

Twenty-three parishioners from the current four Oak Park Catholic churches were invited by their pastors to represent their communities in the Spring of 2021. This Oak Park Renew My Church Grouping worked intensely together over eight months to research, reflect, pray, gather input from other parishioners, and discerned what they believed to be the viable pathways forward that would best position the Catholic community of Oak Park to respond to the needs of our day. This is a recognition that the model of parish life as we have known it was built for a different time. Our Oak Park Grouping viewed this as an invitation to renew the church in both a spiritual and structural way. The summary document is the fruit of this "Renew My Church" process for Oak Park and the reflection of the collective voice of hundreds of parishioners, pastors, and leaders. It was finalized in November, 2021 and presented to Cardinal Cupich and the Archdiocese for consideration. The Cardinal's decision to unite St. Giles with St. Catherine-St. Lucy (as well as Ascension with St. Edmund) was informed by this document submitted by the Oak Park Renew My Church Grouping Pastors and Parish representatives.

Community Discernment Summary for the Oak Park Renew My Church Grouping

We are grateful for the opportunity to submit this feedback to you. The pastors and pastoral leaders, parish delegates, and the hundreds of parishioners who participated in this process look forward to your feedback and response. We would like to continue and expand our collaborative ministry together. We are excited to continue inspiring disciples to accompany all members of our family of faith to a deeper, personal relationship with Jesus Christ.

Following our participation in an extensive discernment process, members of the Oak Park Grouping Team have agreed on several foundational principles, reflected in the Feedback and Implementation Considerations below.

- The Grouping Team has enthusiastically embraced the call to recognize that our four parishes are diverse parts of a single Church and welcomes the opportunity to form structures that will allow our existing communities to collaborate, grow our ministries, and evangelize our community together. Our Grouping has embraced proposals to combine our efforts even at the expense of existing structures, and has been most resistant to proposals that would preserve the status quo at any member parish.
- The Grouping Team has also benefited from the energetic and engaged lay leadership of its member parishes and believes that the success of any scenario will depend on the recognition that our flock should be led by a pastor or pastors who will take advantage of that energy, informed by the Spirit of Vatican II.
- In accordance with our parishes' strong commitment to social justice, our Grouping would also welcome the creative repurposing of existing redundant facilities to new purposes that would serve the needs of our community.
- Finally, in part due to this same commitment to social justice, our Grouping Team asks that the Commission reject any scenario that would simply close the St. Catherine-St. Lucy Church ("SCSL"). As set forth below, SCSL serves as a visible reminder of the interrelationship between suburban Oak Park and Chicago's underserved west side, and maintaining that church as a place of worship provides a unique opportunity to support not only future evangelization efforts but existing partnerships with other Catholic resources in our community.

- Leadership: this Grouping is blessed with substantial lay leadership, informed by the spirit of Vatican II. Every parish has active and engaged parishioners, who have proven track records of participating and contributing to the liturgical and administrative lives of their parishes and engaging in social justice work in the world beyond the parishes. The ambitious plans preferred by the Grouping Team reflect the engaged and energetic lay leadership present here.
- The ordained leadership chosen to shepherd this diverse and highly engaged flock is critical to the Grouping's success in carrying out the Renew My Church mission. Depending on which scenario is chosen, there will be a need for one or several pastors, each faced with well educated and engaged parishioners. Additional associates will also be needed to support the unification and pastoral needs of the newly configured Grouping. It is important that clergy chosen be forward-looking and excited to create a vital Vatican II-inspired Church. Anyone who yearns for or wants to reinstate a pre-Vatican II Church would stifle the palpable energy and commitment of the people of these parishes, and ensure the failure of the Renew My Church effort. Success is never assured, but it would have a much greater chance if We the Church were led by clergy who share this vision.

Conclusion

We are grateful for the opportunity to submit this feedback to you. The pastors and pastoral leaders, parish delegates, and the hundreds of parishioners who participated in this process look forward to your feedback and response. We would like to continue and expand our collaborative ministry together. We are excited to continue inspiring disciples to accompany all members of our family of faith to a deeper, personal relationship with Jesus Christ. Thank you for your prayerful reflection and consideration of this feedback regarding our future.

Submitted respectfully with the endorsement of the pastors and parish delegates, (* = parish employee, members of the writing team are **bolded**).

St. Giles Parish
Fr. Carl Morello, Pastor
Meg Bigane, Principal *
John Gallo
John Milder
Ed Siderewicz
Melanie Halvorson
Claire Noonan

Ascension Catholic Church
Fr. Carl Morello, Administrator
Fr. Rex Pillai, Associate Pastor
Maryanne Polega, Principal*
Annie Boockmeier, Teacher*
Lisa Reed
Tom Gull
Jim Schwarber
Mary Catherine Meek, Pas.
Associate*

St. Edmund Parish
Fr. John McGivern, Pastor
Thomas Mackey
John Martin
Denise Walsh
Thomas Wheeler
Don Giannetti, Parish Assistant*

St. Catherine – St. Lucy Parish
Fr. John McGivern, Administrator
Miles Jackson
Stephen Legatzke
Virginia Jones
Carolyn Kiolbasa
Kevin Kell
Kevin Morgan