

# **PASTORAL PLANNING FOR THE NEW MILLENNIUM**

## **AUBURN PLANNING GROUP**

### **FINAL PLAN**

#### **INTRODUCTION:**

The Auburn Planning Group is comprised of the following parishes/faith communities: Auburn Correction Facility; Holy Family; Sacred Heart/St. Anne=s; St. Alphonsus; St. Francis of Assisi; St. Hyacinth=s; St. Isaac Jogues; St. Mary=s; and Mercy Health and Rehabilitation Center. These faith communities/parishes began the planning process in March of 1999. After an initial training session, and individual parish planning and issues identification, the Auburn Planning Group Leadership Team (APGLT≅) met and began an informational and collaborative process to ascertain mutual interests and needs for the coming millennium.

After having spent numerous meetings with both the PGLT and sub-teams that addressed collaboration, configuration, communication, and finances, and presentation of the issues to respective parishes and parish councils, the following items were identified:

#### **I. Stewardship.**

The International Catholic Stewardship Council defines stewardship as, Aa complete lifestyle, a life of total accountability and responsibility acknowledging God as Creator and Owner of all. Stewards, as disciples of Jesus Christ, see themselves as caretakers of all God=s gifts. Gratitude for these gifts is expressed in prayer, worship, offering and action by eagerly sharing these gifts out of love of God and one another.≅ Stated another way, stewardship is Atime, talent and treasure.≅ In other words, stewardship is not only Amoney.≅ It is the giving of one=s self, be it time, talent or treasure, as a way of giving thanks for what God has given us.

The PGLT has endorsed the development of a coordinated, community-wide stewardship program which will be explored by a stewardship committee. The program could accomplish many tasks and could be coordinated in a number of different ways. The committee, which is to be comprised of membership from each parish/faith community, shall investigate the viability and mechanism for such a program.

The committee should be appointed within three (3) months of this Plan=s acceptance<sup>1</sup>, with an implementation goal of one (1) year from Plan acceptance. The committee should report back to the PGLT (or its successor) on a quarterly<sup>2</sup> basis. The committee should be comprised of

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<sup>1</sup> Although this date is unknown, we anticipate acceptance around January, 2000.

<sup>2</sup> In the initial stages of implementation, the PGLT recognizes that monthly PGLT meeting may be necessary, so that committees, such as the stewardship committee, will have the benefit of the discussion that lead to this Plan.

two (2) persons from each parish/faith community. One person should be the parish priest<sup>3</sup> or his representative. The second should be appointed by the respective parish councils (or their equivalent), with input from respective finance committees, auditors, business managers, or their equivalents. As noted above, the committees should be appointed within three (3) months of the Plan=s acceptance. The committee=s first task will be to elect a chairperson (and a co-chair), and that should be done within four (4) months of Plan acceptance. The first full meeting shall take place within six (6) months of the Plan=s acceptance.

After an initial educational effort, for both the committee and the community as a whole, it is envisioned that the committee will explore, with Diocesan assistance through the Diocesan Development Office, a plan for a coordinated, community-wide stewardship program. The committee=s initial goal for this program, would be to coordinate a census.

The census should be conducted, initially, by each parish, and by a parish council designated person(s). The purpose of the initial census is to verify completeness of individual parish populations. Subsequently, a community-wide census shall be conducted. The census will be done via a universal questionnaire, which will include a talent survey. The form will be developed with input and assistance of the Diocese, with care being given to clearly communicate the fact that this is a census, not a request for time, talent and treasure. This task should be done within nine (9) months of Plan=s acceptance.

To assure that this committee is proceeding according to Plan, the chairperson will attend, and report at, the quarterly meetings of the PGLT.

## **II. Communications.**

The PGLT has decided that it would be in the best interest of the Auburn faith community to develop and implement some form of community-wide communication to apprise the catholic community of Auburn of the events, programs and other opportunities that take place at other parishes/faith communities. The discussion included a possible community-wide calendar (to be inserted in each parishes= bulletins), a newsletter, use of public media (i.e., newspaper insert, television, radio), the possible development of a website (or use of the Diocesan Intranet), and other such vehicles. It was decided that a committee, with representation from all parishes/faith communities, be appointed, within one (1) month of Plan acceptance, to implement such a vehicle.

The communications committee will consist of two (2) persons per parish/faith community, and shall be appointed by the respective parish councils, with input from the pastor/pastoral administrator. It shall be appointed within one (1) month of Plan acceptance. A chairperson shall be elected within two (2) months of Plan acceptance, and a meeting will be

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Please note, that the parish priest has been mentioned as being a part of the various committees herein. However, it is not the intention of the PGLT to have the pastor/pastoral administrator sit on every committee. However, the PGLT felt that the parish priest should be consulted in the appointment process to assure communication and acceptance.

held within three (3) months of plan acceptance. Once again, the communications committee would report back to the PGLT on a quarterly basis, by attendance of the chairperson or other representative at the PGLT meetings, to discuss status and in order to assure progress.

One of the major goals of the committee will be to determine, within nine (9) months of Plan acceptance, whether or not it is feasible to hire a person or firm to coordinate this task, and/or have such a person appointed. It was the preference of the committee, provided it is economically feasible to do so, to make this a paid position in order to assure its implementation within one (1) year of the Plan's acceptance. In order to assure progress, the chairperson is required to attend and report at the quarterly meetings of the PGLT.

Recognizing that the financing of a paid position and/or the communications vehicle itself may pose financial issues, the PGLT suggests that the committee should explore possible Diocesan grants and other modes of financing the program (i.e., a set price [pro rata] per Ahousehold≡). The Diocese has offered its assistance in this regard.

### **III. Youth Ministry.**

One of the most discussed topics at the PGLT meetings, and an item which surfaced in most of the individual parish issues, was youth ministry and young adult ministry. It was decided that there is a need for further collaboration of youth ministry and programs throughout the community. Several items suggested included: a coordinated youth ministry program (while maintaining parish autonomy), a director of youth ministry, and a youth ministry committee (with representation from all parishes).

A youth ministry committee should be appointed. Its makeup should consist of two (2) persons from each parish B one (1) adult and one (1) youth. They should be appointed by the parish religious education director/youth minister, with input from the pastor/pastoral administrator and the parish council. The time frames for appointment, meetings and implementation are as noted for the stewardship committee above.

The youth ministry committee will address such issues as: 1) Exploring ways to coordinate/collaborate on youth programs, etc.; 2) Determining the feasibility of a city-wide youth director; 3) Conducting a youth survey (with input from youths, parents and staff) to determine ways to increase youth participation/interest; 4) Brainstorming ways to reach other youth and their participation in the Synod Goals; 5) Finding a Ahome≡ / office; 6) Defining exactly what Ayouth≡ and Ayoung adults≡ are; 7) The possibility of website to reach, among others, youth; 8) Exploring and utilizing Diocesan resources and personnel; 9) Supporting/advertising Diocesan activities; 10) Exploring Asocial≡ gatherings at varying locations; and 11) Finding ways to Integrate the family into the process.

It is the goal of the PGLT to begin with youth ministry, and hopefully, use this model to evolve into young adult ministry. It was felt that focusing on the youth group, while still supporting other programs, was in the best interests of the Auburn faith community.

#### **IV. Configuration.**

By way of introduction and explanation for the Auburn faith community, the configuration issues were necessitated, at least in part, by the decreasing numbers of ordained priests within the Diocese. Although this issue is not as imminent in Auburn, as it is in other faith communities within the Diocese, assurance of a priest for each parish is becoming less and less. If any parish were to be without a priest, there would be no coverage for its Masses. Rather than wait until a crisis develops, the PGLT felt that a proactive, rather than reactive, approach was in the best interests of the Auburn community.

Although a difficult topic for this PGLT, and one which engendered significant and healthy discussion, it was recognized that there is a need to develop a vehicle/committee to review and reform the number and schedule of Masses for the Auburn faith community. It has been decided, that a configuration committee be formed (within three [3] months of Plan acceptance) that would address the topic of reducing and/or coordinating Mass schedules in Auburn, and in accordance with the Diocesan guidelines<sup>4</sup>. In addition, the PGLT has placed a deadline for implementation of this task, within one (1) year of Plan acceptance.

The Mass schedules will be addressed by a committee as hereinafter described, with input from parishes, parish councils and pastors, with a goal of eliminating duplication of Mass times and reducing Masses in accordance with such factors as: the Diocesan requirements for priests and retired priests, parish populations, church capacity, and the number of Masses currently being held . It was also suggested that some afternoon Masses may facilitate attendance by otherwise reluctant churchgoers.

The committee will be comprised of the pastor and a member of the parish council (or designee) from each parish. The first meeting will take place within one (1) month of Plan acceptance, and the chairperson shall attend the quarterly PGLT meetings in order to report on progress. Other issues that may be addressed include: 1) The suggestion to have each priest say one Mass per weekend at another church. 2) What are the roles of retired priests? 3) Utilization of deacons, etc.. 4) Seasonal Masses. 5) Sacramental celebrations, holy days and special Masses. 6) Envelopes, and how to assure their return to the originating parish. 7) Ways to support/encourage and assist vocations. 8) Future coverage at the correctional facilities and at Mercy Rehab. 9) Future coverage at all parishes/faith communities, with particular emphasis on St. Isaac Jogues and St. Hyacinth=s<sup>5</sup>.

In addition, the PGLT recognized the need to address the issue of vocational recruitment, the need for parish collaboration, and the utilization of Diocesan programs and personnel. There is the desire to develop ways to recruit as a community, and it is hoped that a person from the Diocese could help in addressing this urgent need.

#### **V. Education.**

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<sup>4</sup> Especially the restriction that active priests may only say 3 Masses per weekend.

<sup>5</sup> This should be a priority item for the committee, given the unique circumstances associated with this parish.

Much of the discussion on this topic surrounded catholic education of the youth and young adults in the community. Although closely tied to other topics, it was recognized that the PGLT continues to support the existing financial arrangements for catholic school funding in order to assure the continued viability of a catholic elementary school, noting the challenges that currently face St. Joseph=s. Discussion also suggested the continued exploration of catholic high school education in conjunction with Diocesan requirements and approvals.

The PGLT also recognized the need for coordination and collaboration of religious education and other programs. While it was noted that some of this currently exists, future suggestions included: a city-wide RCIA process (with candidates returning to the parish of their sponsor)(with rotating meetings/staff); and the desire for adult education and Diocesan programs to be geographically located within the Auburn community, and in accordance with the Synod Goals. Faith formation coordinators from each parish/faith community will work collectively to address these matters, and a designee from this group will report to the PGLT at its quarterly meetings, on the progress made.

## **VI. Social Ministry.**

The PGLT endorsed the continued investigation of the on-going efforts of an already-established ecumenical committee exploring the establishment of a home for the terminally ill or so-called Autumn house,≡ where institutionalized people are allowed a home environment to spend their last days in comfortable surroundings and with dignity. It was recognized that this program could be ecumenical in nature, and has been asked for and needed by members of various faith communities. The main support needed from Auburn=s Catholic community, is volunteers who will work in conjunction with trained staff. Current efforts are continuing community-wide.

This and other tasks (as noted below) should be explored by a committee similar to the one being formed for youth ministry (including the correctional facilities and Mercy Rehab), recognizing the need to coordinate with, and avoid duplication of, existing parish programs and personnel. The committee would address these and other topics: 1) Continued viability of food pantries. 2) Continued support of Catholic Charities. 3) Research other needs of the community. 4) Explore ways to find and utilize lay volunteers and associations (i.e., Jesuit Minister Volunteer Program). 5) Find ways to continue to implement the Synod Goals. 6) Investigate ways to import Diocesan programs to our community. 7) Attention and assistance to the Golden agers≡ and the home bound.

It was also recognized that efforts should continue with regard to programs such as Project RACHEL, and that there should be continued support and expansion of the Catholic Charities.

## **Conclusion:**

Throughout the planning process, the PGLT recognized the need for collaboration among the parishes/faith communities, and that coordination of efforts and programs was

necessary to continue the strong Catholic population within the parishes and faith communities, and to assure compliance with, and expansion of, the Synod Goals. The PGLT also noted the need for committees with representation from all parishes/faith communities, so that the programs, plans and/or action items could be implemented and embraced by everyone.

With that in mind, there is a need for continued education of, and collaboration amongst, the various parishes and faith communities. There is also the need for an on-going internal mechanism to assure that the Plan, and its components, are being implemented. Accordingly, the PGLT has decided that quarterly (perhaps more frequently at the beginning) meetings of the PGLT will continue, with the various committees noted above, sending a representative to future PGLT meetings, reporting on the progress made at reaching the milestones developed and/or set forth above, and to advise of any needs, questions, or problems. It will be up to the individual parishes to continue representation on the PGLT, however, it is the desire of the PGLT to lend assistance to the various committees, mainly through the collective experience that PGLT members have gained throughout this planning process. Therefore, it is encouraged that members remain, at least through the initial committee appointment and orientation process.

An initial meeting of the PGLT will take place as soon as the committees are appointed, to meet with the committees on an orientation basis, to express appreciation, and to offer advice and assistance in order to facilitate the implementation of this Plan.

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