

AT-A-GLANCE

Faith in Our Future is a process through which the Diocese of Trenton, its parishes and ministries will plan to meet challenges and respond to new opportunities for sharing the Gospel of Jesus Christ for years to come.

Where we are and what comes next

STEPS 4 and 5

Response from the Cohorts
July 2016 to September 2016

- Conversations about the Preliminary Recommendations take place at the Cohort level, and a response is developed.
- Responses are sent by the Cohort Core Team to the Diocesan Planning Commission regarding a particular Model or Models with a rationale by Sept. 30, 2016.

STEP 6

Final Recommendations
October 2016

- The Diocesan Planning Commission reconvenes to consider the responses from the Cohorts.
- The Commission's Final Recommendations are sent to Bishop O'Connell with a rationale by Oct. 31, 2016.

STEP 7

Consultation and Decisions
Late 2016/Early 2017

- Bishop O'Connell seeks appropriate consultation based on the Final Recommendations made to him by the Diocesan Planning Commission.
- The Bishop issues his decisions and preparations to implement the decisions begin.

STEP 8

Implementation
Early 2017 to July 2017

- Training begins of the parish core teams
- Steps are taken at the parish, Cohort and diocesan levels of all decisions made by the Bishop.

This MONTHLY UPDATE is a report from the Diocese of Trenton on Faith in Our Future, the pastoral planning process to strengthen parishes.

Consultation process draws review, response from thousands of parishioners

Summertime in the parishes of the Diocese of Trenton had a decidedly different look and feel this year.

The typically quieter months of July and August were instead quite busy as parishioners, lay leaders and clergy worked to fully digest and respond to preliminary recommendations that had been made about the future of their faith communities. Small group meetings, town hall-style gatherings and official deliberations by the 25 Parish Cohorts (groupings of parishes) unfolded

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From left, Father Angelito Anarcon and Robert Ambrose, St. Catherine of Siena Parish, Farmingdale; Claire McCarthy, St. Veronica Parish, Howell, and Father Thomas F. Maher and Cohort co-chair Mary Ann Collett, St. William the Abbot Parish, gather Aug. 22 during a Cohort 11 meeting in St. Catherine of Siena Church. Rose O'Connor photo

Here's what Cohort members have said about the Faith in Our Future process:

"All four priests in our Cohort are committed to this process, and when you have this kind of leadership, it really does flow onto the laity working with them. Their support is contagious." *Mary Ann Figura, Cohort 2 co-chair*

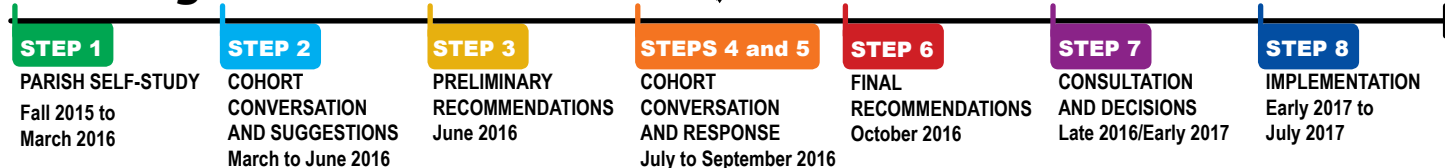
"A lot of improvements have been made in all of our parishes, and we appreciate the nature of the process." *Frank Francese, Cohort 11 Core Team member*

"We need to let go of the short-term concerns and focus on where we are going in the next five to 10 years." *Tom Mullooly, Cohort 19 chairman*

"The group understands this is a serious issue. There's what I want, what the other 19 people want and what God wants. I like to think he's [God] going to get what he wants and needs at the end of the day." *Anthony Coticelli, Cohort 22 chairman*

To read a full report from The Monitor on the summer consultation process, go to dioceseoftrenton.org/faithinourfuture/news/

Planning Process Timeline



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steadily throughout the mid- and late-summer weeks as part of the Faith in Our Future initiative.

The results of weeks of work and consultation were set to emerge during the final days of September, as the Cohorts submit their official responses to the Diocese in preparation for the Oct. 18-20 Diocesan Planning Commission

Need to catch up?

You can find the following resources at dioceseoftrenton.org/faithinourfuture

- ◆ [The five goals for the process established by Bishop O'Connell](#)
- ◆ [A video message from Bishop O'Connell](#)
- ◆ [Video from the June Planning Commission retreat](#)
- ◆ [The Parish Models](#)
- ◆ [Written coverage from The Monitor](#)
- ◆ [The Preliminary Recommendations issued by the Diocesan Planning Commission in June](#)

retreat. During the retreat, the Commission will review all the input it receives from the 25 Cohorts. In light of the goals and criteria for Faith in Our Future, the Commission will prepare final recommendations of models and ministries, including campus ministry, hospital chaplaincy and jail and prison ministry, along with a rationale.

The final recommendations will be sent directly to Bishop David M. O'Connell, C.M., by Oct. 31 for his prayerful review as he consults with the diocesan Curia, Episcopal Council and other consultative bodies at multiple levels before making his final decisions.

Tom Mullooly, Cohort 19 chairman, speaks during a Town Hall-style meeting Aug. 17 in St. Mark Parish Center, Sea Girt. Rose O'Connor photo

He is expected to announce his final decisions in December 2016 or January 2017 with planning for implementation to follow.

Once the responses are submitted, the work

of parish core teams is completed. The next phase of parish-level work will be that of implementation, to begin after the final decisions are announced by the Bishop.



Important to Know

- **The recommendations that have been reviewed and discussed were preliminary only.** As several stages of the process have yet to be completed, no course of action will be taken until Bishop O'Connell announces his final decisions, which is not expected to happen until December 2016 or January 2017.
- **There are a number of different models of parish organization under consideration, and every parish will have some level of change in connection with its neighboring parishes.** At a minimum, parishes will be asked to enter into collaborative relationships with other parishes in their Cohorts. Among other models are merger, linking, in solidum and personal parishes.
- **Merger and closure are not synonymous terms.** If parishes are selected for merger, it means they join together to become an entirely new faith community. It is not about the closing of one parish and the strengthening of the other.
- **Parish and church are not synonymous terms.** The parish is the community of believers and the territorial boundaries in which they reside; the church is the worship site in which the faithful gather. When parishes merge, some worship sites will remain open and some will close, depending on the needs of the new parish and several other criteria.