

# ***Faith in Our Future* - Update - June 2016**

## **What is *Faith in Our Future*?**

- It's a new initiative commissioned by Bishop O'Connell for all 107 parishes in the Trenton Diocese.
- It's a planning process for the future that seeks to:
  - Strengthen and enliven parishes and their ministries.
  - Establish collaborative relationships among parishes and ministries.
  - Improve our stewardship of personnel, finances, facilities and other parish resources.
  - Explore new models of leadership in parishes and ministries in order to address the challenges presented by the anticipated retirement of clergy and religious over the next 10 years.
    - As of 2015, there were 160 active priests in the Trenton Diocese to serve 107 parishes.
    - 105 (66%) of the priests are 50-69 years old.
    - 65 priests are eligible to retire in the next ten years of which 45 will have reached the mandatory retirement age of 75.

## **What is the current situation?**

- Msgr. Mike is one of only five Pastors in the Diocese currently overseeing multiple parishes.
- The Diocese has created 25 Cohort teams which generally consist of 3 to 5 parishes which have been put together by the Diocese generally based on location.
- St. Alphonsus, St. George and St. James have been previously put together by the Diocese and we are now "Cohort #8".
- Our 3 parishes have each created a core team of 4 or 5 volunteers to work on this new initiative.
  - Self-evaluations, surveys and town hall meetings have taken place at the individual parish level.
- The Cohort #8 team consists of the 3 parish core teams plus Msgr. Mike and Father Jarlath.
  - We have been meeting together bi-weekly as a cohort since this past March.
- We have submitted to the Diocese (5/31/16) our proposed model of leadership for our 3 parishes.
  - The proposed model, "Linked Parishes", is what we are now.
  - Linked parishes have one pastor but remain distinct faith communities; they are not merged into one parish.
  - Linked parishes do many things cooperatively, such as programs and in-services.
  - Linked parishes share resources to lower costs and gain efficiencies (e.g. shared music director).

## **What are the next steps?**

- The Diocesan Planning Commission (21 members) will be meeting in June to review all the cohort proposals and will respond sometime in July.
- If the commission's response to our proposal is different than what was proposed, we will have an opportunity to respond before their proposal is submitted to Bishop O'Connell.
- Bishop O'Connell will make the final decisions in late autumn.
- Cohort #8 team will continue to explore opportunities for collaboration with the main objective to:
  - Serve as a catalyst for ideas or recommendations that can help all our ministries.
    - Present those ideas to the various committees/ministries for their consideration.
      - It is up to the respective committees/ministries to make the decisions.

## **Contact Information**

- We will continue to keep you updated. Please feel free to contact any of us if you have any thoughts or ideas you would like to share or if you have any questions about ***Faith in Our Future***.
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  - Dick Currie – St. James Core Team Chairman ([ricacas@comcast.net](mailto:ricacas@comcast.net))
  - Paul Kimaid - Cohort 8 Team Chairman ([pkimaid@aol.com](mailto:pkimaid@aol.com))