

## Table of Contents

1.	Introduction.....	page(s) 1-2
2.	The Vision .....	3-4
3.	History .....	5
4.	The Model.....	6-15,
5.	Ministry.....	16-18
6.	Implementation .....	19-20
7.	Communications .....	21
8.	Other Recommendations .....	22
9.	The Feedback.....	23-24
10.	The Future.....	25-26
	Glossary .....	27
	Appendices	
	“A” Mandate and Resources.....	28
	“B” Archdiocesan Regional Councils .....	29
	“C” Summary of Responses .....	30-38

## FORWARD

The history of the Church has been a story of the People of God carrying out its mission in the midst of a world that experiences constant change in human society. The world at large and our province in particular have experienced rapid change in recent years.

Like most dioceses in Canada, the United States, and western Europe, the Archdiocese of St. John's has experienced a decline in the number of active priests. This decline is expected to continue in the near future. While the participation rate of Catholics in their parishes in terms of regular attendance at Mass on the weekend has decreased, the number of programs and special ministries in parishes has increased, placing additional demands on the time and attention of priests and pastoral councils. Shifts in population have accelerated in recent years. Growth in the northeast Avalon region is expected to continue. The rural areas of the Archdiocese have experienced a decline in population since the collapse of the commercial cod fishery over a decade ago. Many of our young people continue to leave the province in search of employment.

A positive sign in the Archdiocese in recent years is the number of lay persons and religious who are taking part in ministry. Many of them have taken courses in theology, scripture, counselling, and other areas beneficial in pastoral ministry. Some religious and lay persons are employed by parishes. Many offer their services as volunteers, especially in the areas of sacramental preparation and religious education.

The decline in the number of active priests, the increased number of new programs and ministries, and population shifts have convinced many that we cannot rely solely on our priests for ministry in the future. In this report, the Pastoral Planning Committee makes practical recommendations for the distribution of priests and for the greater use of religious and laity in ministry.

The Committee would like to thank Archbishop Brendan O'Brien for his kindness and consideration to us since we began our work. We would like to thank all who responded with feedback to the interim report: parishioners, parish pastoral and finance councils, Archdiocesan committees and Regional Pastoral Councils, organizations, religious and priests. The response to the interim report was extensive and very helpful to the Committee in the drafting of this final report. Because of the volume of feedback, and the need for time to study it, it was necessary for the Committee to request an extension of the deadline until September 2004.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

In June, 2003, upon the recommendation of the Archdiocesan Pastoral Council, Archbishop Brendan O'Brien established a pastoral planning committee consisting of Katherine Daley, Chair, Archdiocesan Pastoral Council; Peggy Walsh, member of the Archdiocesan Pastoral Council and a member of the St. John's Center Regional Pastoral Council; Father Francis Puddister, Chancellor for the Archdiocese and Pastor of St. Thomas Aquinas Parish, St. Lawrence and St. Joseph's Parish, Lamaline; Father Theodore O'Connor, Director of Vocations and Pastor of Sts. Peter and Paul Parish, Bay Bulls and Our Lady Star of the Sea Parish, Witless Bay; and Maxine Davis, Executive Assistant to the Archbishop. Father Puddister agreed to act as Chair for this committee. Committee members possessed varied professional backgrounds and expertise, but more importantly, an appreciation and understanding of the Archdiocese. Membership on the Archdiocesan Pastoral Council and the Presbyteral Council prepared us for this task.

We began by reviewing all the resource material that was available to us including the results of consultation carried out immediately before the formation of this committee. We studied reports that had already been completed in the Archdiocese over the past fifteen years and reviewed reports that had been prepared by other dioceses in Canada and the United States who were also planning for the future. *(A list of these resources and the terms of reference for the committee is included as Appendix "A".)*

In recent years the Archdiocese has experienced a decrease in the number of active priests. The first question for this committee was: how do we make provision to meet the needs of the faithful in the light of this decrease? We no longer have enough active priests so that one can be assigned to each parish. The Archdiocese has not been able to attract religious and diocesan priests from elsewhere in sufficient numbers to make up the difference. Because the number of new vocations in recent years has been few, the average age of the priests who are in active ministry is rising.

The Archdiocese has also experienced a change in population patterns. The total Catholic population has fallen from approximately 120,000 to 111,000 in the decade from 1991 to 2001. In that same period, the population of the rural areas has dropped sharply and is expected to fall further in the future. The population of the northeast Avalon region has remained the same. The second question for this committee was: In light of population changes that have occurred in recent years, and which are likely to continue in the future, is it necessary to make changes to our parish structures?

## INTRODUCTION (continued)

In November 2003 the interim report was presented to Archbishop O'Brien along with a recommendation that he distribute it to all parishes, parish pastoral councils, regional pastoral councils and the Archdiocesan Pastoral Council for study, discussion and feedback. It was very clear from the responses received that this report was taken seriously by clergy and laity in all areas of the Archdiocese. We were very pleased and encouraged by the number of responses received. At our request the Archbishop agreed to extend the deadline for submission of our final report to allow time for us to thoroughly consider all the recommendations and comments received.

It is our opinion, from the feedback, that most people realize we cannot continue to provide pastoral ministry in this Archdiocese without reorganization. They are willing to explore ways of working together and agree that clustering of parishes is the preferred approach. Many recommendations and comments were received and the committee tried to make sure that these comments are reflected in this final report.

Over the past 14 months we met regularly, usually once a month. After analyzing the responses to the interim report, deliberating for many hours, and based on the experience with clustering in other dioceses we were even more convinced that clustering was the model we would recommend. It was clear to us that clustering was the one model for reorganization that allowed parishes to remain intact. All of our parishes have worked with neighbouring parishes in one way or another. Sixteen of them are twinned. Through Regional Pastoral Councils all parishes are sharing ideas and experiences. It is our hope that this background will make it much easier to understand the cluster model - to work together, to share and to extend lay participation.

## 2. THE VISION

The mission of the Church is always the same. To express it in words that reflect today's realities, we have borrowed from "Evangelii Nuntiandi,"\* No. 14. Evangelizing, announcing Jesus Christ to all people constitutes the essential mission of the church. The goal of evangelization is to allow Faith to take root, to grow, to express itself, and to lead to action. There are four dimensions to the Mission of the Church: 1) building a community of Faith by spreading the Word of God; 2) building community of brothers and sisters whose relationships are characterized by Gospel values; 3) a Church called to become a community present to this world's suffering and committed therein on the basis of her concern for social justice and Christian charity; finally 4) the Church has the mission to celebrate together as a community, in the way God has taught her.

Community is essential to the church's life. The universal Church is a world-wide community. Within the Church, individuals belong to one or more communities. For most of Christ's faithful, the parish is the basic community. It is in the parish that they meet and interact with one another. In many cases, parishes are combined into various groupings for certain pastoral purposes. In this Archdiocese, parishes belong to one of the five pastoral regions, each of which has its own regional pastoral council. The organization, arrangement or grouping of parishes, here and elsewhere, is guided by the need to foster and promote community at various levels and to participate in the mission of the Church.

The Vatican II document "Lumen Gentium" (The Dogmatic Constitution of the Church in the Modern World) defines the church first and foremost as "The People of God". This phrase expresses the concept that the church is primarily a community of persons united in faith and worship. The People of God, the Church, consists of many local communities throughout the world. These communities need to have the Word of God proclaimed to them so that, shaped by the Word, they grow in holiness of life. They need to celebrate and to share in the sacraments that Christ has given to the Church, especially the Sunday Eucharist. Individual members need to experience the life of a Christian community as a support and an encouragement to their way of life, and as a forum in which they are called to serve the Church and the world.

\* *Apostolic Exhortation of Pope Paul VI, Dec. 8, 1975*

### THE VISION (continued)

Since the days of the early Church, bishops, priests and deacons have been called forth to serve the People of God. Their ministry has been to preach the Word of God, to celebrate the sacraments, and to lead the communities entrusted to them. Historically, each local church, or diocese, has been entrusted to a bishop. Each local community in a diocese, a parish, has been entrusted to a priest who is its pastor.

Despite changes in the world and in society, the People of God in every generation will continue to have a need to hear the Word of God, to have access to the sacraments, and to share in the life of a faith community.

### 3. HISTORY

Our province is surrounded by the sea; the majority of our smaller communities depended solely on the fishing industry. With its collapse and the moratorium in the 90's, many changes occurred. The social change most evident is the movement of young people from those communities to urban areas or from the province. While St. John's, Mount Pearl and the immediate surrounding areas enjoy growth, employment and prosperity, the small rural communities experience the very opposite. As in other provinces and countries we can expect this movement of urbanization to continue.

Other trends we are experiencing are a decrease in our population, a decrease in birth rates (we have the lowest birth rate in Canada), an aging population and families where the father must leave the province to find employment. Last year for the first time in our history, our death rate exceeded our birth rate. Our family structure has also changed. Young people tend to live at home longer, have fewer children, are relatively well educated and frequently have common-law spousal relationships. The increase in part-time, contractual, and casual work and employers' reluctance or inability to hire full time workers with the expected and necessary work benefits is discouraging to people who are expected to earn a living to support their families. The problem is experienced on both sides. Employers/companies must downsize to balance the books, frequently deficits are unacceptable and on the other side, individuals must find employment to support families. This frequently leads to social and labour unrest. These changes affect person's lives and their association with a faith community.

The geographical area of our Archdiocese extends from St. John's in the east through St. Mary's and Placentia Bays, including the Southern Shore, the Cape Shore and the Burin Peninsula. The population of St. John's and the surrounding Metropolitan area is approximately one-third of the population of the province. A majority of the Catholic population of the Archdiocese lives in the Northeast Avalon area. The populations of most of the smaller communities continue to decrease. Many of these smaller communities are great distances from St. John's and from

each other, yet in other areas those rural communities are situated very close to each other. The Archdiocese is divided into five regions with varying number of parishes within each region. (See *Appendix B*)

This then is the social, ecclesiastical and geographical context in which the Archdiocese strives to meet the needs of God's people.

## 4. THE MODEL

Many dioceses in Canada and elsewhere have had to face the issue of how to continue to provide pastoral ministry to the faithful with a diminishing number, and an aging population, of priests. Different responses have been proposed to address this need.

### A. Twinned Parishes

The first response to the decline in the number of priests, in the Archdiocese of St. John's and in other dioceses, has been to "twin" parishes, i. e., to ask priests to take responsibility for two adjacent parishes. While this has proven to be a solution in the short term, it has some deficiencies. The priest must preside at many liturgies in two or more churches. He is required to attend many meetings. Each parish has its own pastoral council, finance council, and other committees. In most cases, he must bear the full burden of pastoral leadership and ministry alone. He is assisted by many capable parishioners who offer their time and knowledge in areas such as sacramental preparation, religious education, and visiting the sick. Still, the priest feels compelled to be involved in what they are doing in some way, such as organization, calling meetings, etc. The disadvantage of "twinning" parishes is that the burden on priests is increased. As the number of priests continues to fall, can each be asked to accept responsibility for a third or a fourth parish? There is an obvious limit to the extent to which this solution can be employed.

### B. Merged Parishes

A second solution has been to merge parishes and to close churches. In some large cities, this has been done in downtown and center-city areas which once had large numbers of residents but now are filled with office buildings or industrial

facilities. It has also been done in rural areas which have experienced a drastic loss of population. In this Archdiocese, some parishes were closed or merged because of the re-settlement program in the 1960's.

#### THE MODEL (continued)

If the local population has not declined drastically, is it practical to close churches and to invite parishioners to worship in another church? This might reduce the workload for priests if they would have to preside at fewer Masses and to attend fewer meetings. Would the parishioners readily agree to the closure of their parish or of their church? In most cases, there is a sense of community among parishioners or among those who worship in one of the parish churches which has been cultivated for several generations. There is a case to be made for closing churches which are attended by few, and where the costs of operation cannot be met by those who worship there. Parishioners will accept the closure of a church, but only after a process that takes time. Some have compared it to a grieving process in coming to accept the loss of a loved one. Because one of the goals of ministry is to build and to preserve a sense of community among the faithful on a local basis, it would be counterproductive to close a church or a parish without their consent and without the possibility of readily integrating them into another worshipping community.

### **C. Clustered Parishes**

A third solution, which has been adopted in many dioceses, is to combine parishes into clusters. This was also the central recommendation of Plan 90. In the words of Plan 90 (page 9), a cluster “conveys the image of a cluster of grapes which grows on a vine. It connotes the vitality and unity of the whole and at the same time preserves the uniqueness of the part.” Parishes that are clustered retain their status as parishes, but share certain pastoral services with one or more other parishes. We recommend that the cluster model be adopted in the Archdiocese. Clustered parishes will be ministered to by a pastoral team (described in the next section) and will share the same pastoral council. In all other respects, each will retain the features of an individual parish. There are several advantages to this approach. It preserves the existing parish structure and the sense of community that the faithful

have in their parishes. It allows the ministry of priests to be shared without placing an intolerable burden on them. It draws on the availability of religious and lay persons who have the training and the skills to minister to the faithful.

#### THE MODEL (continued)

Included in this report is a set of tables in which we propose how clusters are to be formed in the Archdiocese. The main consideration is geographical proximity. Parishes are clustered with others that are adjacent to them. The second is population. We have taken into consideration the number of parishioners in each parish and the prospects for growth or loss of population in the near future. A third consideration is the geographical size of the proposed clusters. The proposed clusters in the northeast Avalon region have large populations but are relatively small in area. The proposed clusters in the rest of the Archdiocese have smaller populations and are geographically larger.

We are recommending that most of the parishes in the Archdiocese be clustered according to a three-step process. There is no time line or schedule as to when each step should be initiated or completed. The process will begin and proceed at the discretion of the Archbishop, according to the availability of active priests and pastoral ministers, and the readiness of parishes to be clustered. Once initiated, the process of clustering could be fully implemented, if need be, in a short span of time, or over the course of several years. Circumstances in the Archdiocese will dictate the timetable.

To be fair to all parishes and to all parts of the Archdiocese, the clustering process should be implemented in each of the five regions. With this in mind, we recommend that step 1 should be completed before step 2 begins. The 16 parishes that are twinned at the present time (with the addition of one other) will become 8 clusters with the implementation of step 1. The reader will note that, in the tables, each region will see at least one clustering of parishes in step 1. We regard step 3 as a "worst case scenario" to be implemented only if the number of active priests falls below 20. Step 3 may be implemented, in whole or in part, after step 2 has been completed.

In our interim report, we had proposed a five-step process. During the

feedback process, some expressed a desire for a more flexible approach because some parishes might be ready and willing to be clustered before others. We believe that a three-step process would allow for flexibility and ensure that clustering would occur in and affect each of the regions. We wish to emphasize that our recommendation of a three-step approach is not meant to imply that the process should be hastened. We envisage that it would occur, if fully implemented, over the same time span as a five-step process.

THE MODEL (continued)

*We recommend:*

1. that clustering of parishes with pastoral teams and a common pastoral council be adopted throughout the Archdiocese as the process for restructuring;
2. that the clustering process be implemented according to the tables contained in this report;
3. that step 1 be fully implemented before step 2 is begun;
4. that, in the implementing of step 1, those parishes that are “twinned” at the present time shall become clusters;
5. that step 3 be initiated only if necessary;
6. that step 3 be initiated only after step 2 is fully implemented;

## THE MODEL (continued)

The following proposed plan provides for a gradual restructuring of the Archdiocese from 40 parishes to 12 clusters and 3 individual parishes.

**ST. JOHN'S EAST REGION**

<u>PARISH</u>	<u>NOW</u>	<u>STEP 1</u>	<u>STEP 2</u>	<u>STEP 3</u>
Pouch Cove-Flatrock	PC	PC-T	PC-T	PC-T- PORT C-BI
Torbay	T			
Portugal Cove	PORT C	PORT C	PORT C-BI	
Bell Island	BI	BI		
Outer Cove	OC	OC-SP	OC-SP-MQP	OC-SP-MQP
St. Paul's	SP			
Mary Queen of Peace	MQP			
No of Parishes/Clusters	7	5	3	2

## THE MODEL (continued)

**ST. JOHN'S CENTRE REGION**

<b><u>PARISH</u></b>	<b><u>NOW</u></b>	<b><u>STEP 1</u></b>	<b><u>STEP 2</u></b>	<b><u>STEP 3</u></b>
Basilica	B			
St. Patrick's				
St. John Bosco	SP-SJB	B-SP-SJB	B-SP-SJB	B-SP-SJB
St. Teresa's	ST	ST	ST	ST
St. Pius X	SPX	SPX	SPX	SPX
Corpus Christi	CC	CC	CC	CC
St. Matthew's	SM*			
No. of Parishes/Clusters	6	4	4	4

- \* While this report was being prepared the Archbishop announced the merger of St. Matthew's Parish with Mary Queen of the World Parish. In our interim report it was our recommendation to cluster these two parishes. For the purposes of this report St. Matthew's is included in our table to reflect the present but it does not appear in Steps 1, 2 and 3.

*We recommend:*

1. that Corpus Christi Parish and St. Teresa's Parish not be clustered because of

their large populations and because the number of their parishioners is expected to grow in the next decade;

2. that St. Pius X Parish not be clustered while it is entrusted to the Jesuit Fathers;

THE MODEL (continued)

3. that, in view of the announced merger of Mary Queen of the World Parish and St. Matthew's Parish, the newly enlarged Mary Queen of the World Parish not be clustered unless step 3 is implemented;
4. that a committee be established by the Archbishop to examine the parish boundaries of the newly-enlarged Mary Queen of the World Parish, St. Teresa's Parish, Corpus Christi Parish, St. Kevin's Parish (Goulds) and St. Peter's Parish, with a view to their revision.

## THE MODEL (continued)

<b><u>ST. JOHN'S WEST/SOUTH REGION</u></b>				
<b><u>PARISH</u></b>	<b><u>NOW</u></b>	<b><u>STEP 1</u></b>	<b><u>STEP 2</u></b>	<b><u>STEP 3</u></b>
St. Peter's	SP	SP	SP	SP-MQW
Mary Queen of the World	MQW	MQW	MQW	
Goulds	G-PH	G-PH	G-PH	G-PH
Petty Harbour				
Paradise	P	T-K	P-T-K	P-T-K
Topsail	T			
Kelligrews	K			
Bay Bulls	BB-WB	BB-WB	BB-WB	BB-WB- BSC-TRE
Witless Bay				
Brigus South-Cappahayden	BSC	BSC-TRE	BSC-TRE	
Trepassey	TRE			
No. of Parishes/Clusters	9	7	6	4

*We recommend:*

11. *that no other parish be clustered with St. Kevin's Parish (Goulds) and St.*

*Joseph's Parish (Petty Harbour) because of the expected growth of population in the Southlands area;*

THE MODEL (continued)

<b><u>PLACENTIA/SALMONIER/ST. MARY'S BAY REGION</u></b>				
<b><u>PARISH</u></b>	<b><u>NOW</u></b>	<b><u>STEP 1</u></b>	<b><u>STEP 2</u></b>	<b><u>STEP 3</u></b>
St. Mary's	SM-SV			SM-SV-SJ-MC
St. Vincent's		SM-SV	SM-SV	
St. Joseph's				
Mount Carmel	SJ-MC	SJ-MC	SJ-MC	
Placentia	P			P-FW-FH-SB
Freshwater	FW-FH		P-FW-FH-SB	
Fox Harbour		P-FW-FH		
St. Bride's	SB	SB		
Long Harbour-Southern Harbour	LH-SH	LH-SH	LH-SH	LH-SH
<b>No. of Parishes/Clusters</b>	6	5	4	3

*We recommend:*

- that the Archdiocese enter into discussions with the Diocese of Grand Falls with a view to clustering St Francis Xavier Parish (Long Harbour and Southern Harbour) with adjacent parishes in the Diocese of Grand Falls, in particular St. Alphonsus Parish (Whitbourne, Bellevue and Chapel Arm). The pastor of this cluster might come from either diocese;*

## THE MODEL (continued)

<b><u>BURIN PENINSULA REGION</u></b>				
<b><u>PARISH</u></b>	<b><u>NOW</u></b>	<b><u>STEP 1</u></b>	<b><u>STEP 2</u></b>	<b><u>STEP 3</u></b>
St. Bernard's	SB	SB-R	SB-R	SB-R-M
Rushoon	R			
Marystown	M-B	M-B	M-B	
Burin				
St. Lawrence	SL-L	SL-L	SL-L	B-SL-L
Lamaline				
No. of Parish/Clusters	4	3	3	2
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>15</b>

## 5. MINISTRY

### A. The Pastoral Team

Ministry to the clustered parishes will be the responsibility of a *pastoral team*, which will consist of two or more persons. The team will include at least one priest who will be the pastor of the parishes in the cluster. Other members of the team may be priests, permanent deacons, religious or lay persons. If possible, all should be employed by the cluster on a full-time basis. For compelling reasons, some may be employed on a part-time basis.

The members of the pastoral team should minister to each of the parishes of the cluster, and not be confined to one parish or one geographical part of the cluster. They may concentrate on one aspect of ministry, e.g., religious education, pastoral care to hospitals and health-care institutions, youth, etc. To the extent possible, they should carry on their ministry throughout the cluster.

The members of the pastoral team will view ministry in the cluster as a collaborative effort. Each will see his or her work as complementary to that of the other members of the team. They will meet frequently to discuss their work and the needs of the cluster, for prayer and for mutual support. The pastor will lead the team. In his ministry of pastoral leadership, he should consult the other members of the team frequently, and attempt to obtain a consensus when decisions on major issues are to be made.

The priest should be assisted by others in fulfilling the liturgical needs of the cluster. In clusters in which many marriages are celebrated each year, one of the team members who is not a priest might be authorized by the Archbishop to officiate at weddings celebrated outside of Mass. Each cluster should have religious or lay persons who are prepared to preside at the Liturgy of the Word and the Liturgy of the Hours. These persons need not be members of the pastoral team.

MINISTRY (continued)

## **B. The Pastoral Council**

To facilitate pastoral planning, we recommend that, when parishes are clustered, the pastoral councils of the parishes be dissolved, and one pastoral council be formed for the cluster. This council may be called the Cluster Pastoral Council (CPC). Each of the parishes in the cluster will be represented equally on this council.

The members of the pastoral team will be members of the pastoral council *ex officio*. Having a single pastoral council for the cluster will increase the interaction between the parishes, contribute to a greater sharing of ideas and encourage pastoral planning to be done on a cluster-wide basis. The focus of the pastoral council will be on the cluster as a whole, and coincide with that of the pastoral team.

## **C. The Finance Councils**

Although it is envisaged that ministry and pastoral planning be done for the cluster as a whole, the parishes will retain their status as parishes. It is primarily in the context of the local community that the faithful experience and celebrate their membership in the People of God. This sense of community, built up over several generations in many cases, is to be promoted and preserved. It is expressed, not only in worship, but in the service that the parishioners feel called to do, whether in liturgical ministries or in other works of service. Each parish will continue to express its independence also in its ownership and management of its property and of its financial resources. When property owned by the parish is sold or leased, the proceeds will go to the parish, as it does now. As required by canon law, each parish will continue to have its own finance council. In addition to being himself a member of each parish finance council in the cluster, the pastor may appoint members of the pastoral team to one or more of the parish finance councils.

## MINISTRY (continued)

*We recommend:*

13. *that each cluster will be ministered to by a pastoral team;*
14. *that each pastoral team will consist of a priest, who will be pastor of each of the parishes in the cluster, and one or more others: priests, permanent deacons, religious or lay persons;*
15. *that, with the assistance of the Archdiocesan Liturgical Commission, each cluster will prepare religious or lay persons to preside at Liturgy of the Word and Liturgy of the Hours in the absence of a priest or a permanent deacon;*
16. *that, in clusters which have many weddings each year, one of the team members apart from the pastor will be authorized by the Archbishop to assist at weddings celebrated outside of Mass;*
17. *that the parish pastoral councils in each cluster be dissolved, and that one pastoral council be formed for the cluster as a whole;*
18. *that the parishes in the cluster are represented equally on the Cluster Pastoral Council (CPC);*
19. *that the members of the pastoral team shall be members of the pastoral council ex officio;*
20. *that each parish in the cluster continue to have an active finance council;*
21. *that each parish in the cluster will contribute to the remuneration and*

*maintenance of the members of the pastoral team on a basis in proportion to the number of parishioners compared to the total number of parishioners in the area of the cluster.*

## 6. IMPLEMENTATION

To assist the Archbishop in implementing the pastoral plan,

*We recommend:*

22. *that a Permanent Implementation Committee be established in the Archdiocese. This committee should consist of five lay persons, one from each of the five regions, and five others appointed by the Archbishop;*

The mandate of the Permanent Implementation Committee will include:(1) to develop a strategy for communication, that is, to communicate to parishioners and to members of other Archdiocesan committees, on a continuous basis, the clustering process and all information pertaining to it; (2) to develop and to recommend to the Archbishop a set of qualifications and a salary scale for members of pastoral teams who are not priests or permanent deacons;(3) to invite applications from lay persons and religious for positions on cluster pastoral teams and to submit to the Archbishop for his consideration a list of those who have met the established qualifications;(4) to draw up a “parish vitality survey” that is, a self-evaluation questionnaire, which can be used by the clusters to evaluate the vitality of parish life;(5) to assist the Archdiocese and the individual clusters in the clustering process in any other way necessary or useful.

The Committee should establish and maintain close links with the five Regional Pastoral Councils, and work with them on an ongoing basis, in the implementation of the pastoral plan.

IMPLEMENTATION (continued)

*We recommend:*

23. *that the Dean act as the coordinator on the regional level with the Permanent Implementation Committee to oversee the implementation of the pastoral plan;*

The appointment of members of the pastoral team who are religious or lay persons will be made by the Archbishop after consulting the pastoral team and the pastoral council of the cluster concerned. Appointments shall be made from a list submitted by the Permanent Implementation Committee of those who have applied for such positions and who possess the required qualifications.

## **7. COMMUNICATIONS**

As with any change that so profoundly affects so many people, communications is one of the key ingredients to success. In today's world many different types of communication are needed to ensure that all the people involved have an opportunity for input, dialogue and discussion. There must be a commitment to find the most appropriate communication channels.

*We recommend:*

24. *that the Permanent Implementation Committee continue to seek feedback from parishioners, cluster pastoral councils, regional pastoral councils and pastors on all matters pertaining to the clustering process;*
  
25. *that the Archdiocese make use of every possible communication technique to share information on the clustering process: dialogue, newsletters, internet, bulletins, meetings, question and answer sessions, etc.;*

## 8. OTHER RECOMMENDATIONS

*We recommend:*

26. *that the Archdiocese continue to encourage parishes to promote vocations to the priesthood, the religious life and to service in the church;*
27. *that the Archdiocese continue to welcome qualified diocesan and religious priests from outside the Archdiocese to minister within the Archdiocese;*
28. *that the present rule in the Archdiocese that priests should not preside at more than four Masses for a Sunday or holy day (including the anticipated Masses on the previous day) be maintained;*
29. *that priests who wish to retire or to “semi-retire” be encouraged to offer sacramental ministry, especially the Mass on Sundays and holy days, to one cluster or another;*
30. *that each Cluster Pastoral Council be represented equally on its respective Regional Pastoral Council;*
31. *that before a new church is built, or a major renovation carried out on an existing church, the Cluster Pastoral Council and the Parish Finance Councils within the cluster shall demonstrate to the Archbishop and the Archdiocesan Administration Board that the needs of the faithful concerned cannot be met without undue inconvenience by another existing church within the territory of the cluster. The Archdiocesan guidelines for the approval of a new church or of a major renovation of an existing church should be amended to make this a requirement of approval.*
32. *that the Archdiocesan Policy and Procedures Manual be updated to reflect the recommendations in this pastoral plan.*

## 9. THE FEEDBACK

This committee is gratified by the volume of the feedback in response to the interim report. The comments and opinions expressed were quite varied.

Most respondents understood the reality of the declining number of priests and the need to find a way to share their ministry without placing undue burdens on them.

The concept of clustering parishes appears to most respondents to be an appropriate way of doing this. It appears also that there is widespread agreement to making greater use of lay ministers.

A number of respondents emphasized the need for communication. All information relating to the clustering process, if implemented, should be shared fully and continuously with parishioners. Accordingly, we recommend that the Permanent Implementation Committee make communication a priority.

Several respondents urged that ongoing education is important. Lay persons must learn more about their faith and about the implications of the clustering process.

Priests and laity alike will need formation in working together on pastoral teams and in ministry. The Permanent Implementation Committee will address this issue.

A number of respondents asked about the cost of the clustering process. Can parishes that are struggling financially support a pastoral team, even in conjunction with one or more other parishes? We believe that clustering will not increase costs to parishes except in cases where “twinned” parishes presently have one priest only. But ministry is a priority, and it is important that parishes search for ways to support it financially. Parishes that are no longer financially viable will need to consider in what form they might continue.

Some parishes disagreed with the clustering proposals that affected them. Sacred Heart Parish (Fox Harbour, Ship Harbour and Dunville) believes that it is more practical to cluster it with Holy Rosary Parish (Freshwater) and Sacred Heart Parish (Placentia). Holy Redeemer Parish (Trepassey) prefers to be clustered with the parishes on the Southern Shore. The Committee agrees with these views and has amended the clustering proposals accordingly. They are reflected in the tables accompanying this report.

THE FEEDBACK (continued)

A suggestion from Holy Trinity Parish (Torbay) recommends that the community of Flatrock be removed from Saints Agnes and Michael Parish and added to it, and that the enlarged parish be clustered with Holy Rosary Parish (Portugal Cove). The Committee disagrees with this suggestion because a smaller Saints Agnes and Michael Parish would not be viable, even if its pastor, as suggested, was to be a chaplain at one of the institutions in St. John's. Should step 3 be implemented, these three parishes would be included in a cluster with St. Michael's Parish (Bell Island).

*A summary of the responses received is contained in Appendix C.*

## 10. THE FUTURE

The history of the Archdiocese is a story of change. Since 1784, new parishes have been created as the Catholic population increased and as more priests became available. The number of parishioners in each parish has grown or diminished with the movement of population. Parish boundaries have been modified to reflect these changes. Some parishes have been merged. In the course of its history, the Archdiocese adapted to the changing needs of its people and to changes in the universal Church.

We believe that once again, the Archdiocese is presented with new challenges, to which the People of God in our local church must respond. This report recommends changes to our parish structure and to our use of pastoral resources in an attempt to make plans to meet these challenges. The circumstances of life in this province will continue to change, even in ways that cannot now be foreseen. At the time of the writing of Plan 90, only the most astute believed that the fishery would collapse in a short time, and only a few foresaw the drastic and rapid fall in our population that would result from it. While we hope that the future will have positive developments, further change is inevitable. The Permanent Implementation Committee will monitor the implementation of the pastoral plan in the light of changing conditions in the Archdiocese on a continuous basis. It may recommend modifications to the pastoral plan as they appear to be necessary.

It is our view that, while change occurs through planning and the implementation of decisions, it occurs through evolution as well. Once they are joined to others in a cluster, some parishes may decide to combine some services or ministries with other parishes in the cluster. They may decide to come together for worship frequently, or even to formally merge with others in the cluster. Other parishes will continue to thrive individually within the context of the cluster. These will evolve in the course of time.

THE FUTURE (continued)

This report does not recommend the closure of any churches or the merger of any parishes. Nor have we made our recommendations with the intention to create conditions to make this likely or inevitable. We believe that a decision to close a church should not be made without the agreement of those who make it their place of worship, and who pay for its upkeep. In the future, it is likely that some churches will close, because of populations shifts, diminished use and operating costs. Those who worship in them will choose to worship in another church in the cluster and to celebrate their sense of community in a new setting. There may also be a need to construct new churches in areas of population growth where the existing churches are neither adequate nor conveniently located for the needs of the people.

The circumstances facing the Archdiocese at the present time are a challenge to adapt. We are confident that, with appropriate changes in the way in which ministry is carried out, the faith and witness of our communities will not only continue but thrive.

## GLOSSARY

**Cluster:** Two or more parishes that are ministered to by the same pastoral team and share the same pastoral council.

**Cluster Pastoral Council (CPC):** A council which has the same responsibility as the parish pastoral council, but which is formed to deal with pastoral issues facing the cluster as a whole rather than those of an individual parish. Each parish in the cluster is represented equally on it. The members of the pastoral team are members *ex officio*.

**Lay Person:** A member of the Church who is not a priest, permanent deacon, or religious.

**Ministry:** The performance of services to meet the spiritual needs of members of the Church, such as presiding at Mass or another form of worship, celebrating the sacraments, preaching, teaching, counselling, etc.

**Parish Vitality Survey:** An instrument to evaluate the degree of life and activity in a faith community.

**Pastoral Plan:** The recommendations for changes in ministry and in the organization of the Archdiocese as contained in the report of this committee.

**Pastoral Team:** A team consisting of a priest who is the pastor of all of the parishes in the cluster, and one or more others, who may be other priests, permanent

deacons, religious or lay persons. Each cluster will be ministered to by a pastoral team.

**Permanent Implementation Committee:** A committee to be established at the Archdiocesan level to assist in the implementation of the clustering process.

**Region:** The parishes of the Archdiocese are divided into five regions, each of which has a Regional Pastoral Council (RPC).

**Religious:** A sister or a brother (who is not a priest) who is a member of a religious order.

**Twinned Parishes:** Two parishes that share the same pastor, and are independent of one another in all other respects.

## APPENDIX "A"

### MANDATE AND RESOURCES

The Archbishop provided the committee with the following terms of reference:

1. Review the work that has been done since March 2002
2. Recommend the steps to be taken during the next three years September 2003-2006 in light of population shifts, availability of clergy, financial picture of parishes. This might include proposals for restructuring, clustering of parishes, development of parish ministry teams, etc.
3. Recommend an organizational structure to guide the planning process through the next three years.

The first task for the Committee was to review the work done since March 2002. The resources available to us were:

- Comments and suggestions from Clergy Day meetings held to discuss the need to plan for the future.

- Statistical information prepared by the Archbishop's office and the Chancery Office.
- Feedback from consultation with Parish Pastoral Councils (June 2002).
- Feedback from consultation with Regional Pastoral Councils (January 2003).
- Feedback from consultation with Archdiocesan Pastoral Council (February 2003).
- Information on the planning process used for restructuring in the Diocese of London, the Archdiocese of Moncton and the Archdiocese of Edmonton.
- Plan '90 Report.
- Findings and Recommendations from Assembly 97' and Beyond.

## **APPENDIX "B"**

### **ARCHDIOCESE OF ST. JOHN'S**

#### **ST. JOHN'S CENTER**

DEAN: Monsignor James Doody, P.H.

1. Basilica of St. John the Baptist
2. St. Patrick's Parish
3. St. John Bosco Parish
4. Corpus Christi Parish
5. St. Matthew's Parish
6. St. Teresa's Parish
7. St. Pius X Parish

#### **ST. JOHN'S EAST**

DEAN: Father John Hanton

1. Mary Queen of Peace Parish
2. St. Paul's Parish
3. Holy Trinity Parish, Torbay

4. St. Francis of Assisi Parish, Outer Cove
5. St. Agnes' Parish, Pouch Cove-Flatrock
6. Holy Rosary Parish, Portugal Cove
7. St. Michael's Parish, Bell Island

#### **BURIN PENINSULA**

DEAN: Father Jeff Kolonel

1. Sacred Heart Parish, St. Bernard's
2. Christ the King Parish, Rushoon
3. Sacred Heart Parish, Marystown
4. St. Patrick's Parish, Burin
5. St. Thomas Aquinas Parish, St. Lawrence
6. St. Joseph's Parish, Lamaline

**ST. JOHN'S WEST/SOUTH**

DEAN: Father Pat Kennedy

1. St. Peter's Parish, Mount Pearl
2. Mary Queen of the World Parish, Mt. Pearl
3. St. Joseph's Parish, Petty Harbour
4. St. Kevin's Parish, Goulds
5. Sts. Peter and Paul Parish, Bay Bulls
6. Our Lady Star of the Sea Parish, Witless Bay
7. Holy Family Parish, Brigus South-Cappahayden
8. Holy Redeemer Parish, Trepassey
9. Holy Family Parish, Paradise
10. St. Thomas of Villanova Parish, Topsail
11. St. Edward's Parish, Kelligrews

**PLACENTIA/ST. MARY'S**

DEAN: Father Jerome Hann

1. Sacred Heart Parish, Placentia
2. Sacred Heart Parish, Fox Harbour
3. Holy Rosary Parish, Freshwater
4. Sacred Heart Parish, St. Bride's
5. St. Francis Xavier Parish, Long Harbour/ Southern Harbour
6. St. Joseph's Parish, Salmonier
7. Our Lady of Mount Carmel Parish,  
Mount Carmel
8. Assumption Parish, St. Mary's
9. Sacred Heart Parish, St. Vincent's

## APPENDIX "C"

## Summary of Responses to:

## PASTORAL PLANNING COMMITTEE INTERIM REPORT

Number of responses received

45

Personal reflection.....	
Individual Clergy.....	
Individual parishioners.....	
Deaneries.....	3
Parish Councils.....	14
Catholic Women's League.....	2
Legion of Mary.....	1
Chair.....	1
Prayer Group.....	1
Parish Council & Finance Committee.....	1
Parish Council/Finance Committee/Liturgy Committee.....	1
Regional Pastoral Council.....	1
Liturgy Committee & Interested parishioners.....	1
Parishioners.....	2
Finance Committee.....	1
Society St. Vincent de Paul.....	1
Religious Congregation.....	1
Representatives of Parish Committees.....	1
Catechetical Office.....	1
Parish Reflection/comments.....	3
Liturgical Commission.....	1
Clergy Day Recommendations.....	1
Total number of Responses	<u>45</u>

Comments	Communication	No
Must have better communication with those who want to be heard. ....		1
Communications will be a major factor in any configuration of a Pastoral Plan. Must take top priority. ....		3
Possibly consider presenting a revised report to the Archbishop for further discussion with parishes before preparing a final report to be adopted. ....		1
Respect for the human dynamics, the need to grieve, to say goodbye and prepare to welcome into another community .....		1
Need to communicate the principle objectives and recommendations of the Interim Report to the public at large .....		1
The Implementation coordinator has to be sensitive and open to the concerns and wishes of each parish in the cluster .....		1
Must have consent of th people who should be consulted every step of the way. No imposed solutions will work .....		1
Introducing the deaconate will demand careful communication and explanation on the local level (grassroots) .....		1
Good communication in this day & age is more than sending out materials hoping the priest will discuss it and everyone will hear it. ....		1
The “why” of this interim report needs clearer articulation and communications .....		1
There must be a commitment to communicate the final plan to all people in the Archdiocese .....		1
How will the parishes scheduled to be “clustered” cooperate with each other? Perhaps these parishes should be encouraged to begin the process of cooperation and integration more .....		1
Must give some thought to conflict and conflict resolution.....		1
Must give some guidelines to how to discuss the report .....		



Comments	Restructuring	No
Too Corporate a plan - the church is not a business .....		1
Our church is following a Protestant model .....		1
It might be more practical to have parishes that amalgamate & be centralized		
rather than trying to set up different times and places for masses and services .....		1
Separation would affect some excellent programs now in place .....		1
Community and its true meaning is missing from the Report. In rural NL the smaller churches in communities are just as important to people as the main parish church- it is important to keep them open .....		1
Is the only option "clustering", could other options be considered eg. continuation of the parishes, maybe in smaller more economical "plants" or even smaller communities .....		1
This would require an intensive effort to develop lay leadership for administration; liturgies, evangelization, outreach, etc .....		1
Clustering parishes can be counter productive, in that it can have the effect of dissolving community. Bigger geographic and new administration can't compete with the sense of oneness that comes from decades of sharing a common vision and building together .....		1

Financial Issues	No
How will the financial Issues of restructuring be addressed? Will finance	

committees be respected and held responsible for parish finances by the bishop.....	3
At least one lay person in the team will have to be paid a salary .....	1
Consideration must be given to employees whose positions will become redundant because of restructuring.....	2
Suggest a comparative study be made regarding the disproportionate operational expenditures of parishes with comparable populations and facilities and discuss the reasons for the disparities.....	1
Revenues with drop in parishes losing their resided priest as people will probably not attend church if services are curtailed .....	1
Has there been any studies or discussions on the Revenue implications of amalgamation? .....	1
If we accept married clergy...must consider the additional costs to cover spouse and possible children? .....	1
If a church community does not have the numbers or the finances to maintain a reasonable parish community they should be closed and asked to join the neighboring faith community .....	1
For struggling parishes how will they afford to have paid staff? .....	1
Cost of education and formation should be borne by the Diocesan assessments. ....	1
What consideration has been given to an increase in travel allowance for clergy moving from one area to another.....	1
Will cluster finances be a major factor in reorganization .....	1
Who benefits from the closure of churches? Presbyteries? Sale of Land? ..	1

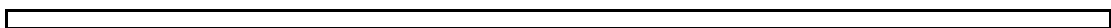
Comments	Personal Issues	No
----------	-----------------	----

Should be recruiting priests from other areas, outside the province and country.....	4
How will the two religious orders be involved in this process .....	2
How will chaplaincy services be provided to hospital, nursing homes etc. ...	1
Volunteers are the preferred choice over paying lay ministries .....	1
More emphasis from all levels of the church should be placed on religious vocations .....	1
The Burin Peninsula needs at least three priests .....	1
It appears that the urban areas will have more priests assigned than rural areas .....	1
Considering the age of some of our priests, will they be prepared for this expanded form of ministry? .....	1
Parishes have dedicated lay ministers and volunteers and their ministries and services need to be maintained. Possibly lose some volunteers in the process.....	3
Some parishes should be left for other priests; the process is not counting on retired priests.....	1
There should be a contingency plan to respond should the Redemptorists and/or Jesuits ever pull out of the city .....	1
Should we consider deacons when there are sufficient gifted and qualified lay ministers who can fulfill most functions of a deacon .....	1
The pastoral team in the cluster should have representative from each parish.....	3
The archbishop after much prayer and reflection appoint one full time person to coordinate the implementation plan.....	1
The spiritual welfare of people must have top priority when considering qualifications of team members. Political aspirations could be a real danger .....	1





Comments	Education Issues	No
Must understand and explain the true meaning of clustering and restructuring ie.		
Identity, Finances, Parish Organizations, C.W.L., K of C, etc.....		3
The concept of team approach must be understood. ....		1
Must initiate a process of education for all the people in the cluster.....		1
Education be provided on the Documents of Vatican Council II, particularly with respect to the role of laity in the Church .....		1
Must prepare; educate priests and lay people for those leadership teams; what resources are available to help with education and formation of teams .....		1
Restructuring must not begin until the required training is completed and pastoral teams are ready to participate according to the plan. ....		1
There should be ongoing evaluation and assessment of the clustering implementation.....		
Need a planned well thought out systematic formation program for priests, lay ministry, team ministry .....		1
Consider setting up a Retreat Center so that various parish groups could avail of opportunities for Retreat weekends and for spiritual and Faith Development .....		1
Immediate need to develop an archdiocesan approach to develop a comprehensive Stewardship Program .....		3
Involve personnel who would be available to make presentations and offer ongoing support for a well planned program.....		1
Clustering should be preceded by a period of interchanging ministries, for eg.		1
Readers of the Word, Chair, Ushers, etc., from one parish to the other and vice versa .....		1
Clarification for a parish vitality survey be given to parishes .....		1
Need one year of preparation before restructuring can begin .....		1
As soon as possible each parish should train and prepare lay presiders who will be ready to celebrate Liturgy of the Word and Liturgy of the Hours .....		1
Who will do the foundation required for ministers and teams pastoring those clusters.....		1
Priests will need formation vis-a-vis working on a team, learning how to let go, the psychology of pastoring in a cluster etc .....		1



Other Comments

Must establish a definite time line. ....

A representative from the Burin Peninsula should be on the committee .....

What input did the rural areas have in implementing the restructuring of the diocese?.....

Why wasn't something started twenty year ago when decline of priests began? .....

What can be done to head the hurting population of our faith? .....

We've known for a long time that this has to happen.....

Must keep in mind the deep attachments people have to their local communities .....

We must not be seen to abandon them .....

Will fewer masses and celebration of Sacraments by a priest lead to a confusion of belief in the Catholic Church and in belief practices .....

The Planning Committee should be a broader group representing the consumers of the Catholic Church.....

Hope that the Interim Report will not be the final report.....

Hope the Archdiocesan boundaries will change to better reflect historical ties and transportation patterns within the region .....

Must have a clear mission statement for the Diocese and the parish before the document can be discussed in a purposeful manner.....

Before restructuring commences, representatives from the diocese should come to Terrenceville to discuss the impact on the spiritual life of the parish .....

Need a priest (who is willing) to undertake this task .....

If possible, restructuring should take place in the five regions simultaneously .....

Must consider the individual needs of the parishes and modify the plan if necessary.....

Some clarity must be given regarding suggested time lines for implementing the plan.....

The time line for the final report should be extended to allow the committee to adequately deal with all the concerns and issues raised through consultation.

Formation of Catechetical coordinators in a cluster needs to begin as soon as possible.....

Parishes offering Catechetics in different forms could end up working at cross purposes to each other .....

The new plan must call for a renewal of services to the elderly and sick in small & large communities .....

The biggest fear is that this report is more "smoke & mirrors" and subterfuge for a top down bureaucratic decision resulting in little or no change in clergy, institutions or laity .....

At best this is a stop-gag measure. With one new priest every 3-5 years the end is in sight.. We need to be preparing for a non-clerical church.....

