

Interaction with Tompkins County Covenanting Council about St. Catherine's Draft Strategic Approach

This section contains several documents regarding St. Catherine's interaction with the Tompkins County Covenanting Council (TCCC) in September 2011 about St. Catherine's draft strategic approach:

- Letter of Request from Fr. Joe Marcoux;
- Two page summary of St. Catherine's draft strategic approach: Shaping St. Catherine's Future: A Life-long Journey;
- Feedback from the TCCC;
- Notes taking by members of St. Catherine's Facilities Planning Steering Committee (FPSC).



St. Catherine of Siena Church

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August 26, 2011

Mr. John Bradac, Chair
Covenanting Council of Tompkins County

Dear John:

St. Catherine of Siena is purposefully creating its future for the next 25 years in order to become a thriving and growing parish in the region. I invite collaboration by the other parishes in Tompkins County in guiding, developing and participating in this future and in building Christ's Kingdom here on earth.

The Parish has an exciting *draft* strategic approach that is described in the enclosed documents. St. Catherine's future would be underpinned by the Catholic principle of "living abundantly for others, not for ourselves." St. Catherine's parishioners crafted this concept over the past four years through a series of parish forums for strategic planning in which ideas were presented, themes consolidated and prioritized, and a sense of community developed.

At this stage of the development of St. Catherine's *draft* approach, I ask the Covenanting Council the following question:

"How do the other parishes believe this project could enhance the facility resources available to help the entire group attain its goals?"

I look forward to meeting with the Covenanting Council on Tuesday, September 27, 2011 and discussing its ideas and reactions. Meanwhile, please distribute to the Council's members the enclosed materials so they can review and reflect on the material prior to the meeting.

Gratefully in Christ,

Father Joseph Marcoux
Pastor, St. Catherine of Siena Parish

Materials in attached packet:

Shaping St. Catherine's Future: a Life-long Journey

Recommendation Report: A Path Forward for the Parish Center and its Surrounding Land

St. Catherine's Strategic Statements

Shaping St. Catherine's Future: a Life-long Journey

St. Catherine's is purposefully creating its future in order to become a **thriving and growing parish in the region**. In 2007 the Parish adopted **vision, mission and strategic goal statements** that are guiding the Parish forward (enclosed).

The Parish embarked on implementing the powerful statements in two phases. **Phase One** (2007-2010) focused on the tactics of more effectively engaging the parishioners in ministries and making essential repairs to the St. Catherine's facilities. **Phase Two** (2010-16) will focus on developing and implementing a strategic approach to a vital and sustainable future.

Phase One

From 2007-2010, the Parish:

- Developed and implemented 47 parishioner-created action plans that strengthened its ministries and finances.
- Completed five critical facilities projects: repaired the church roof support beams, replaced the church roof, replaced the church hvac system, temporarily repaired the parish center roof and temporarily mitigated the airborne mold situation in the parish center.
- Completed the Build Our Future Campaign (2009-2012) that raised \$937,000 to fund the facilities projects, with 69% of the pledges paid to date.
- Deferred permanent repairs to or replacement of the parish center until Phase Two due to insufficient funds.

Phase Two

In 2010-2011, the Parish developed an **exciting strategic approach** based on a picture of St. Catherine's 25 years into the future through two strategic visioning forums focused on possible parish-based programs of significant scope and impact in the region. The Pastoral and Finance Councils recommended to Fr. Joe **further study** on the strategic approach, and Fr. Joe accepted the recommendation.

The **strategic approach** is grounded in St. Catherine's vision, mission and strategic goals and presents a picture of St. Catherine's 25 years into the future:

In 25 years St. Catherine's lives its vision, mission and Catholic principles through its role as:

- A **regional center of faith** to the Catholic Church in this geographic area of the Diocese,
- A parish with **mission-compatible programs** that are locally and regionally significant in scope and impact,
- A parish with strong **support from parishioners** (\$'s and deeds), and
- A parish that is **sustainable** for the long-term.

One **unifying theme** emerged: a **“village for regional ministry.”** In essence, **St. Catherine’s would become a village where parishioners intentionally join the Parish to be part of this special model of a parish.**

Three **strategic programmatic groupings** would be central to St. Catherine’s as a parish:

1. A regional center for faith formation and training for the next generation of lay parish leaders
2. A location for housing of priests, lay ministers and active retired parishioners
3. A parish delivering multiple programs with intergenerational support

Within these groupings, specifically designed programs would be delivered for several **demographic groups.**

1. For seniors
2. For those in need
3. For youth and their families

More information and details for this approach are available in the enclosed report.

In 2011-2012, Pastoral and Finance Councils will further study this strategic approach to include, but not be limited to, clarifying zoning and code issues, developing project space and cost budgets and seeking out funding sources. They will make a recommendation this fall on how to **revitalize the parish center** so that it would support this strategic approach. The study of the remaining and larger issues would come soon thereafter. Fr. Joe encouraged the Councils to present Bishop Clark a **comprehensive conceptual plan** for his approval before the Bishop’s term ends on June 30, 2012.

Key to the Strategic Approach

St. Catherine’s wants to identify and develop a **few signature programs** that enliven and engage the parishioners and that have St. Catherine’s become a “village for regional ministry”. In the near term, St. Catherine’s would **revitalize its parish center** to support these signature programs and other important programs and essential operations.

We seek the **Covenanting Council’s input and suggestions** on how a **revitalized parish center** and **other possible future facilities** could enhance the resources available to help the **Covenanting Council attain its goals.**

Feedback from Covenanting Council September 27 2011 for St. Catherine of Siena Parish

Bill Perkins and Steve Moolin from St. Catherine's Parish Planning Committee joined the Covenanting Council to present the draft results of the St. Catherine's strategic planning process.

Feedback was requested from the group, as some basic decisions need to be made in the next couple of months, with the goal of presenting a comprehensive conceptual plan to Bishop Clark prior to the end of his term on June 30, 2012. The rectory building was described as "living on borrowed time", and there is a concern that replacing the roof (est. at \$300K) would in reality mean bringing the entire facility up to code, possibly increasing the cost to approximately \$1.3M. The parish owns about 12 acres of land, which is also a consideration. The idea of a regional center of faith to the Catholic Churches in this area evolved into a "village for regional ministry" model of a parish. Doubling the current size of the rectory (10,000 square feet) to approximately 20,000 square feet would cost an estimated \$5M.

The Committee raised questions and concerns about the state of the economy and the need to consider the "right-size" of the facility are needed, as well as long-term costs beyond the mortgage payments, to include operating costs and deferred maintenance over the life of the facility were mentioned. Questions were also raised about whether the facility planning was driving the programs, or whether the programs were determining the size of the facility. There were also queries about demographics and trends. What is Mass attendance today at St. Catherine's?

Some of the Council expressed financial concerns not only for St. Catherine's parish but for all of the regions parishes. Overall, we are in a time of change not only with demographics, but also the availability of priests, does it make sense to build larger or to use existing facilities in the area to accommodate the needs of all the parishes? A big question: What is the larger plan for the region?

Other questions rose as to whether this was a regional Center. Do we see this new facility as a stand-alone community or inclusive of the other parishes in the area? It was explained that the goal was to share each parish's unique strengths and faith based programs. The goal of this new center should be to "build bridges and not walls."

The idea of building a facility that could serve as a satellite for St. Bernard's was mentioned, with the comment that this could be done with a relatively small investment, and could serve deaconate, staff, lay training, and adult faith formation needs. This was a positive aspect of building something like this into the plan. However there are centers like this in the region Syracuse and Watkins Glenn. Is this necessary and or needed here? Will it be used?

Another area of question and concern is that since St. Catherine's is in proximity of several of the rural parishes, this project could possibly cause the closures or fiscal challenges of existing parishes by wooing away their parishioners. Being more attractive facility and offering larger or more unique programs may attract others from regional churches. Is creating a larger programmatic effort going to affect the sustainability of our neighboring parishes? Some of the

more rural parishes are already facing financial challenges; ultimately growing St. Catherine's could limit future sustainability of the rural parishes in the area.

There is considerable interest in the upcoming presentation by Karen Rinefierd on October 19th, tentatively titled "Church Past, Present and Future: Diocesan and Local Trends and Possibilities". The information presented and discussed could help the Covenanting Council with planning for the future in light of the trends and challenges that we are bound to face. This in turn could shed more light on the draft St. Catherine's strategic planning process.

Overall the need for building proposal was understood from a code and need to "do it now before it falls apart" but the Covenanting Council thought it would be good to ensure the long term sustainability in terms of fiscal responsibility and parishioner needs today and in the future. It is also important for all to better understand how changing demographics and staffing will affect our area.

For the Committee
John Bradac, Chair

Notes from 9/27/11 Covenanting Council Meeting (by Steve Moolin and Bill Perkins)

Council was asked the following question - "How do the other parishes believe this project could enhance the facility resources available to help the entire group attain its goals."

The Council asked us to clarify what we wanted them to comment on - we responded the idea of a faith formation and development center for lay leaders. We also defined facility as a building with supporting grounds.

Discussion around how the future would affect St Catherine (and other) Parishes in region through possible clustering and was StC viewing itself as a stand-alone Parish. Response from us was no, we saw StC and this project as supporting needs of other Parishes which is what brought us to the meeting that night.

Concern was that if StC developed project that smaller rural churches and All Saints might 'dry up' if StC was seen as center for Catholics in the area.

Karen Rinefierd from Diocese asked if StC had considered the cost of owning a large Parish Center citing suburban Parishes that had closed just after recent renovations who had not taken these factors into account. We were cautioned against "overbuilding".

Observation was that most Parishes were looking at creative ways to 'use what they've got' and that also the Tompkins County area had facilities like All Saints where these types of education activities might take place

Were encouraged to look at St Bernards as a resource for on-line and video conferencing training that could happen soon and relatively inexpensive.

Interesting discussion on looking at demographics of Parish. We were reminded to review mass attendance in the discussion of parish demographics.

Point was brought up about a facility that planned to 'not be there forever' and had given thought to what it might become in future. (Fr McMullen)

Discussion about need for affordable housing for aging/retiring religious and others. (FR McMullen)

Believe that Oct 19, 6:30 - 9:00 pm presentation at All Saints "Church Past, Present and Future: Diocesan and Local Trends and Possibilities" will be an important presentation to see for the Steering Committee.