

Report of the Pastoral Visitation  
of  
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**Vicar, Eastern Vicariate**

## **HISTORY**

The town known today as Pikesville was the region settled by many Irish and German immigrants in the mid-1800s. In response to the spiritual needs of this large influx of immigrants to the area, the Catholic Church in America began to establish immigrant churches. St. Charles Parish, founded in 1848 coincided with this development. The new parish served two communities—the immigrant population who lived in the area year round and the wealthy city Catholics who were summer residents—many of whom owned elegant summer cottages that still exist today.

In September of 1847 two acres of land were purchased for \$250 and deeded to Archbishop Samuel Eccleston for the construction of a church. Father Charles Ignatius White was assigned the task of building a new church. Funding came from a variety of sources and the cornerstone was laid in July of 1848. The church was completed and dedicated on September 9, 1849 by Archbishop Eccleston. The parish boundaries extended to Fulton Street in Baltimore City and as far north as the Pennsylvania line. Parishioners formed a community diverse in its economic and social status but united in its Catholic faith.

In 1873, a mission of St. Charles was established in Glyndon—Sacred Heart. Around the same time, the McDonogh School was begun with the stipulation from the McDonogh estate that it would be “altogether nonsectarian.” This prompted the pastor, by this time, Father Edmund Waldron, to strongly advocate for the creation of a Catholic School to assure that Catholic children would not be enticed to other faiths by attending school at McDonogh. It seems that two schools were established during this time—one in Glyndon and one at St. Charles.

A growing community and the deterioration of the 1848 church made it necessary to build a new church by the end of the century. The new church was dedicated in 1899 by Cardinal James Gibbons and by 1910 a permanent school was built. The school was staffed by two young women for the first few years and in 1915, the Daughters of Charity took over its administration. Throughout the next decades, the church underwent several renovations. A new rectory was built in 1952.

Over the years, many priests served as pastors and associate pastors at St. Charles. In 2003, Sister Constance Baker was appointed PLD by Cardinal

William Keeler initiating a new form of pastoral leadership in the Archdiocese. Father Raymond Chase was appointed as Sacramental Minister. Sister Constance continues to lead the community of St. Charles with dedication to its people and its future.

## **STATISTICAL INFORMATION**

St. Charles Parish currently has 673 registered families. This number represents a decrease of approximately 8% over the past five years. Of those registered households, 284 are over age 70. The next highest age group is the 40-49 age group representing about 200 families. The parish is diverse with about 347 Caucasian, 115 African-American, 41 Asian and 32 Hispanic families. Financial support of the parish—about \$480 per household, has remained about the same for the past five years.

The demographics of St. Charles are as diverse as the membership. The northeastern portion of the parish to the east of Park Heights Avenue and north of the 695 Beltway shows a loss in population of 20% to 50% over the past 10 years. The portion of the parish west of Park Heights and north of Winands Road shows an increase in population of 20% to 50% over the same time period. At the time of the 2000 U.S. Census, the overall population living within the boundaries of St. Charles was approximately 55,765. This was a 16% gain since the 1990 Census.

The Archdiocesan Information Systems statistics indicate that approximately 830 Catholic families living within the boundaries of St. Charles choose to worship elsewhere—primarily, New All Saints, Holy Family and Sacred Heart. Conversely, approximately 502 families living outside the boundaries choose to worship at St. Charles.

## **THE PARISH COMMUNITY**

During the pastoral visit, I became increasingly aware of the warm and welcoming spirit of the parishioners of St. Charles. I particularly noted the care and attention paid to the grounds and buildings. It was clear to me that the people of St. Charles love their parish and consider it a spiritual home. I was deeply impressed by the multi-generations of families who have worshipped at this parish spanning over two centuries. I was also deeply impressed by the obvious commitment to reverence the diversity present in the community and to value this diversity as a gift rather than an obstacle to authentic Christian community. I commend the parishioners for the following:

- The efforts to build strong multigenerational fidelity and participation through longstanding family ties to the parish.

- The commitment and pastoral presence of Father Ray Chase and Monsignor Thomas Donellan.
- The participation of many in life long formation programs such as the Lenten Opportunities 2007.
- The commitment to and support of various outreach programs.
- The welcoming atmosphere that fosters a strong sense of hospitality among parishioners and visitors.
- The generosity of time and talent of parishioners, especially those responsible for gardening around the grounds of the parish and decorating the church during the Liturgical seasons of the year.
- The general availability of parishioners to volunteer for whatever is needed to be done in the parish.
- The embracing of the diversity in the community and the successful integration of all into the One Faith Community.

## **COMMENDATIONS**

As your bishop, I wish to commend the various individuals and groups for their outstanding service to the parish in the specific areas highlighted below:

1. The Pastoral Life Director's initiatives to offer programs, events and other opportunities to deepen spirituality and prayer among parishioners.
2. The Pastoral Life Director's commitment to the Jewish-Christian dialogue with the Baltimore Hebrew Congregation and her efforts to encourage and promote this dialogue in the parish community.
3. The dedication, availability and willingness of staff to do whatever is necessary for the parish and its ministries.
4. The efforts of many to build up the Youth Group, which seems to be in a growth mode.
5. The commitment of parishioners and staff to ministering in the ten nursing facilities located within the parish.
6. The efforts of parishioners, staff and Pastoral Life Director to build on the tradition of St. Charles as a family and community oriented parish.
7. The work of the Finance Council to pay down the parish debt significantly.
8. The commitment of staff to work with neighboring parishes to take engage in joint programming whenever possible, e.g., RCIA and Confirmation planning.

9. The conversion to QuickBooks Online.
10. The Social Justice and Outreach programs that are an integral part of the parish, e.g., environmental cleanup, Our Daily Bread casseroles, St. Vincent de Paul, Youth March in Washington, DC, Giving Tree—plus the generous availability of the Silverliners.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS AND DIRECTIVES**

A significant purpose of the Pastoral Visit is to bring to the attention of the Pastoral Leader, the Staff and Parishioners specific recommendations and directives that should be addressed. These are based on observations and information gained through the pastoral visit and through various archdiocesan offices that track specific data. As Bishop, I wish to bring these matters to your attention in the firm belief that you will make every effort to attend to them to strengthen the administration and ministries of the parish and the community.

### **COMMUNICATION**

Communication is a vital part of any organization, not only because it informs, but because it also forms. Good communication networks established and utilized in the parish will focus the efforts of staff and volunteers so that all are working together for the good of the parish and the mission of the Church. When good communication networks are lacking, much energy is misdirected and those involved in the everyday running of the parish can feel demoralized and frustrated.

### **Directives**

1. I ask the Pastoral Life Director, Staff and Pastoral Council work together to develop clear networks of communication that will address all levels of information sharing in the parish. These networks must be made known to all involved and must be adhered to so that they become an integral part of the parish's daily functioning.
2. The people of the parish have a right to know how their contributions are being used and the real costs of running a parish. I ask that a comprehensive Annual Report be provided to all parishioners.

### **Recommendations**

- I recommend that the weekly bulletin include the offertory income and expenses from the previous week as a way to foster informed giving and good stewardship in the parish.

- I recommend that a specific communication plan be developed by all parish leadership to share information and to address questions regarding the future relationship between the Cambridge School and St. Charles Parish.
- I recommend weekly Staff meetings to share information, discuss upcoming events and to engage in visioning together for the future. It would be helpful to utilize the services of an outside facilitator to assist the staff in developing comfortable and collegial models of interacting.

## **PLANNING**

Good planning enables a parish to choose a preferred future and to set a course that will help to insure that future. This kind of planning requires the investment and commitment of the key players in the parish, i.e., the Pastoral Council, the Staff, the Committee Chairs, and the Pastoral Life Director. In addition, it requires a commitment to implement the plan and levels of accountability to those entrusted to take responsibility for particular aspects of the plan. Good planning is essential for the wise stewardship of the parish community and its resources.

## **Directives**

1. I ask that the Pastoral Life Director, Staff and Pastoral Council identify the key areas for planning through mutual consultation. This consultation should include an assessment of issues or concerns that need to be addressed as well as the information gained through the parish self-assessment.
2. I ask the Pastoral Life Director to work with the Pastoral Council and Staff to develop a three to five year Pastoral Plan and to utilize the services of a planning facilitator to assist in the development of the process and subsequent plan. The final plan should be shared with the parish community. It is the responsibility of the Pastoral Life Director to assure that the plan is implemented and that mutual accountability factors are built into the plan.

## **PARISH OPERATIONS**

The smooth operation of any parish depends on many people. It is imperative that there be adequate committees and volunteers in place to carry out the many tasks necessary to meet the needs of the parish. The more these various persons and groups can connect with one another to build synergy and direction, the more the parish will benefit.

## **Directives**

1. I ask that the Pastoral Life Director and Pastoral Council examine the current committee structures in the parish and determine what committees are needed to carry out the necessary ministries in the parish and community.
2. I ask that the Pastoral Life Director, Staff and Pastoral Council strategize together ways to call forth the gifts of the community and invite into ministry those persons identified.
3. I ask that the Pastoral Life Director, Staff and Pastoral Council develop the “Charter” for each committee so that members of the committee are clear regarding their role in the overall mission of the parish.
4. I ask that the Pastoral Life Director schedule and lead quarterly Corporation Meetings with the two Lay Corporators and that the minutes of Corporation Meetings be sent to the Chancery Office of the Archdiocese. (See Parish Corporation Document at the end of this report)
5. I ask that the Pastoral Life Director and the Corporators meet to go through the document “The Parish Corporation” so that they clearly understand the fiduciary responsibilities of the Parish Corporation. *Please note that the document does include the corporation structure for a parish with a Pastoral Life Director. In this case, the Vicar Forane of the Region is also a member of the Board of Corporators.*
6. I ask that the Pastoral Life Director review the recommendations from the most recent audit and work to implement them as soon as possible.

## **Recommendations**

- I recommend that the bookkeeper, John Bayliff, attend Business Managers Meetings sponsored by the Archdiocese to assure compliance with Archdiocesan policies and procedures.
- I recommend that the Finance Council establish a separate fund for the cemetery.
- I recommend that the Pastoral Life Director and Finance Council look at development efforts with the goal of establishing an endowment for the parish. It may be helpful to call on the assistance of the Development Office of the Archdiocese.

## **PASTORAL PRESENCE**

Good pastoral care of the parish translates to personal, effective and compassionate presence to the community on a daily basis. Opportunities to listen, to speak words of comfort, to counsel and advise, to offer support and praise and to challenge and question are all components of pastoral presence. The ministry of presence builds community. The compassion and dedication that the Pastoral Life Director brings to her ministry to the sick, suffering and marginalized of the parish is one such example of good pastoral care.

### **Directives**

1. I ask the Pastoral Life Director to increase her presence at Liturgy and to find ways to be physically present to the gathered community.
2. I ask the Pastoral Life Director to work more collaboratively with the Staff as a means to share leadership through consultation and mutual sharing of ideas.
3. I ask the Pastoral Life Director to provide clear direction to the Pastoral Council through training and collaborative approaches to discussions on parish life and planning.

## **LAY MINISTRY DEVELOPMENT**

Inviting and utilizing the gifts of parishioners is a core responsibility of all who share leadership in the parish—particularly, the pastoral leader, the staff and the pastoral council. Nurturing the gifts, once identified and focused, builds community.

### **Directives**

1. I ask that the Pastoral Leader explore the possibility of initiating the “Filling the Pews” program at St. Charles.
2. I ask that the Pastoral Council and Staff work with the Pastoral Life Director to establish and train an Evangelization Committee and that a plan for evangelization be developed.
3. I ask that the Pastoral Life Director and Council explore ways to foster and expand lay ministry in the parish.

## **Recommendation**

- I recommend that the Pastoral Life Director explore successful mentoring programs that may be used at St. Charles.

## **CONCLUSION**

During the pastoral visit, I became more aware of the strong bonds of community that permeate St. Charles. It was obvious to me that parishioners care deeply about their parish and want it to grow. The statement that I heard several times during the visit—"St. Charles is the best-kept secret in Pikesville"—is very accurate. I sensed a strong desire for a renewed energy among parishioners and parish leadership. I believe that a strong and dedicated faith community will draw new members and will strengthen stewardship of time, talent and treasure among the members. I believe that St. Charles has the capacity to both survive and thrive.

June, 2007