Reporting

Trends = Diocese of Rochester

- Lack of appreciation and support for urban churches
- Conservative decisions/status quo
- Remodeling of Cathedral-all asked to support financially
- Too slow and inconsistent in communicating Vatican requirements/this leads to inconsistency
- Short of priests-leads to churches closing
- Increase in school tuition-reduced enrollment
- Lack of receptivity to accepting and acting upon input from people in the pews
- Diocese has a good website

3rd Group Reporting

Trends = Neighborhood

- Brown Street improvements/revitalization, Main Street (new homes) Anthony Square
- Closing drug houses
- Susan B. initiatives

3rd Group Reporting Trends Neighborhood (continued)

- Increase in participation at St. Peter's Kitchen *(by outside volunteers; not SSPP parishioners)*
- Poverty and hunger remain
- Luz Pedilla has had wonderful impact on the neighborhood *(NEIGHBORHOOD UNITED grassroots activism)*
- St. Peter's kitchen offering more programs to individuals
- More diverse population: Black, Hispanic, White *(began as a parish ministry)*
- Pride House and Fairchild Ministry
- Ice cream socials-connection with community
- Increase of people at St. Paul's Table
- Pastor Mary Robinson uses SSPP facility and participated in joint revivals
- Neighborhood and guests coming to worship because of St. Paul's table

4th Group Reporting

Trends = Diocese of Rochester

- Liberal Bishop
- Less priests available
- Waiting for "other shoe to drop" when Bishop Clark retires
- Financially affluent parishes are favored by diocese
- Lack of interest in urban churches ("It's your problem, you solve it")
- Sexually deviant behavior emerging
- Money to build Cathedral/ not for poor

4th Group Reporting

Trends = Neighborhood

- Lots of new houses and business i.e. Pride House and Rite Aid
- SSPP presence (ice cream/ bells)
- Susan B. neighborhood *Social*
- Scary at night
- Few neighborhood residents @ SSPP's mass
- Economic development (Tops, etc.)

5th Group Reporting

Trends = Diocese of Rochester

- Physical church contraction (closings)
- Continuing to reduce number of priests
- More leadership by laity (pastoral admin, pastoral assoc, deacons)
- Corporate principles used to influence parishes (measure of success)

5th Group Reporting

Trends = Neighborhood

- Renewal of neighborhood
- Rehabilitation of housing (African American)
- Increasing owner occupancy (African American)
- Still segregation of neighborhood
- Crime #1 problem, poverty, drugs

Report: Saints Peter and Paul Vision Retreat

March 17, 2002

(WRITTEN
AFTER
RETREAT
SESSION)

Purpose

Parish Administrator, Craig Bullock contacted me, in early February to consider leading Saints Peter and Paul Church through a "visioning" afternoon so that the parish might begin to move toward deeper clarity of purpose over the next three to five years. In conversation with Craig, the following were determined as appropriate outcomes for the retreat:

- 1) An opportunity to look out three to five years and to ask the question: "Where to do we want to go as a parish community?" One of the factors that was pushing the congregation to look out three to five years was the imminent question regarding the future of the church's Rectory, a 30,000 square foot space.
- 2) An opportunity to create a hospitable space where all voices could be heard and appreciated
- 3) The beginning of a concrete vision for the parish
- 4) Would allow the church members to "practice" having thoughtful conversations with one another
- 5) The afternoon would host a process that could be "modeled" for members to use in subsequent conversations
- 6) Would allow for various and sometimes disparate energies in the church to find a larger purpose and to galvanize

Day Care, formerly parish-operated, was scheduled to move out of rectory in summer 2002

The event was planned with a possibility of seventy participants. Between thirty and thirty-five attended on the afternoon of the event.

Process

A major piece of the process design for this event included the use of "Table Conversations". They allow for small groups of people to generate lots of valuable information in a short period of time. "Table Conversations" also allow groups to learn quickly from one another since each group presents their findings after every conversation. Each "table" was hosted by a member of the Parish Council who also served as facilitator for that table.

Parish Retreat

Saints Peter and Paul Church

March 17, 2002

1:00 Introduction to our task in the context of the parish's history and current life

1:10 Introducing key elements and norms

1:25 First "Table Conversation"
Your relationship to the parish community

1:50 Second "Table Conversation"
"We Believe"

2:15 Short Break

2:25 Third "Table Conversation"
"Trends"

2:45 Fourth "Table Conversation"
"Visioning the Future"

3:25 Presentation of Visions

3:45 Plenary Session
"Common Elements"

4:00 Wrap Up and Evaluation
Next Steps

Norms

A key norm for "Table Conversations" is to require everyone around the table to participate. Though debate on issues is possible at a table, the emphasis is on generating good information that appears to have group consensus. The goal is to be as generative as possible and not dismissive of information.

Setting the Context

Parish Administrator, Craig Bullock, introduced the day to the group and shared some key elements of the church's history and current life

"Table Conversations"

Three significant "Table Conversations" provided the basis for the last and final conversation geared toward creating a vision for the parish

The 1st Table Conversation revolved around the question: "What drew you to this parish and why have you stayed?" Some key themes were as follows:

What drew people?

- Family history and roots were in the parish
- Invited by Craig Bullock
- Proximity to where one lives
- Introduced through marriage
- Invited by members of the parish

Why have you stayed?

- Because of seeing lots of potential
- Experienced a thoughtful, caring community
- Saw the "campus" in service to the community
- Beauty of the worship space
- Nice balance between embracing tradition and being cutting edge as an urban parish

The 2nd "Table Conversation" was structured to find general agreement among participants with respect to the church's strengths and weaknesses

Key themes were as follows:

Strengths

- A diverse and gifted congregation, and one that views itself as having the capacity to serve the community in which it finds itself
- Lots of forward momentum over the last two years due in part due to Craig Bullock's giftedness including preaching and leadership.
- Lots of positive energy linked to outreach programs
- A community open to God's spirit and a desire to expand that ministry
- A desire to survive and even thrive in the neighborhood

Weaknesses

- Fragile financial capacity and more parish administration required given complex nature of campus
- Outreach programs haven't necessarily enabled folks to transition to becoming members of the parish
- The rotation of priests creates a lack of continuity even though the diversity the rotation brings is appreciated
- Struggles continue with respect to cultural differences and the fears linked to such a diverse community

The 3rd "Table Conversation" was geared to help folks think about the religious context and neighborhood context beyond the doors of the local church. The first conversation was one that sought to identify trends observed in and around the Diocese of Rochester. The second conversation was to identify trends in and around the neighborhood.

Some key areas identified with respect to trends in the Diocese

- More church leadership being assumed by laity
- Diocese currently led by a liberal Bishop
- Shortage of priests, some small parishes closing
- Perception that Diocese is putting emphasis on suburban parishes
- Perception that Diocese is preoccupied with issues of money and "numbers" of members

- Some key trends identified with respect to trends in the neighborhood
- Rebuilding of Brown and Main Streets including new homes, businesses and a general feeling of revitalization
 - Closing down of drug houses
 - Diverse population of people and faiths
 - Financially depresses area, poverty and hunger always present
 - Increased home ownership

The last "Table Conversation" began with a time of personal visioning, a guided visioning exercise, one in which every person participating could dream and imagine Saints Peter and Paul Church in the year 2007.

After the guided exercise, the table groups reconvened and each member of the group shared their respective visions. Visions were shared, built upon and combined. Finally, each group was asked to draw a picture of their vision in order to present during a plenary session. Each of the five groups then gave a detailed presentation of "their" vision. The five visions each have common elements and themes that should be more deeply explored by the groups in conjunction with the Parish Council and Parish Administrator.

Some of the major elements of the visions included the following:

- All visions incorporated the "campus" of Saints Peter and Paul Church as a key resource for ministry, whether elder care, job training or youth development programs
- All visions included a deliberate and systematic reaching into the community and would require "many hands" to make it successful
- All visions had energy and commitment behind them, and all appeared to be appropriately stretching and entirely realistic

Recommendations

- Determine as a congregation the pluses and minuses of rotating priests in light of the vision and direction you now have. What role would a priest play in the vision/direction you have set before you?
- Develop more clarity on the exact nature of "administrative help" you believe you need given where you are going. You may develop an "administrative team" approach given the complexity of your campus and outreach involvement

AFTER FR.
Paul Tonnish?
parish leadership
in late 1990's
early 2000.

-Prioritize the 5 visions you now have, even if it means taking some ideas from each vision. Every suggestion offered during the retreat has real merit. The question is in what order should they started, or said another way, what makes strategic sense given you are looking at seven to ten years to move toward fulfillment of some of the visions

-Create a group that will seek out funding or will hire someone to write funding grant proposals for you: city, state, county and federal. Lots of people want to fund the "right" things. Saints Peter and Paul is at the crossroads to make a difference and funders will appreciate your strategic location combined with your resources of people and talents.

Respectfully Submitted,

Dale Davis
March 25, 2002

Saints Peter and Paul Church
Vision Retreat

(PARISH
COUNCIL)
HAD VISIONING
SESSION WITH
DALE DAVIS
PREVIOUS YEAR

March 17, 2002

Dale Davis

An "outside" facilitator
who guides retreat

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