

ISMS, SCHISMS, AND DECISIONS:
PRESERVATION PLANNING FOR THE PARISHES OF THE ROMAN
CATHOLIC ARCHDIOCESE OF BOSTON

A Thesis

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ABSTRACT

Much of the difficulty of preserving religious property is based on the social and political polarization of church and state. The climate of preservation planning for these buildings has been shaped by the dominant perception of separating the secular from the religious by all traditionally involved in the process: the planning practitioners, policy makers and sectarian leaders. Yet ample evidence shows that these houses of worship, particularly historic ones, provide crucial social services and can be incubators for community and economic development initiatives. To overlook these socially and architecturally significant buildings ignores an important part of American civic life.

In light of the divide of state and church, how does one create an ideal model for saving a religious building? To try to answer this daunting question, one may look at the history and current climate of the Catholic Church in the United States, particularly the Boston Archdiocese. The current events within the Archdiocese provide a means to examine the hierarchy and relationship between laity and clergy in decision-making regarding their property. Can there be true participation in preservation planning when one deals with an institution such as a parish, archdiocese or papacy?

The *ad intra* issues affecting Catholic property that, as with many other religious groups, is highly complex. The gamut of liturgical redesign issues associated with the Second Vatican Council's guidelines about removing the traditional high altar and installing movable pews has outraged both preservationists and parishioners alike—many who see these features as a decisive link to an architectural legacy as well as embodying cultural and ethnic histories. The ramifications of the sexual abuse crisis and financial hardships of the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Boston is leading to the

eventual closures of parochial schools and parishes in some of Boston's most underserved communities such as Roxbury, Dorchester and South Boston underscores the importance of planning for perpetuity of historic, religious property. Collaboration among the secular and religious groups and an understanding, and acceptance, of differences in beliefs and values will be required in order to achieve a future for these crucial buildings.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Erin Dearborn Coryell was born in Seattle, Washington in 1977 to Dr. Todd and Judy Coryell. After graduating from Garfield High School in 1995, she attended Bard College in Annandale-on-Hudson, NY. At Bard, she majored in Art History with a senior thesis focusing on the lithographic works of Jean Charlot.

Erin was introduced to the challenges, opportunities, and rewards of working with historic buildings in her first job. She worked with the construction manager of an urban development team to rehabilitate two Seattle landmark buildings into retail, office and condominium space. After the protests against the World Trade Organization, she decided to change her occupation and enter the public housing sector after traveling for a few months in the Middle East and Spain.

In August of 2002, Erin entered Cornell University's Master's program in Historic Preservation Planning, within the College of Art, Architecture, and Planning's City and Regional Planning Department.

For Herschel and all the good things that came along with him.

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INTRODUCTION

Many barriers stand in the way of preserving historic religious properties. Having suffered decay from age and neglect due to deferred maintenance, owners of these buildings are often times unaware of how to perform a building assessment, write a grant application or perform basic tasks associated with planning and undertaking a restoration project. Once a building has reached an advanced stage of decay, the property owner must acquire preservation skills or rely on professionals to secure a future for their church, temple, synagogue, mosque, or meetinghouse.

The likelihood that a congregation has an educated steward specifically responsible for building maintenance decreases as the operating budget and size of the congregation declines. Typically, repairing and maintaining these aging properties carries costs so prohibitive, only vibrant and growing congregations can afford the expenses. Many congregation members would like to see their building remain the center of an active community. Unfortunately, demographic shifts over the last century have meant that the largest group of potential donors who would give money to restore a religious building-the congregation-are now physically and geographically severed from their place of worship.

Other problems specific to historic religious buildings are that the Constitutional provisions requiring the separation between church and state affects the availability of federal and state grant funding. There is also an overall reluctance by many private individuals to support funding for religious properties. Sometimes this is due to the belief of splitting the secular from the spiritual. While at other times, they may have the perception that religious properties are not important to American cultural history. There could be misconceptions of the actual wealth of the congregation or larger denominational body. Many people value the idea of a secular,

non-pluralist mission as an ideological highroad in the preservation of historic property, therefore marginalizing the importance of traditional religions that have contributed to the past events of this country. Other aversions occur when possible donors assume that their contribution to a capital campaign or restoration fund of a religious building will support the operating budget of the church administration rather than support the rehabilitation project, especially if they believe in a religion different than the church in need of restoration.

Another barrier to paying for the perpetual care of houses of worship by a wider body of donors is due in part to misunderstandings about what activities take place within these buildings. Services and activities that are essential to many urban areas exist because of the availability of a religious building and survive, even prosper, solely due to the availability of property and financial support of the congregation. If a religious property exists in an underserved community, the likelihood of the building providing services to the community at large is high.¹ And due to the typically low median income of its congregation, the likelihood that the financial means of an inner-city congregation to support a pastor's salary, building utilities, and the costs associated with running a variety of services will leave money for building repairs is highly doubtful.² Since many urban congregations have declining membership, and their reliance on their member's donations has been the only source of operating income, the state of financing for many historic religious buildings is in decline.

As these buildings start to decline and deteriorate, neighbors begin to notice and are financially impacted. When the buildings are left vacant, the property values decline and cost of insurance for adjacent structures is increased and sometimes

¹ Cohen, Diane and A. Robert Jaeger. *Sacred Places at Risk: New Evidence on How Endangered Older Churches and Synagogues Serve Communities*. Philadelphia, PA: Partners for Sacred Places, 1998, 12.

² Partners, *Sacred Places at Risk*, 17.

cancelled. When judicatory bodies such as the Lowell and Vermont Diocese are considering the closure of up to thirty percent of their parishes, the situation of church abandonment is becoming an epidemic. The solution to the problem is much more problematic than restricting the church owners from making alterations to their building. Instead it becomes, how can preservationists preserve these crucial pieces of social and cultural history?

Local landmark ordinances can be inherently restrictive, and have been the few points of intersection between faith-based organizations and historic preservationists. Rather than cooperating with the religious community at an early point by assisting with fielding information and grant applications, the interaction between preservationists and religious congregations is relegated to rare instances of collaboration. A major movement to create resources for houses of worship by the preservation community has been the formation of the Sacred Places programs begun by local landmark commission and conservancy offices in New York, Chicago (now defunct) and Denver. Prior to the formation of these entities, preservation of religious property was a sovereign venture and voluntary by the congregation, and rarely done in cooperation with the assistance of the resources offered through a State Historic Preservation Office or landmark agency. The lack of contact between the groups has caused a miscalculation of the importance of religious properties in terms of historical importance and public value. Now that the potential of professional and financial assistance is becoming more readily available, a bridging of gaps should occur. But more preservation programs and grants are needed, as well as more education for preservation and planning practitioners to understand the importance of urban houses of worship and the community at large that it serves.

Partners for Sacred Places, a non-profit, non-sectarian organization in Philadelphia, argues that the variety and amount of service programs supported by

historic religious buildings surpasses any other building type in the United States. This high amount of building use that goes along with the social programming places an extreme amount of wear and tear on a house of worship. It often stretches a congregation's budget to the point of ending the support of these services and activities, ultimately forcing the group to close their doors.³ Many Americans have erroneously assumed that financial support for social ministry has been provided by the federal government to faith-based organizations through the "Charitable Choice Act." The idea that ample funding is available for social programs is in part due to the government publicity and public debate surrounding President George Walker Bush's *Faith Based and Community Initiatives Plan*, which in fact has been stalled on the House of Representatives floor since 2001.⁴ The current debate over Charitable Choice is an evolution of President William Clinton's 1996 "Welfare to Work" policies that granted federal funding to faith-based organizations providing social services.

A common perception of the new Bush policy is that if House Resolution #7 is passed, then the government will support faith-based organizations by direct distribution of capital allocations without oversight of hiring practices or programming content. Many fear that drawing a line between providing a social service and not forcing participants to be ministered to is blurred by the government's proposal. What some do not understand about the policy that is currently in place, as of the Welfare Reform Act in 1996, is a provision that community-serving faith-based organizations can provide social services with direct or indirect Federal support on the same basis as

³ Partners, *Sacred Places at Risk*, pg. 28.

⁴ House Committee on Government Reform. *The Role of Community and Faith-Based Organizations in Providing Social Services*. Serial no. 107-69. Washington D.C.: GPO, 2001.

any other nongovernmental providers of these services.⁵ These providers are non-profit 501(c)(3)s and follow the same federal guidelines concerning fair hiring practices and prohibited from making political campaign contributions.

The difficulty with funding restoration work caused by deferred maintenance can be lessened with the formation of a non-profit organization by the congregation. Although there are few sources of governmental funding for bricks and mortar work, other than state grants, there is a cache of funding for social programming. Many of the already existing social services provided by congregations are a natural outgrowth of their ministry but also a contributing factor to the deterioration of the building. The wear and tear from usage and prioritization of funding these services over building maintenance cause the need for more educated organizational strategies for owner's of historic houses of worship. To go that extra step to form a new non-profit entity is complicated by either lack of knowledge or trepidation on behalf of the church administrators.

This thesis will use case examples to demonstrate the current trends related to how declining congregations or religious organizations in underserved communities can organize to perform dual missions: effectively maintain their historic religious property and provide community services. Three models will be discussed that relate to the formation of nonprofit entities that are separate from the congregation or parish.

The relevance of preservation planning is most apt in the current situation of the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Boston (R.C.A.B.). The process of closing parish buildings, called by the Archdiocese as the reconfiguration process, is larger in scope than anything done before in the history of the Catholic Church in America, and larger than any other denomination has undertaken in a single region.

⁵ House Committee on Government Reform, *The Role of Community and Faith-Based Organizations in Providing Social Service*, 19.

Much of the information contained within this thesis is a result of primary, contemporary source documents gleaned from the *Boston Globe*, *Boston Herald*, *The Pilot* (the Boston Archdiocese newspaper), and the web site of the R.C.A.B. Telephone interviews with members of the preservation community in Boston shaped the understanding of the relationship between the hierarchy of the R.C.A.B. and local preservation practitioners. Numerous phone interviews with members of congregations of multiple denominations across the country have discussed the process and reasons for forming non-profit 501(c)(3)s from a religious entity's perspective.

In Chapter One, the examination of the plight of religious structures will be based on the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Boston's current process of reconfiguration involving the suppression of numerous historic buildings and merger of parishes with one another. The Boston Archdiocese has closed forty-five parishes over the last twenty years and is considering shuttering up to a third of its 357 parishes.⁶ The effect of the reconfiguration will be widespread but most pronounced in the urban neighborhoods that house the older, historic parishes. The reasons for the reconsolidation are due to changes in the leadership of the R.C.A.B. as well as the mounting financial hardships experienced by Catholic churches due to demographic changes, declining contributions, increased social services, and lawsuit settlements related to the sexual abuse scandal that has come to light. By looking at the process of reconsolidation and the response by the preservation community of Boston, the importance of these buildings to the city of Boston, will be shown.

In Chapter Two, the history of the Archdiocese and Catholicism will be discussed. By understanding the history of the denomination, the difficulty that arises when religious institutions begin to decline financially can not be undervalued. In the

⁶ Paulson, Michael. "Many Parishes Seem Closure Candidates." *Boston Globe*, December 10, 2003.

case of the Catholic Church in Boston and elsewhere, canon law dictates that all parishes are ruled by the hierarchy of the papacy and the authority of a large governing body of cardinals, bishops, and presbytery. The financing of each parish is determined by the hierarchal structure, as well as choices and decisions that are made regarding every component of paying for the maintenance of parish property, although it is the lay people who donate money to build their own church. This type of canon law leads to a disjunction between the economic versus emotional value of parish property between hierarchal members and parishioners. Answering the question of if the hierarchy is willing to adapt to parishioners requests to keep their church building open shows the schism developing between the laity and the governing power.

In Chapter Three, by looking at the issues that effect the fate of the historic religious property in Boston, a counter argument can be made that a new life for these buildings can be developed which runs parallel with the values and ideals of the social service mission of the R.C.A.B. In many other cities, when other religious denominational houses of worship have experienced their congregation size dwindle and maintenance costs become prohibitive, congregations have formed non-profit entities to plan for the preservation of their building. The relevance of creating non-profits for securing a future for historic properties has been a tradition in the field of preservation, but in the situation of religious properties the relevance seems particularly apt and appropriate due to the lack of funding for sectarian organizations by the federal and many state governments.

Discussed in this chapter will be the concept of an “Urban Life Center,” a particularly compelling and potential model for rehabilitation campaigns, fundraising, and future usage of religious property. The Urban Life Center model is the formation of a separate nonprofit 501(c)(3) formed by congregation members of a historic religious building. These urban centers have catapulted declining congregations from

providing simple community services as part of their mission to creating a highly effective organization to address the challenges and opportunities of providing for their community. This type of non-profit has been used in numerous cities, and each Urban Life Center has common characteristics thus making it a potential organizational model to be used by both congregations and preservationists. The steps are simple-members of a congregation in an urban church form an autonomous 501(c)(3) organization to coordinate a community center of sorts. The group has formal, legal ownership of the historic building and the non-profit entity allows the congregation to use the sanctuary space for Sunday and holiday services, but generates the building operating income from renting to other non-profit organizations.

In Chapter Four, other examples of the importance of houses of worship in a community context will be discussed. Churches and other buildings have been the location of prolific faith-based and community development organizations to become organized and begin important community and economic development work in many cities. Unfortunately, the historic preservation and city planning profession has traditionally avoided working in partnership with these organizations due to their inherently sectarian nature, although they have 501(c)(3) status.

Another model discussed will be Adaptive Use projects that involve buildings that were formerly sacred space for a congregation but are no longer used by that religious organization or congregation. Some of these examples are buildings that have evolved into a collective space for the community in cities such as Cincinnati, OH and small towns in North Dakota. Whether these spaces are still “religious” in nature is debatable since the uses may relate to spiritual beliefs, but have had their original liturgical elements altered and no longer serve a specific religious congregation. Nonetheless, they are usually run as a non-profit or small-profit organization and believe in serving the community and restoring sacred space.

An alternative outcome to preservation planning for historic religious properties that are experiencing hardship can result in the formation of faith-based community organizations. These organizations have used their religious property as a catalyst to develop the neighborhoods around their house of worship. In the example of Bethel New Life in Chicago, congregations that have undergone a capital campaign or restoration project for their historic property have developed tools to take their energy to the next level. These faith-based organizations utilize the organization of the congregation and their physical building as a resource. They see a need, either to serve the community by providing more social services from their newly maintained building or to create new housing or credit unions in the area in which they are located.

In all of the models discussed in Chapters Three and Four, the reason for examining the importance of separate non-profit groups is logical. Historically and presently, faith-based organizations with non-profit 501(c)(3) status have helped solve dilemmas associated with preservation grant applications. The non-profit status also helps with community fundraising for maintenance and restoration projects by forming a group autonomous from the religious body. Establishing this separate group from the congregation helps with a variety of issues—from marketing the capital campaign for a non-profit organization to formalizing a group of individuals with the same goals and dedication to raise money for their cause.

This “realignment” into a separate group happens when the members of a religious organization are forced to look at the bottom line of their day-to-day operations. These factors typically coincide with the long-term implications of losing congregation membership and hence, funding from internal sources, creates a need to look beyond their immediate circle in order to self-sustain. With the formation of a separate 501(c)(3), some of the groups strikingly disassociate the religious uses of the building from the social services or community uses. Other non-profits that are

formed by religious organizations have connected their programs to the original religious mission but are willing to keep budgets and staff apart. Many of these separate non-profit spin-offs require community and congregation partnerships, and reorient the goal of programming for the community uses along with the congregation's usage of the building.

By discussing the various methods of organization for congregations, information about successful methods of creating a steering committee, building management and drumming up financial support will be documented. Since many people interviewed were unaware of similar projects in other cities, hopefully these glimpses of other projects can generate communication and instruction between groups. The hurdles of running both a non-profit and rehabilitation project at the same time can seem insurmountable, but have been accomplished in the past and can be in the future.

CHAPTER ONE:
CLOSING CHURCHES IN THE ROMAN CATHOLIC ARCHDIOCESE OF
BOSTON

Process

The complex and disheartening challenges facing the task of preserving religious structures is epitomized in the current situation facing the Boston Archdiocese. Once one of the most prosperous and quickly growing sectarian organizations in the history of the country, the Archdiocese has been plagued with insurmountable barriers preventing it from continuing to operate in the fashion it has for the last twelve decades. In December 2003, the new Archbishop requested that lay leaders and clergy meet to discuss the redundancy of underutilized property in defined “clusters” or geographic areas outlined by the archdiocese. In each of these clusters, there are between two to seven parishes and a diversity of sizes and uses: some have rectories, convents and schools whereas some only have a church. Some have as many as four Sunday services with a thousand or more regular parishioners whereas some have little as 40 attendees. There is also a huge diversity of building stock in terms of age and historic significance: properties contain nineteenth-century, masonry, multi-storied landmark buildings built to accommodate thousands of parishioners whereas others are of recent and inexpensive construction, small, and lack signature ornamentation. There are 357 parishes identified in the Boston Archdiocese, and it is estimated by the archdiocese that up to a third of these parishes will be closed within the next year (Figure 1.1).⁷

⁷ http://www.R.C.A.B..org/Parish_Reconfiguration/FAQ.html. Information received March 20, 2004.

Archdiocese of Boston

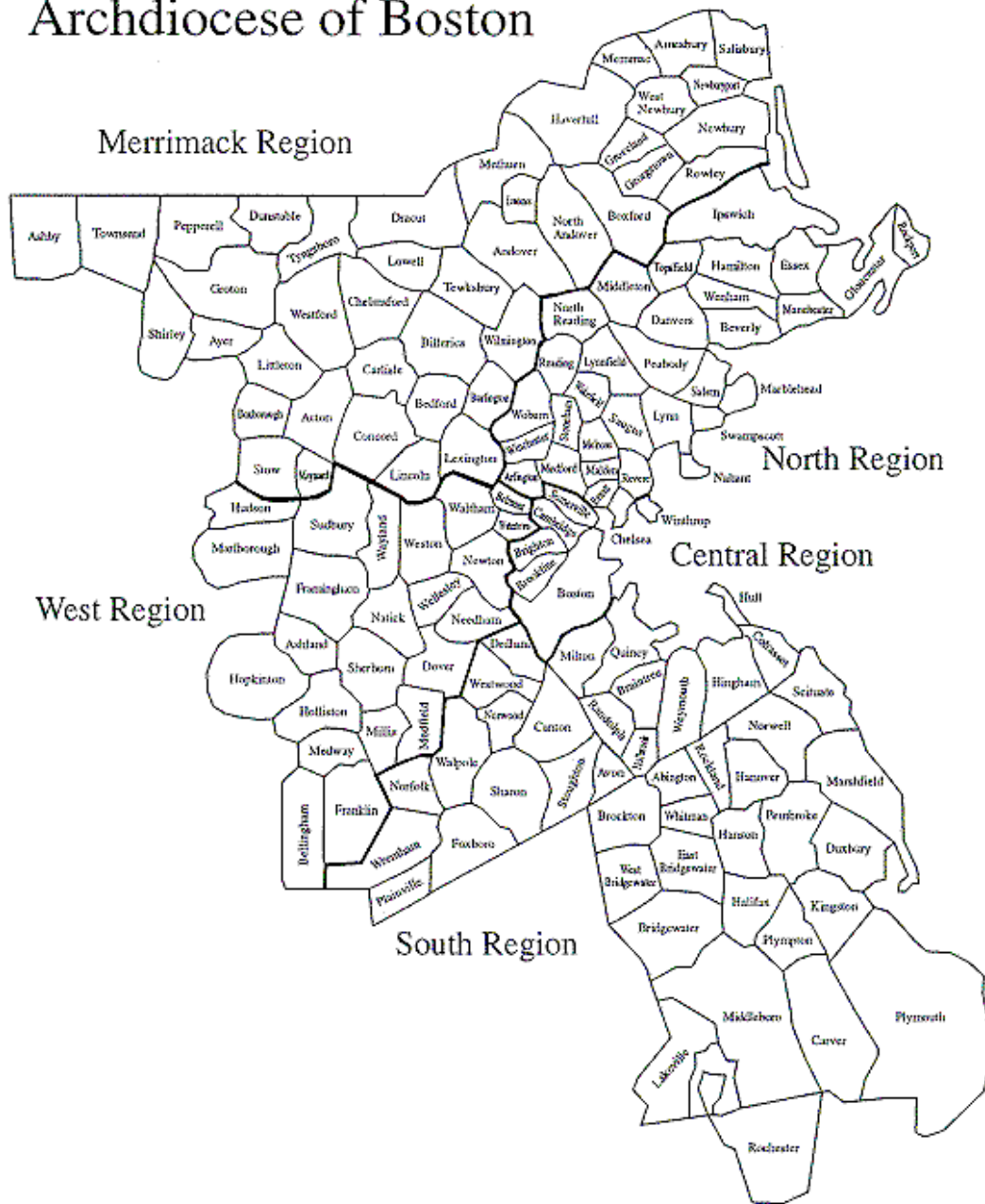


Figure 1.1. Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Boston Map of Regions at Present Day. Source: www.racb.org. Information received April 24, 2004.

The task for each of these clusters from December 2003 to March 2004 was to reach a consensus about which parishes in their cluster should close and those that should remain open. The Archbishop asked the general Catholic laity to think hard about what buildings they would sacrifice in order to consolidate and reconfigure the archdiocese so that it may grow stronger in the future. In order to address this problem, each parish was allowed to have three lay persons and their clergy meet with others in their cluster. These meetings were overseen by a vicar who was to guide the process and answer questions. The lay leaders and clergy were requested to balance their attendance, based on christenings, funerals, weddings and funerals, with their contributions to the community as seen in social programs, schools, and outreach. The archbishop and bishops requested that the leaders consider factors such as a church having a significant ethnic population, if it supports a parochial school or provides a remarkable social program. These were considered along with the total debt and attendance. The leaders then reported their findings with two parishes recommended for proposed closure to the archdiocese by March 8, 2003.⁸

The cumulative effect of these closings has been compared to everything from a real-life version of the television show *Survivor*, where the participants choose a fellow player to kick off the island and lose the chance for a small fortune, to the analogy of what happened after the implementation of busing and desegregation in Boston in the 1970s. Court imposed bussing in 1974 caused a significant number of long-term residents to move out of the city and not enroll their children in the Boston School district. Many of these former residents have not returned to the city or their old neighborhoods since then.

⁸ Ibid.

The archdiocese has emphasized the importance of brevity in the cluster decision-making process to the lay leaders, but many outside and inside the Church have requested that the Archdiocese slow down. Questions surrounding the long-term effect of the closures have arisen. Boston Mayor Tom Menino said that the decision to close these churches can not occur without a plan slowed into phases since the impact on neighborhoods will be extraordinary. "They [the churches] are like communities within a community, the touchstone of people's lives. They feed people. They clothe them. They educate their children. In some cases, they even help to find them jobs. The role they occupy in the neighborhood is enormous."⁹ Personal pleas to the archdiocese by U.S Representative Stephen P. Lynch and former Boston mayor and U.S. Ambassador to the Vatican, Raymond L. Flynn, to slow the expedited process imposed by the curia have been ignored. Their proposals to meet with archdiocese representatives have been denied.¹⁰

A central committee who will review the recommendations was established upon the announcement of the reconfiguration process. Representatives of clergy and laity from the five regions of the archdiocese sit on the central committee and each region has at least one priest and one lay person representing their area. In addition to the clergy and lay people, several archdiocesan officials, additional members of congregations and a few representatives who have background and experience with ethnic apostolates sit on the committee.¹¹ The central committee has been oriented by the archdiocese on the current situation of the amount of priests as personnel able to serve parishes, current parish finances and demographics. Members were selected by their past involvements in parish life and knowledge of dynamics within the region

⁹ Gelzinis, Peter, "Menino on Church Closings: NOT SO FAST; Compared to Busing." *Boston Globe*, March 2, 2004.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Dorney, Meghan, "Reconfiguration Committee Members Announced." *The Pilot*, March 12, 2004.

concerning schools and ethnic representation. The central committee has been overseeing and reviewing the recommendations made by the clusters of parishes that met the deadline of cluster recommendations of March 8, 2004. A number of parish clusters opted not to make any suggestions for closure while others suggested all parishes be closed.

The designation of these cluster groups began in 1995. Defined by the archdiocese as uniting a group of parishes together to collaborate for planning purposes, the clusters have met in a variety of capacities for the last nine years.¹² The premise for the organization of the cluster groups is based on geography, and a closer examination of the groups show that some clusters included areas that may have redundant properties (underused parishes) due to population declines, whereas others have active congregations that are growing, according to the sacrament index that is related to parish pastoral statistics collected annually by the archdiocese.¹³ The discrepancy between the overall health of one group as compared to another is disparate. For instance, in one of the cluster groups in Dorchester (Figures 1.2–1.5), considered Vicariate II in the Central Region, the average health of sacramental index of the congregation of four churches was nearly identical (Table 1.1).

Of the four parishes, Saint Brendan and Saint Mark were recommended for closure. In comparison, a cluster of parishes in South Boston that recommended keeping all the parishes open had a similarly wide array of sacramental statistics.

¹² http://www.R.C.A.B..org/Parish_Reconfiguration/FAQ.html. Information downloaded March 20, 2004.

¹³ According to *Boston Globe* articles, the sacramental index is a five-year average of the number of funerals; the number of baptisms; and double the number of weddings tallied on a point system. If a parish has over a hundred points, they are considered healthy.

Table 1.1 – Sample Cluster in Vicariate II

Parish ¹⁴	Mass Attendance	Baptisms	First Communion	Confirmations	Marriages	Funerals
St Brendan	754	59	41	23	20	68
St Mark	n/a	85	20	17	19	68
St Ann	811	62	45	25	12	56
St Gregory	1942	72	36	31	30	94
Gate of Heaven	836	61	51	94	41	94
Our Lady of Czestochawa	961	24	38	25	8	29
St Augustine	n/a	108	32	8	18	122
St Brigid	1358	85	44	94	27	64
St Monica	n/a	14	0	0	3	16
St Peter	n/a	13	24	18	5	39
St Vincent de Paul	375	55	6	2	18	44

¹⁴ http://www.R.C.A.B..org/Parish_Reconfiguration/PastoralStats2003.html



Figure 1.2: Saint Brendan, built 1937, 589 Galvin Blvd; Architect: Raymond J. Gorani



Figure 1.3: Saint Mark, built 1914, 175 Dorchester Ave; Architect: Charles Brigham



Figure 1.4: Saint Ann, date of construction unknown, 251 Neponset Ave; Architect: Edward T. P. Graham



Figure 1.5: Saint Gregory, c. 1852, 2215 Dorchester Ave; Architect: Patrick Ford



Figure 1.6: Gate of Heaven, built 1896, 615 East Fourth St; Architect: Patrick Ford



Figure 1.7: Saint Augustine, built 1868, 845 East Broadway; Architect: Patrick Kelly



Figure 1.8: Saint Brigid, built 1930, 845 East Broadway; Architect: Maurice Meade



Figure 1.9: Saint Peter, built 1899, 75 Flaherty Way; Architect: Patrick Ford



Figure 1.10: Saint Vincent de Paul, built 1872, 1524 VFW Parkway; Architect: Patrick Keely

In the case of the second cluster (Figures 1.6–1.11), also in Vicariate II, all parishes agreed not to make a recommendation for closure. Instead, the regional vicar, Rev. Nicholas C. Ciccone Jr. recommended closing Gate of Heaven and Saint Augustine due to the premise that the two parishes require \$5,000,000 for building repairs, which the archdiocese estimates is 80 percent of the amount needed for all of the South Boston churches.¹⁵ Both of the churches were built soon after the end of the Civil War. Saint Augustine has traditionally been the home parish for many of South Boston’s poorer families. Gate of Heaven, one of the most well-known and largest parishes in the area, is similarly disposed to providing services to the area community.¹⁶ The vicar who made the recommendation to the archdiocese of closing these historic parishes used a process termed “qualification,” when no response by the cluster to the archdiocese allows the vicar to cast a vote instead.

The cluster recommendations are passed onto the twenty-two vicars who are overseeing the cluster process meaning that, of the approximately eighty clusters, four groups will fall under a vicar’s supervision. The vicars will take the recommendations made by the cluster, add comments and forward them to the five regional bishops. In the case of the first groups of parishes discussed, Rev. Ciccone over-rode the recommendation of the cluster leaders and recommended to keep Saint Brendan’s open, although he did not explain his reasoning. The bishops review and add comments to the recommendation and send them to the central committee who will review them further before sending their recommendations to Archbishop O’Malley. The process is seen as multi-stepped, with the recommendations made by the cluster

¹⁵Abelson Jenn, “Parish Makes a Case to Challenge the Threat of Closure, Crowd Fills Gate of Heaven Church.” *Boston Globe*, April 5, 2004.

¹⁶Kurkjian, Stephen and Kellyanne Mahoney, “2 S. Boston Parishes Targeted for Closure.” *Boston Globe*, March 5, 2004.

open to change by the vicar, bishop, central committee, and archbishop. No parish can be closed without approval from the Vatican.

Historically, the archdiocese has relied on a system of mergers for the suppression of a parish. A merger differs from the process of reconfiguration in the sense that when merging parishes combine, the resources, assets and debts from the closed parish are shifted over to the merged parish.¹⁷ The receiving parish also has the say over relics and other decorative objects. The responsibility of the closed parish's members and financial obligations can lead to a strain on the newly formed parish.

The Effect of the Reconfiguration

In order to secure a future for the Church in the Boston area, the leaders in the Archdiocese hierarchy believe that sacrifice is required from the parishioners to insure that the institution and the good works it supports will continue to prosper. Downsizing needs to occur in order to prosper as a healthy entity and for this to happen, Archbishop O'Malley has requested that parish doors close immediately so that a more efficient Catholic organization will result. The sacrifice of this reconfiguration could mean that long standing, historic Catholic property will be dispersed away from the parishioners and neighborhood it has served into the hands of private developers, or will be shuttered and abandoned.

The effect on the neighborhoods within the vicinity of closed parishes, outside of the sense of loss by many of the attending parish members, will be seen on two levels: the immediate impact of losing social service programs integral to supporting

¹⁷ "When there is a merger of two or more parishes the assets and liabilities of the parishes belong to the new parish that is formed from the merger, whereas when there is a suppression, the assets and liabilities of the parish that is suppressed or closed belong to the Archdiocese of Boston." Bishop G. Lennon, Moderator of the Curia, in an open letter sent to priests of the archdiocese. Downloaded information from www.R.C.A.B.org. on February 13, 2004.

the community at large will be lost and historic buildings identifiable to neighbors will potentially be demolished, abandoned or altered irreparably.

Programs that will be lost or moved span the social program spectrum. They include after school and day care programs, food distribution programs like Meals on Wheels or food banks, homeless shelters, and immigrant education programs. The long-term effect on the immediate users can only be measured after the greater Boston network of social service providers responds to the new empty holes.

The second effect will be on the built environment. This is even more difficult to project or contemplate since the Archdiocese has rarely identified what land-holdings they own. The Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Boston has been averse to working with the preservation community in the past. This reluctance meant may lead to historic properties being demolished by purchasers or may result in being left abandoned for long periods of time while waiting to be sold by the Archdiocese.

It is worth noting that the Boston Archdiocese is not using a prior reconfiguration process as a model, although there have been significant suppressions in the past in Pittsburgh, Chicago, Detroit, Cincinnati and rural areas such as northeastern Pennsylvania and upstate New York. The Boston Archdiocese is forming a model that is for this situation and responds to their needs, the defining feature they see as expediting the process of closing churches. The size and scope of the closures and mergers will surpass any other prior religious denominational consolidations in this country.

For the presbytery, the goal of the reconfiguration has been to lessen the obligations that go along with the welcoming parish receiving the suppressed parish. The debt from the closed parishes will be placed into a general fund rather than passed

onto other parishes in their cluster.¹⁸ The process of closing a church means that deconsecrated sacred places will lead to the national, potentially international, distribution of unique and historically important interior objects. Everything that was part of the blessing of the church will be sold: the stained glass (if not broken upon removal), pews, organ, altarpieces, and relics will be sold through an on-line Catholic auction to other recognized Catholic parishes allowed by the judicatory body to participate. Some components of the church will be destroyed before being handed over to private or other religious buyers.¹⁹

Reasons for Consolidation

The impetus for the new organization of parishes is due to the new leadership of the curia in Archbishop O'Malley, a Franciscan monk originally brought up in the Capuchin order, who replaced Cardinal Bernard F. Law in July 2003 as head of the archdiocese after resigning amid the sexual abuse scandal.²⁰ Why Archbishop O'Malley has made a clear goal of directing the archdiocese to become more fiscally responsible, and the gusto with which he is organizing the consolidation process seems directly related to his vow of poverty and value of admonishing all earthly and material goods. Upon his appointment, he moved into an apartment in the rectory of the Cathedral of the Holy Cross, designed by Patrick Keely, and announced that one of his first priorities in becoming archbishop was that no money from church donations would be used to pay for litigation and settlement costs for the sexual abuse scandal.²¹

¹⁸ Paulson, Michael. "Diocese to Speed Parish Closings." *Boston Globe*, March 3, 2004.

¹⁹ Phone interview with Marilyn Fennelosa, National Trust for Historic Preservation, Senior Program Officer, Northeast Regional Office. March 10, 2004.

²⁰ Cullen, Kevin. "More than 80 percent of Victims Since 1950 Were Male, Report Says" *Boston Globe*, February 28, 2004. One of the most misstated facts about the sexual abuse scandals is that the abusers were ephobophiles, attracted to post-pubescent victims, rather than pedophiles.

²¹ Paulson, Michael. "Diocesan Headquarters Sold to BC: Brighton Land Nets \$107.4m" *Boston Globe*, April 21, 2004.

He quickly put the sprawling archbishop's mansion in Brighton on the market and sold it to Boston College within four months for \$107.4 million.²² The Archdiocese had previously taken out \$37 million in loan from the Knights of Columbus to cover lawyer's fees and has been borrowing with interest from the General Fund to cover the settlement to the victims.²³

The land was originally a 26 acre estate purchased in 1880 to build a seminary and includes a number of historic buildings, such as the immense former home to cardinals O'Connell, Richard Cushing, Humberto Medeiros, and Bernard Law along with the immense St. William's Hall built in 1936 and St. Clement's Hall which was a former seminary but has been leased to the college. Part of the dialogue underway is in regards to the tomb of former archbishop O'Connell, who like many men currently in the archdiocese administration was an alumnus of Boston College. The community residents have received the news of the sale with trepidation and concern due to the longevity of the Archdiocese in the neighborhood. The Massachusetts Secretary of State who has lived across the street for the property for twenty years remarked to a reporter, "This seems more like a going out of business sale. As an institution, is this the end? It is more than just a dramatic move, when you start selling off the educational facilities."²⁴ The sale of the property includes a provision that if the Archdiocese decides in the next ten years to sell the chancery that serves as the headquarters and St. John's seminary, then Boston College will purchase these building as well for an additional \$60 million.

²² Ibid.

²³ Convey, Kevin. "Rough Year Financially for Boston Archdiocese." *Boston Herald*, 4/02/04. Chancellor David Smith said that the archdiocese had borrowed a total of 90 million to pay claims in the cases. The interest on those loans are approximately \$250,000 a month.

²⁴ Slack, Donovan. "Though Expected, Neighbors Wary, Unsettled." *Boston Globe*. April 21, 2004.

The parish consolidation process is in line with these large parcel sales. The philosophy of Archbishop O'Malley is built around the importance of maintaining the spirit of those within the institution, rather than the physical symbols of the Catholic Church. "As I said when I first came [to Boston], people are more important than money, and the church is more important than our buildings. It is a very difficult decision to make, but we needed to make it, and hopefully it will put us on the road to recovery, both spiritual and economic."²⁵

Although many associate the current consolidation process with the litigation related to payments to abuse victims for lawsuit settlements, it is a direct result of multiple factors akin to mistakes that many municipal governments make. The archdiocese is confronting the cumulative effects of public service programs running on deficit, parochial schools with decreased enrollment, a sharp decline in the amount of clergy entering the priesthood and the effects of less people attending church. By examining the *Archdiocese Annual Financial Report for the Financial Year ending June 30, 2003* the largest expense that contributes to the operating shortfall is due to \$85,000,000 for lawsuit settlements. The archdiocese attributes their negative balance to the eighty social service agencies supported by the Archdiocese's Central Fund and the decreased contributions by members.²⁶ Also, the estimated depreciation of the buildings owned by the archdiocese are impacting the net assets of the Central Fund, with \$2,232,367 estimated for office furniture and buildings over forty years old as well as \$1,273,013 included under Administration Expenses for Facility and Property

²⁵ Paulson, Michael. "Diocesan Headquarters Sold to BC: Brighton Land Nets \$107.4m" *Boston Globe*, April 21, 2004.

²⁶ Letter to the public from David W. Smith, Archdiocese Chancellor "Annual Financial Report Roman Catholic Archbishop of Boston A Corporation Sole – Central Funds" from *The Pilot* April 2, 2004.

Management. A line item of gains on sale of land and buildings was \$1,436,901 (Appendix A).²⁷

The depreciation from the properties owned by the archdiocese is only a small consideration, but when selling underutilized properties and land can remedy the current financial shortfalls, the decision is clear. Archbishop O'Malley identifies these buildings as the greatest current burden and an obvious target for streamlining the budget. Reconfiguring the archdiocese involves identifying which parishes are redundant, and can be consolidated with a similar congregation. The goal is to allow parishes that thrive, in terms of marriages, baptisms and attendance to accommodate the suppressed parishes. But these parishes also need to be able to operate their programs and services without debt, which means that either the contributions from parishioners are enough to subsidize the programs or the programs are kept to a minimum.

Little information has been made available to understand the details about the fiscal crisis, specifically what burden the historic parishes create on the R.C.A.B.'s budget. One could assume that debt has accumulated due to the age of the building, the lack of donations from the dwindling congregation, and the more extensive programming that services the community. The archdiocese's policies for the parishes in underserved communities, which tend to be the parishes that operate in the red, have been to provide loans to subsidize the expenses of these congregations. The archdiocese has publicized financial information that shows separating debt from assets on parish and archdiocese levels and proves that, although it may have a large budget, expenses exceed revenue. Yet no information is broken out on a parish

²⁷ "Annual Financial Report Roman Catholic Archbishop of Boston A Corporation Sole -- Central Funds" *The Pilot* April 2, 2004 for FY ending June 30, 2003.

specific level to give hard facts and numbers stating what the true financial burden of these properties is.

The Church is still operating in a surplus minus any costs associated with lawsuits. It has a central account, separate from parish budgets that closed the 2002 fiscal year with an 11 million dollar surplus, although 9 million dollars was borrowed to cover budget shortfalls relating to operating expenses and social service programs.²⁸ From this same report, the archdiocese has investments worth 14 million dollars that generated \$800,000 in profits from interest.

This same report omitted information about nearly 1.4 billion dollars worth of church property that are *not* being used as churches or schools.²⁹ The Roman Catholic archdiocese does not directly possess properties owned by various orders such as the Jesuits, Franciscans and Dominicans, but it may have some control over how they are managed and staffed. It also does not include information about hospitals and health care facilities owned by the R.C.A.B. or any of the orders.

The problem for understanding whether the diocese is financially viable or teetering on decline is the lack of communication between the leaders of the religious institution, the laity, and those outside of it. Requests by parishioners or media for reporting the bottom line of earnings and expenses have been ignored prior to the sexual abuse scandal. It wasn't until the enormous settlements that the R.C.A.B. began to be more transparent about its budget.

Further complications in understanding the institution are caused by the vast holdings of an almost seeming empire in Boston. If one were to try to understand the amount of land owned by the archdiocese, one would need to know all of the entities

²⁸ Covey, Eric, "Archdiocese Opens Book for Public" *Boston Herald*, May 31, 2003.

²⁹ Sullivan, Jack and Eric Convey, "LAND RICH: Archdiocese has Millions in Unused Property" *Boston Herald*, August 27, 2002.

and relationships between the non-profits established by the diocese as well as what is contained within a trust or acquired by a donation with a binding conveyance. Some property owned by an order, such as the Franciscan or Jesuit, may be controlled by the order but final say about the purchasing or selling of the land is dictated by the Archdiocese of Boston.

The policy of the archbishop having final say over the future of a building has many social implications that go beyond the basic fiscal decision that surrounds it. The effect of the church closures causes some to feel that they will be more directly negatively impacted by the reconfiguration process than by the sexual abuse scandal. Some feel that the sexual abuse scandal has already alienated some Catholics so severely that the repercussions of a parish closure could make them never return to the Church again. Then there are some that see this as an inevitable process that the archbishop and clergy know about best and the decisions can only allow the Church to grow healthier in the future.

It is difficult to make conjectures about what the cityscape of Boston will look like after the consolidation process has been completed. It is also difficult to estimate the impact on the availability of social services. But more importantly, many within the Catholic Church wonder what will happen to the parishioners who may have been previously disenchanted by the church's response to the sexual abuse scandal and are now displaced. Will this mean that the hierarchy that exists within the Church will cause its own implosion? Active campaigns by the Catholic archdiocese to incorporate younger members into the fold and recruit more clergy have been unsuccessful and the conjecture for dedicated members in the future looks bleak.

The Boston Preservation Community's Response to the Consolidation Process

Preservationists working within Boston are well aware of the verging catastrophe, although not sure of how to engage the Archdiocese with considering reuse options of the parishes recommended for closure.³⁰ Since the steps for approving a closure could take a year or more for approval and consolidation, the preparation for instituting any policies that could affect those earmarked for closure need to have begun. One idea has been to propose to the R.C.A.B. to include conveyances in the sale of parish properties. The preservation community as represented by the Boston Landmark Commission and National Trust Northeast Field Office would like the Archdiocese to consider selling the property with restrictions.

The option of landmark designations was considered briefly during an initial meeting between the local preservation groups when the consolidation process was announced in December. A survey had been performed previously through a grant to research the historic churches in the city of Boston. Approximately fifty churches of different denominations were covered by the survey and classified to be of historic significance. Although this information was important for identifying some of the important older parishes, it did not cover or survey all of the 357 parishes in the greater Boston region of the R.C.A.B., and classify buildings according to historic significance or architectural integrity. From this lack of information, the preservationists quickly created a strategy to locate all of the parishes and rate them on a scale of 1 (one) to 4 (four): one being of national significance, two being of regional importance, three being important to the city, and four being important on a local or neighborhood level.

³⁰ Phone interview with Ellen Lipsey, Executive Director Boston Landmarks Commission. March 2, 2004.

From this exercise, the group learned that there were very few on the national level as well as the regional. Marilyn Fennelosa, Senior Program Officer for the Northeast Regional Office of the National Trust for Historic Preservation, recollected that one of the difficulties of using architectural significance as a criteria was that a few designs have been used over and over again during the growth of the archdiocese.³¹ These designs revolved around the works of Patrick C. Keely, the architect who designed the Holy Cross Cathedral in the South End (located on the corner of Washington and Union Park Street, built between 1866 and 1875) or were a variation of previous designs based around Keely or his son-in-law Patrick Ford, and developed by later architects.

One of the major barriers to a proactive dialogue for creating options for the closed parishes has been the lack of a relationship between the preservation community and the archdiocese. Some of the few interactions that have occurred between the Catholic Archdiocese and the preservationists in Boston have been contentious as with the Church of the Immaculate Conception.³² In October 1986, the New England Province of the Society of Jesus began the conversion of one of their churches into condominium and office space for the members of their Jesuit order. Stopped by a building inspector due to the lack of a demolition permit, the partial interior demolition of the Church of Immaculate Conception angered many local residents, preservationists and lay leaders. It also led to the first application for an interior landmark designation by the Boston Landmarks Commission. The application was begun in hope of preventing the further demolition of the sanctuary, central apse

³¹ Phone interview with Marilyn Fennelosa, National Trust for Historic Preservation, Senior Program Officer, Northeast Regional Office. March 10, 2004

³² *A Case Study on the Mediation Process Over the Preservation of a Religious Building: the Church of the Immaculate Conception, Boston, Massachusetts*. Case Study published by Historic Boston Incorporated. April 1988.

and seating area but was halted when the Jesuits agreed to begin mediation with Historic Boston to discuss pragmatic design solutions that would respond to both parties' interests.

The church had begun the demolition of the interior in order to conform to Vatican II standards of creating an interior compatible with their sense of a religious mission. Since Vatican II, the ritual of the sacrament of initiation in receiving the Eucharist had changed over time.³³ This was seen by the Jesuits as performing worship services in a space more intimate and austere than their existing sanctuary. The existing ornate interior was seen by community lay members and preservationists as one of the most remarkable of its kind in the city for the amount of detail in its furnishings, artwork, pews, altars, murals, and organ.³⁴

The case of Immaculate Conception resulted in the typical disjunction that occurs between religious groups with urban properties that are seen as architecturally or historically significant to people outside of the remaining congregation. Issues of remodeling or making significant exterior alterations are frequently controversial between the religious organization and the interests of the community members or preservationists. From the Jesuit point of view, the original use of the church accommodated services for a parish the size of 2000 people, and then over time, due to population shifts, the space was more appropriate for the use of offices and staff living quarters. This meant that the new design resembled the space arrangements more relevant to the needs of the Jesuits. Rather than keeping the architectural design intact with how preservationists perceived the essential characteristics of the building to be, the new interior alterations would accommodate and address the Jesuit's interpretation of the Second Vatican Council.

³³ *Case Study*, pg. 6.

³⁴ *Case Study*, 7.

The complexities of bridging the gaps between the preservation community and religious groups, particularly in Boston, has been due to a lack of understanding or ignorance about the other group's values in regards to property. Whereas in the case of Immaculate Conception, the preservation community interpreted the changes to the interior as an irreversible refurbishing and redesign that threatened the historic fabric of the church, the Jesuits saw the changes as accommodating the recommendations made by the councilor body that determines the church design. The antagonism between the two groups could be expected when one considers that a landmark ordinance would not trump what the Jesuits saw as their right to practice religion and follow the orders that come from a higher power.

Conclusion

The notion of whether the selections for closure follow the principles of a participatory process that is just or equitable for all involved does not apply to the reconfiguration process. Resembling an egalitarian exercise where every congregation has a part of the closure process, the domination by some groups over others will inevitably occur due to language differences or other components that will create an uneven playing field. The Archdiocese of Boston does not appear to be concerned with oversight of the process other than the speed of the process; the transparency in the cluster formations and process of collaborative planning are as nearly opaque as identifying sexually offending priests. The formation of the clusters has been a mysterious and disconnected component of the process with groups that are ethnically and culturally varied meeting in a short eight-week span. Meeting the deadline has caused a gross inequality of the lay leaders and clergy giving input and time to consider their recommendations.

The inevitable unevenness in suggesting closures will mean that the congregations that are already organized within their parish will be more likely to successfully demonstrate and stress the community and historical importance of their building. One could assume that these will be the parishes in middle to upper class communities. Whereas the parishes that consist mainly of recent immigrants in the older sections of Boston may be unaware of the history of their building and may not possess the language skills or resources to demonstrate the importance of their building. Looking at some of the recent recommendations that have been made indicate that this is occurring, except in clusters where the demographics of each parish are equally diverse.

The consolidation process has much to do with the current plight of Catholicism and other religions in the United States. The new generation of parishioners is a striking contrast to their elders and something has to change within the church to accommodate these changes, or else the longevity of the institution is severely threatened.

CHAPTER TWO: THE DISJUNCTION BETWEEN CATHOLICISM AND MODERN TIMES

Why Now?

Many Catholics and preservationists are wondering why the process of consolidation is occurring in such a widespread, vigorous manner. The question for those who will be affected by the process of reconsolidation, and for Catholics in other comparable diocese in de-industrialized cities and towns should be: what could have been done to prevent this and what is the best case scenario for what can come from this process? To answer “why now,” one must look at the history of the archdiocese in Boston as well as the Catholic religion in America. One must also examine the attitudes from within the religious institution and those outside of it to understand how the decline of Catholic properties will occur in the future as well. From understanding the contributable factors leading up to the current situation, it is clear to people within the hierarchy of the archdiocese and laity that the timing for this could not have been worse since coming off the destructive sexual abuse scandal. By understanding the financial factors and attendance figures, the reconfiguration process should have occurred over years prior.

Historic Developments that Influence the Current Situation

In the past two centuries, the traditional parish system has defined the face and community of Catholics in Boston and other industrial cities. The territorial parish system, which has defined the identity and history of many immigrant neighborhoods, has become antiquated with population shifts and the implementation of Canon Law resulting from the Second Vatican Council. Since Vatican II, flexibility for

parishioners to attend and receive sacraments from other churches other than their home parish has loosened one of the core and central rules that determined where a Catholic would attend services.

Also, very eclectic, new immigrant groups entering urban and first ring suburban neighborhoods have a potentially divisive effect related to the differences in the importance of saints, relics, and language. Although there are many Catholics in the Boston Archdiocese who have acclimated to changes in services that accommodate the new diverse groups of parishioners, there are “traditional Catholics” or those who identify with beliefs that revolve around the Irish and Italian conservative traditions of the Church. The beliefs of traditional Catholics typically are informed and shaped by edicts of the Pope and identify with the history of Irish and Italians in Boston that largely compose the history of Catholicism in the Boston area. This history of immigrants is particularly pronounced in Boston and defines the origins of the formation of the city, but also casts a net that extends as wide as the initial inhabitants of towns and cities in this country that developed around the Industrial Revolution. The early Catholic immigrants, who worked in the numerous manufacturing vocations supported by the modernization of machinery, shaped a distinct character in the many of the neighborhoods in Boston. The parishes in Boston, and elsewhere, still represent the heritage of these early inhabitants.

Prior to mid-twentieth century, the neighborhoods in Boston had customarily come to be known or named after the parish that they grew around.³⁵ Although these neighborhoods could be sometimes be ethnically and culturally diverse, in neighborhoods in Boston the settlement patterns of Catholic immigrants in contributed

³⁵ O'Connor, Thomas. *Boston Catholics: A History of the Church and Its People*. Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1998, 31.

to a phenomenon of neighborhoods named after parishes in places, such as Dorchester, where people identify being from St. Mark's or St. Brendan's.

Although the Catholic immigrants of the nineteenth century were a striking mix of languages, cuisine and culture compared to the early Boston Catholics from France and Ireland, they were essentially racially homogenous as compared to the current multitude of various ethnicities that define Boston Catholics today. Parishes now serve Haitians, Cape Verdeans, Vietnamese, Koreans, Mexicans, and El Salvadorians, among a number of other immigrant groups who do not have English as their first language. The literature about the history and early experiences of the Catholics in the United States frequently concentrates on the notion that although America consisted of numerous religions within society by the late eighteenth century, the inherently pluralistic nature did not prevent early Catholics from experiencing prejudice and bigotry, especially those who were foreign born.

In Boston, Catholics became more organized and visible, receiving support from the Vatican to establish the first parish in Boston and receive their first priest after the Revolutionary War.³⁶ Historians have concurred that the greatest prejudice early Catholic immigrants in Boston encountered in the nineteenth century wasn't singularly due to the dominant Protestants but from fellow Catholics as well. The first wave of the Irish, who were the target of bigotry from the initial French Huguenot Catholic immigrants, experiences prejudice due to their accent, manner of dress and low occupational status. This type of prejudice continued to be directed to the later wave of Italians, Lithuanians, Portuguese and Poles.³⁷ The other forms of prejudice these groups received was from the religious institution itself when the archdiocese

³⁶ O'Connor, *Boston Catholics: A History of the Church and Its People*, 14.

³⁷ O'Connor, *Boston Catholics: A History of the Church and Its People*, 169-70.

would not allow parishes to be built or not designate native speaking priests for the parishes if they were formed for these ethnic groups.

The separation of church and state and the existence of religious tolerance helped the Catholic religion prosper although racial and cultural prejudice kept these new immigrants clustered. Over time, the urban enclaves of Irish, Poles, Italians, and Eastern Europeans grew into larger neighborhoods and many built churches that represented their growing wealth and prominence. Many of the cultures preferred churches of their own due to divergent beliefs about saints, religious festivals, and even display of emotion while praying. One account of the attitude of the Irish towards the new Italians questioned if they were as much believers since the men tended to socialize outside on the church steps while the women prayed inside.³⁸

As with many other post-Industrialized cities, populations have shifted from urban neighborhoods to suburbs from the middle of the twentieth century to the current day. The legacy of a parish has become jeopardized and the current analysis of the impact on Boston's neighborhood is succinctly described by Gillis as thus:

The population shift has a severe impact on city parishes, most of which has been built during the heyday of immigrant Catholicism. Large complexes often with a convent, school, rectory and church occupied an entire city block or more proclaiming a significant presence in the neighborhood. In the forties and fifties, real estate advertisements mentioned in what parish a house was located. The reputation and stability of the parish became a selling point. The residents described where they lived by parish name and not by street name or neighborhood. In many cases the population of sections of the city were so overwhelmingly Catholic, so that Jews and Protestants found themselves outsiders in their own neighborhoods.³⁹

³⁸ O'Connor, *Boston Catholics: A History of the Church and Its People*, 66.

³⁹ Gillis, Chester. *Roman Catholicism in America*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1999. 83.

One of the most comprehensive writings to date that discusses the importance of the territorial parish in defining the history of Catholics in Boston's Dorchester and Upper Roxbury neighborhoods is Gerald Gamm's Urban Exodus: Why the Jews left Boston and the Catholics Stayed. The research that Gerald Gamm presents is incredibly relevant for filling in the gaps of trying to forecast where people of a specific religious denomination may choose to settle and form a community.

Gamm discusses how white flight by Jews in the early 1970s is perceived to have occurred due to the idea that they had more money and affluence than those who stayed when decentralization occurred in major cities throughout the United States. Using a 1971 State Senate hearing that examined the loss of Jews in Boston to outside suburbs, Gamm contrasts the population shift of Jewish residents with their Catholic neighbors and uses census tract data and historical documents to show that salaries and income were of a similar level between the two religious groups.

When three years after the major shift of Jews to the suburbs, Savin Hill residents who were primarily Catholic, vowed to keep their children home from school to protest desegregation busing rules. Gamm proposes that these situations indicate two different attitudes: that Jews fled their neighborhoods for more affluent neighborhoods whereas the Catholics affirmed their right to make choices about where they lived. In Gamm's view, this indicated a sociological phenomenon of Jewish abandonment versus the Catholic refusal to relinquish what they perceived as their right.⁴⁰

Gamm's writing is a thorough analysis of historical events based on qualitative data such as census records as well as primary and archival documents. This study raises some particularly relevant questions for planners interested in researching the

⁴⁰ Gamm, Gerald. *Urban Exodus: Why the Jews left Boston and the Catholics Stayed*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999, 13.

effect of faith-based organizations, as well as the tendencies for particular denominations to respond to local, neighborhood needs. By looking at the geographical dispersal of people of particular religious persuasions, one could attempt to forecast the likelihood of a faith-based group becoming a “neighborhood institution” or not.

Gamm proposes that the unintended consequences of the Second Vatican Council may have undermined or eroded the traditional territorial nature of the parish to lend stability to neighborhood.⁴¹ Gamm undertook the study of the history of Dorchester and Roxbury and from this research shows that by “focusing on the two ideal types [the American synagogue and the territorial Catholic parish]—and on a set of neighborhoods in which they predominate—makes it analytically feasible to investigate the impact of institutional differences on neighborhood feasibility.”⁴²

Gamm looked at the rules such as canon laws and Talmudic guidelines, as well as the practices of the judicatory bodies and parishes or congregations in order to understand how neighborhood institutions are formed from faith-based organizations,. The strength of the rules gathers not because of a physical written word, but rather because rules from the governing body of the sectarian body is followed and obeyed by the congregation or parish. Of course the method of organization of the faith-based group differs extremely between Jews and Catholics. He identifies three dominant areas that can make a religious group a long terms neighborhood contributor:

1. By how the group defines “membership”—for Jews it is voluntary whereas for Catholics it is defined by boundaries as established by judicatory body in the territorial parish system.
2. The religious organizations “rootedness” in terms of structural and geographical formation. Catholics have a consecrated space in that

⁴¹ Gamm, *Urban Exodus: Why the Jews left Boston and the Catholics Stayed*. footnote 10 on page 17.

⁴² Gamm, *Urban Exodus: Why the Jews left Boston and the Catholics Stayed*, 17.

their building is blessed and is built as a location designated by the papacy for them to receive sacraments. Whereas Jews follow the Torah and believe that there is only one temple.

3. Role of “authorities”—as seen through creation and dissolution of an institution; acquisition, ownership, and disposal of funds and property; determination of policy and doctrinal questions; selection and dismissal of clergy; and prerequisites for congregational worship—for a synagogue it reflects that role of the authority inherent in each separate congregation whereas Catholics reflect the hierarchical system inherent established by the archdiocese and Vatican.⁴³

Like an early childhood development model, these three rules can and do affect neighborhood stability and they must be seen as resulting from exogenous factors that may have occurred prior to the religion existing in America’s urban cities.⁴⁴ The trait of loyalty so prevalent in Boston’s Catholics is tied to the early territorial parish definitions. The structure of the institution and rules concerning receiving of sacraments meant that for the parishioner, the cost of leaving a neighborhood for a new community equated to abandonment. The territorial parish system helped to ensure neighborhood stability and starkly defined the geography and demographics of Boston’s Catholic communities.

The territorial parish system was based on a system comparable to modern day voting districts. The archbishop was the only figurehead who could petition the Vatican for a new church to be built, and by recognizing a new parish to be created, the archbishop would draw the boundaries for the area. These boundaries outlined the home parish for those Catholics within the area and designated the church where those people could attend and receive sacraments in following with Canon Law. If a new parish was built and affected long existing boundary lines, it could inevitably affect parishioners who had attended the same parish for generations, some of whom

⁴³ Gamm, *Urban Exodus: Why the Jews left Boston and the Catholics Stayed*, 17-19.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

believed that their ancestors had essentially “built” the church with their donations and were buried in the parish cemetery. Correspondence from the Boston Archdiocese archives captures the passionate petitions from these members for permission to receive sacraments at their original parish, rather than new one. In each of the instances, even with threats to leave the Church, their appeals are denied.⁴⁵

Since the Second Vatican Council, the concept of territorial parishes has changed from the perception that receiving the Eucharist should be a local event to recognizing the differences in liturgy and Mass as well as that some Catholics may identify with churches that are not in their own parish. Canon law still states that “as a general rule a parish is to be territorial” and many still seek permission to receive sacraments at a parish other than their own.⁴⁶

Although many have moved, many others have not. Some members of Boston’s parishes have had four to five generations of their family attend the same church, elementary school and have been buried in the church cemetery. For some who have moved, their ties to their mother church still run deep since there may be family and friends who still live in the neighborhood and they may attend their local church on the weekends but save holidays for their original church. If one wants to identify who belongs to a church or parish for in-pur about how they would like to see property used in the future, the present situation of identifying Catholics as members of a church poses problems and would be presumptive to relate ethnicities with parishes.

For the preservationist attempting to identify the parishioners of a church, it would be speculation to identify which members of a parish should be consulted prior to the beginning of a rehabilitation project or closing a church. The notion of

⁴⁵ Gamm, *Urban Exodus: Why the Jews left Boston and the Catholics Stayed*, 112.

⁴⁶ Gamm, *Urban Exodus: Why the Jews left Boston and the Catholics Stayed*, 115.

“member” in regards to the territorial parish system is an oversimplification of the current trends of where people live, how they travel, and what they identify as community. For many Boston Catholics, the juxtaposition between the church buildings their relatives helped to build, the current neighborhood in which they live and the parish of which they identify as their own have been affected by these changes. Since Vatican II and the early 1970s, people no longer live next door to the church where they attended growing up, got married and confirmed. This is not due singularly to the transience of families moving but partially due to the flexibility allowed by the Second Vatican Council in terms of receiving rites and the dissolution of the territorial parish system. Since people do not necessarily go to the church located next door in their current neighborhood and due to closures, changes in clergy, neighborhood transformation, the present day method for how Catholics will choose their home parish will question the hierarchy of the archdiocese.

Although they may be Catholic, members of a parish may not live within the immediate community for a variety of reasons. One factor is that if they are of a specific ethnicity, liturgical services in traditional American Roman Catholic churches may not correspond with their beliefs in terms of liturgy, iconography and community. Immigrant groups such as Eastern European and Hispanics who have traditionally used a Latin Mass, requiring the use of a fixed, high altar have been defensive about clergy suggesting they adopt the Vatican II re-design of a freestanding altar and rearranging services to be in English.

The ritual of receiving sacraments, such as the Eucharist, have provided early example of schisms within the Catholic Church. An early example in the United States occurred in 1891 when Ukrainian Catholics in Minneapolis divided with the archdiocese over the enforcement of Vatican rule that banned clergy from marrying, a long-standing tradition among Ukrainian clerics. Because the use of Eastern rites

was already in contrast to the rest of American parishes that followed Latin rites, they aligned themselves with the Russian Orthodox Church that would allow them to continue their marriage and liturgical customs. “One view advocated a congregational model of the church, which emphasized a democratic functioning of authority with local autonomy. According to this model, lay people and clergy would work together and share responsibility for the organization and government of the parish.”⁴⁷

Theoretical Disputes about the Adaptability of the Hierarchy in Catholicism

The issue of power in the hierarchal structure of the church remains a critical issue in the Boston Archdiocese and within parishes across the country. The ability for a parish to make its own autonomous decisions was both affirmed and denied by the dichotomy of decisions resulting from Vatican II in 1972. The canon law that resulted from this council relied on revisions proposed by the liberal members of the order to produce new definitions for the proper design and ceremony for liturgical services and revamping of interior space. As discussed further below, many of the reformers requested revising canon law to create more active participation by members of the parish. They also believed, that in order for the Church to accommodate parishioners in a receptive manner, the procession and design of the liturgical services had to be altered to be inclusive by having the parish priest face the congregation and allow sacraments to be given to non-parish members. The hierarchal structure was reaffirmed though in the sense that all of the decisions made in regards to the church building must be agreed upon by the clergy and bishop, although any costs associated with altering the building space are paid for by the congregation either through donations or fundraisers.

⁴⁷ Gillis, Chester. *Roman Catholicism in America*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1999, 63.

The notion of participation by the laity in terms of parish administration and participation in liturgical services has increased since Vatican II. This is not entirely due to the reforms proposed by the liberal members of the Council, but also due to need by the larger diocese structure to have laity take over parts of the liturgical service that had previously been performed clergy since the rate of priests retiring is extraordinarily higher than those entering. The decline in seminar enrollments and men entering vocations has reached epidemic proportions. The current change in the number of active priests has dropped 40% and the rate of nuns committing to the church has decreased 45% since the late 1960s.⁴⁸ The enrollment in parochial school has dropped in half since Vatican II.⁴⁹ The parish school has gone from 94,000 to 20,000 religious in the schools from 1967 to 1994. “In 1988 the archdiocese of Detroit closed 31 parishes some with schools. In 1990 the archdiocese of Chicago closed 28 churches and 18 schools including the largest high school seminary in the country.”⁵⁰

One of the cornerstones of the pyramid of the Roman Catholic Church is the concept of infallibility, the doctrine that defines obedience to the teachings and instructions of the Pope. This is particularly astute in the concept of following doctrine since, “the church’s authority to teach is to be respected and an appropriate response should greet particular teachings, proportionate to the centrality of the teaching and the degree of authority with which it is taught.”⁵¹ This concept of being obedient to the teachings and instruction of the authority figures has not been diluted by Vatican II documents. By referring to “People of God” to describe the church, an encompassing inclusion of both parishioners and clergy is evident in the Vatican II document *Church in the Modern World*. The ecclesiology of new empowerment to the

⁴⁸ Gillis, *Roman Catholicism in America*, 245.

⁴⁹ Gillis, *Roman Catholicism in America*, 199.

⁵⁰ Gillis, *Roman Catholicism in America*, 204.

⁵¹ Gillis, *Roman Catholicism in America*, 140.

laity is contrasted starkly with the previous image of the authority of the ordained. “The presence of structures, regulations, and directives implies neither knowledge nor compliance, but indicates the wide-ranging organizational structure of the church.”⁵²

Even though many Roman Catholic parishes in America have attempted to adapt the multiplicity of ethnicities and viewpoints about what it means to be of the faith within their parishes, the hierarchal nature of the Catholic Church has remained stalwart amidst these disparate cultures that are entering the fold. The Church could be characterized as the epitome of turning inward and ignoring the changes of governance in the secular world. An essay titled “Reclaiming our History: Belief and Practice in the Church” by Marcia Colish discussed the history of the hierarchal structure and governance of the Catholic Church in how it relates to changes from during medieval times to current day. Her projection for a reformation is that if the Church wants to change its order, doctrine and practice, then it can. She bases this theory on the notion that although the constitutional monarchies or representative monarchies have developed over the last two centuries, the church has not changed its governance structure but has amended belief and practice to accommodate to changing times. The developed doctrine has accommodated new interpretations of beliefs.

An example Colish cites is the Augustinian theory about original sin, also called the vitiated seed notion, which addressed of the issue of whether Mary could have been removed from sin since she herself would have been susceptible to inheriting the evils from The Fall that are passed from parent to child.⁵³ The Marian theory that accumulated from theological debate over centuries turned into doctrine in the first Vatican Council meeting in 1854 with official Catholic teaching concurring

⁵² Gillis, *Roman Catholicism in America*, 198.

⁵³ Collis, Marcia L. essay titled “Reclaiming our History” in Oakley, Francis and Bruce Russett, ed. *Governance, Accountability, and the Future of the Catholic Church*. New York: Continuum International Publishing Group Inc., 2004, 64.

that she had been removed from sin through divine inception one cycle before the inception of Christ's Immaculate Conception.

Colish's theories about the adaptation and altering of theory into practice of rites and ritual are particularly apt for how they apply to the architectural features of Catholic churches and how they have changed over time. She looks at architectural changes due to attitudes involving sacramental practice, such as the rite of baptism that was originally performed as total immersion in high Middle Ages in Mediterranean areas and have been adjusted to the symbolic sprinkling by a priest over a baptismal font.⁵⁴ Another development of practice is the act of confession. Originally a post-baptism sin that could be forgiven through public confession and lengthy penances became a private and mild in comparison so as to have the access to the sacrament as much needed to develop their spiritual growth. These changes about ritual and the receiving of sacraments are functions that made both "a pastoral utility and more effective performance of ministry."⁵⁵ Instead of a dogmatic homogeneity of customs and ritual, Catholicism has prospered from adapting and changing those rituals that are most intrinsic and this pluralism of customs has never hindered its development as a faith.⁵⁶

These observations of the history of ritual and how it has changed the form and function of church space add much to the understanding of the Catholic Church as a hierarchy. Typically perceived in modern day as a solid and unmovable force when addressing the needs of its parishioners, it appears from understanding the history of Catholicism that there are episodes of interaction between the laity and clergy where

⁵⁴ Collis, *Governance, Accountability, and the Future of the Catholic Church*, 67.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

need at a bottom level had changed canon law. The reflection of history would seem inherent in a hierarchal structure where tradition defines rules.

A counterpoint to this vision of the church as an adaptable entity by viewing history is offered by Francine Cardman, author of “Myth, History, and the Beginnings of the Church.” Her concept of the church is, “Thinking about the history of the church is not the first instinct if Roman Catholic ecclesiology . . . Ultimately this habit of thought serves those at the institutional center, since it reinforces not only institutional structures that underlie and perpetuate them. It discourages the thinking or asking of question about power, participation, and purpose in the church.”⁵⁷ The author attributes this denominational attitude to the institutional perception of the church being a divinely willed institution unchanged historically or in the future due to its origin of existence.⁵⁸

From its origins, the emerging structure of ministry was based on the notion of *ekklesia* meaning assembly, a Greek term for the gathering of free citizens called to debate matters of civic import. These meetings were the early form of congregations and eventually church. These groups of people assembled to discuss the apostles and Jesus Christ. From these simple origins, the New Testament was produced, and over time, a hierarchal ruling structure was formed. The creation of the position of bishops led to a separation from the clergy and laity level. Those that reported to Rome versus those that that were relegated to the confines of the parish became isolated from one another over time, although the concept of the parishes as having their own importance and character was central to Catholicism.⁵⁹ This concept of the parish as the apostolic center on the ground level led to an affirmation of the concept of Catholicism being

⁵⁷ Cardman, *Governance, Accountability, and the Future of the Catholic Church*, 33.

⁵⁸ Cardman, *Governance, Accountability, and the Future of the Catholic Church*, 34.

⁵⁹ Cardman, *Governance, Accountability, and the Future of the Catholic Church*, 41.

the “Church of the People” with a diffusion of power from the central papal authority in Rome to the local level. Also, this concept of central power being diffused to smaller nodes became common geographical ruling pattern in the urban areas by the 4th century with churches clustered around the more powerful metropolitan church.⁶⁰

Applying this understanding of how centralized power has functioned in the development of the Roman Catholic Church represents the current disjunction between the figurehead in Rome versus the experience of those on the local level. Those who are granted the position of bishop or cardinal and sanctioned to report to the Pope are disjointed from the laity. The notion of participation in determining the future of the church has traditionally been in the hands of those empowered to create Canon Law, although it is what is occurring on the local level, and possibly outside of the parish walls that influences the creation of new policy. The idea that input by the laity will contribute to the future growth of Catholicism is not traditionally accepted by the presbytery. “Proposals for wider participation in governance at all levels of the Roman Catholic Church are often criticized as inappropriate because they represent political and sociological ways of thinking about the church, which is ‘not that kind of institution.’”⁶¹ Although the ecumenical councils have only been allowed to function because of the imperial power of Rome, the democratic principle that the overall structure only exists because of participation of the common person, is not applied to the hierarchy of the Catholic institution.

The model of a more participatory power structure has been suggested by some Catholics. Some voice concern that a disjunction between the ordained and the laity is occurring due to the archaic nature of the Church. These calls to forming a more socially responsive power structure had led to the Second Vatican Council in the

⁶⁰ Cardman, *Governance, Accountability, and the Future of the Catholic Church*, 42.

⁶¹ Cardman, *Governance, Accountability, and the Future of the Catholic Church*, 47.

1960s, which tried to balance the liberal, reformist interests of those that proposed greater involvement of the lay people and the traditionalists who felt that the character of the Catholic Church would be diluted by any liturgical reforms. The result of Vatican II was a middle road acceptance of incorporating some laity into services and into administrative positions.

Vatican II also created policy that led to a reinterpretation of the church interiors by forming a circular chancery and having clergy face parishioners as they performed services in English. Achieving consensus in parishes for undertaking restoration of these church interiors has been problematic. The difference of opinions between the older and younger parishioners has caused its own schism. Older parishioners have been accustomed to services in Latin whereas younger congregants are frequently disengaged by the formality of traditional services. Inner-denominational dichotomies, particularly astute in the Catholic faith due to the pluralism of cultures and ethnicities, have tried to be resolved by encouraging new groups of parishioners to attend. Priests have begun to lead services in Spanish and Haitian French, evolving from the dominant use of Latin for services but use of Irish and Italian for sermons for the previous generations.

Some see these alterations of interiors and services as a diluting of Catholicism. They fear that by the removal of the high altar and omission of those things that have been traditionally incorporated in the giving and receiving of sacraments, such as use of Latin spoken by a priest, will mean that the character of Catholicism will be transformed into a common, unrecognizable form. The traditionalists may unknowingly be alienating potential members who share beliefs and values but are put-off by the formality and exclusivity of the many Catholic churches.

Catholicism's adaptability to modern times since Vatican II has not progressed; in fact some of the reforms have been reverted or clarified to respond with pre-Second Council decrees. If the papacy followed the inclusive principles of the reformist liberal cardinals and bishops, would the problems with attendance and contributions be so widely manifest in Boston in the current day? Possibly not, but the relative flexibility of the Archdiocese to create social programs and initiatives to respond to community needs may have meant better use of these parishes and more members if the leaders had incorporated laity into problem-solving initiatives.

An outgrowth of adapting to the interests of the laity could solve many of the issues related to declining attendance in the urban center of Boston. Decentralization has not directly caused the dwindling membership of the older, historic, urban parishes. One could tie this loss of membership to the lack of responsiveness of the hierarchy to the interests of the new community members. Many of these buildings may have been saved if the R.C.A.B. had adapted to new neighbors, rather than preemptively severed ties by not opening their doors and welcoming the multiplicity of ethnicities, cultures and beliefs.

Conclusion

Although the Catholic Church may have formed an important backbone to the earlier communities in Boston and the new, growing suburbs, much has been lost in the R.C.A.B.'s relationship to contemporary inhabitants of the city. By looking at how other denominations have responded to population shifts and change in demographics in their neighboring communities, the R.C.A.B. would see how creating a parish that is defined by being open and welcoming bodes well for earning new members. This does not need to occur by removing the beliefs that are central to the faith, rather it means ministering without requiring those receiving the services to be of the faith.

This is something that the Catholic Church has done in the past, but most of those that it has ministered to were already of the faith, due to the nature of the territorial parish system. Over time, as those members move to other areas of the city, membership has declined as well as donations, and the R.C.A.B. administration has responded by closing the parochial schools and stopping the services that can be crucial to attracting new members. In the following pages, the models that serve to describe the reuse of religious buildings may not be the solution to the current situation. Rather, they can show how over time, new versions of ministry and beliefs can live on in a building after the congregations or parish have gone.

CHAPTER THREE: THE URBAN LIFE CENTER MODEL

The primary factor that complicates forming a preservation plan for the R.C.A.B. parishes has been the traditional presbytery prioritization of paying for social service programs over funding restoration work. Since most of the capital expenditures in the Central Fund are earmarked for the diocese's administrative costs and employee salaries, and most donations collected by each individual parish are contributed to the Fund, a parish must have its own capital campaign in order to pay for restoration repairs. In some instances in the past, the bishop has decreed that no individual parish fundraisers can occur separate from that of the Central Fund and that all allocations to the parishes will be dispersed by how the diocese sees fit.

This centralization of budget and institutional oversight will continue to cause difficulty with the future maintenance of R.C.A.B. property. What is required for ensuring the future of the parishes, whether as a house of worship or as a building standing in the future, is not a continuation of the current arrangement of parish financing that the religious organization has developed through Canon Law and the diocese interpretation of parish autonomy. Rather, a paradigm shift by the institution in regards to their system of maintenance, paying for upkeep, and the way the property is dispersed is required. This means that parishes should be able to make autonomous decisions regarding the maintenance and future use of their property.

A paradigm shift is also applicable for the preservationists as well. Methods of preservation planning used by the preservation community for keeping the architectural integrity of the R.C.A.B. buildings intact during and after the disposition need to be angled to blend with the values and laws of the Catholic Church. Instead of prohibiting or restricting changes, models of alternative use that run parallel with the

ideals and principles of the religious belief of the institution need to be suggested. If this is achieved, possibly parishioners, preservationists and presbytery will reach a consensus about the future use of many of these religious buildings in a new context.

In the past, the tendency for preservationists has been to argue that saving structures means declaring the building as a local landmark and prohibiting additions or changes. There are a number of difficulties with pursuing the direction of limiting alterations to religious buildings by landmark ordinances in regards to religious buildings. First, while the preservation commissions may hope that designation assures the future of the building, it could also lead to its abandonment or demolition by neglect because the building has become an encumbrance. By imposing restrictions on alterations, the unintended consequence can be that the building will lay vacant. This path, unfortunately, does not address the larger economic problem facing the institution or outline or instruct the religious body with convincing reasons about the importance of preservation.

The process of designation does not offer suggestions or outline directly to the archdiocese what the other options are for the building usage. In instances where a parish has sought to inhabit a building but update it according to their current needs, the changes proposed by the religious body are due to spatial requirement to provide space for offices or community services, functions that may inherently threaten the historic, religious fabric of the building. In the cases of revamping interiors, they are frequently a result of what the denomination perceives as law passed down from the highest order of their judicatory body.⁶²

⁶² *A Case Study on the Mediation Process Over the Preservation of a Religious Building: the Church of the Immaculate Conception, Boston, Massachusetts.* Case Study published by Historic Boston Incorporated, 8.

Second, it does not address the larger and more complex issue of what is threatening the livelihood of the Archdiocese and the communities that supports the function of the building. Although a preservation group may try to save the physical structure of a house of worship, there are times when this does not answer the issue of who will use the building in the future. Ideally, the preservationist could help the congregation or parish to grow, to manage their expenses, and devise a strategy for building maintenance and rehabilitation work in the future. This requires the preservationist to have access to the building as well as a positive relationship with the diocese and parish.

The solution to the problem of conserving religious property is that instead of imposing restrictions, the preservation community needs to take a pro-active and responsible approach prompting the religious community through considering options for their building. This takes time and energy, but the costs may be less than litigation that could arise if the preservation community tries to impose restrictions on the disposition of properties. Many within the preservation community in Boston had not anticipated the widespread off-loading of these church buildings and are unprepared to create a relationship with the archdiocese in order to collaborate on the disposition.⁶³

Although a number of members may wish to see a future for their house of worship, this may run contrary to the larger judicatory body which also operates on a largely bureaucratic level and unresponsive to the needs of individual parishioners. In the situation of religious denominations when the owner of the building is not a single individual or congregational group but a power structure layered akin to a government, achieving a consensus about the future of the building that concurs with the objectives of the preservationist has traditionally been highly problematic. The ownership is not

⁶³ Phone interview with Ellen Lipsey, Executive Director Boston Landmarks Commission. March 2, 2004.

the only issue because many denominations have laws about the disposition of property that are as defined by the denomination as the giving or receiving of sacraments. In the case of the R.C.A.B., each property will be de-sanctified with the loss of features that are potentially monetarily valuable and historically representative such as stained glass windows and interior woodwork.

Although the situation in Boston is the largest in scope of anywhere, there have been numerous instances in the past century when congregations across the country have faced the difficult decision to close or abandon their building, or to fashion new uses for their property. For ease of communication, the use of the term congregation here applies to all denominations of religious organizations. Often the congregation's membership has diminished and their building has either deteriorated over time or a cataclysmic event such as an electrical fire due to outdated systems or a collapsed rotted roof made the building unusable. These facts force the group to think about the condition of the house of worship and to consider either abandoning it or saving it over the long term by creating a preservation agenda. In order to plan for the future of their congregation, a handful of churches across the country have utilized the organizational structure and building uses of the Urban Life Center model, which will be described in depth in the following section. It is this model that could be a solution or provide new and improved uses for some of Boston's historic churches in older, urban neighborhoods.

Creating new uses for historic religious buildings frequently require restoration work that can be highly labor intensive and means a "fast track" education on historic preservation, fundraising and non-profit management by the leaders involved. Most importantly, the act of planning for the preservation of historic properties requires the participants in the process to be aware of the complexities and challenges of finding funding sources. Typically the building is in dire need of repair because the

congregation does not have the resources to pay for building maintenance or knowledge of preservation to hire a professional architect, engineer or preservationist to work with them or oversee the rehabilitation work.

The costs associated with restoration, repairs and future maintenance of the building will typically be such that a group must effectively garner the interest of large donors or obtain funding from a cobbler of sources. Foundation, corporate or public grants will be the most useful sources since the vast majority of federal, state or municipal contributions cannot be designated for religious property if it still in use or owned by a religious denomination. The lack of governmental and denominational support for historic religious properties means that a more sophisticated ownership structure is required. This will most likely require taking it out of the name and ownership of a religious entity and putting into the name of a separate non-profit organization.

A new type of persona for the building will be cast – the house of worship becomes a major player in the area's community development. When the owners of the property go to outside sources, the importance of the building goes beyond its architectural importance or position as a local landmark or how it defines the area's social or cultural history. What will attract donors is multi-faceted: the community services that go on within the house of worship, the dynamic and unique position that the faith-based organization has within the community to address the social needs and the urgency of the need to fund the programs and restoration work to continue the services will be the paramount factors in drawing financial support. Selling the potential contributors and the community at large on the importance of the building for what the religious organization may refer to as ministry is what the neighborhood calls social programming, and that forms the hinge for achieving collaboration on preserving historic religious structures.

What has evolved in many cities are new forms of building usage that essentially function as an intermediary between the secular and the sectarian. This is the Urban Life Center, which remains largely undocumented in any type of formal literature. Many of the participants in the four case examples cited were unaware of similar projects in other cities and some describe their buildings as re-use projects or community centers since they are no longer fully financed by a congregation. It differs from an Adaptive Use in that a congregation worships in a sanctuary space in Urban Life Centers. The Adaptive Use projects profiled in Chapter Four, see their mission as spiritual or community driven, but with no goal of catering to either the former or future congregations.

These models are shaped by interviews with leaders of the projects. By using case studies and capturing a variety of projects involving religious buildings, the information can be helpful to a wide audience of preservation planners, community development organizers and as well as religious judicatory bodies. The case examples and models that will be discussed capture the organizational structure of non-profit groups involved, funding sources and hopefully in each example, the emphasis on the forethought of the building owners to plan for property maintenance.

The relevance of these projects relies on the supposition that historic religious properties have been fixtures of cities and are crucial to the development of neighborhoods and communities. They represent not only an architectural heritage in the sense that they are by and large a unique and identifiable cultural form, but also the site of important events or places for community meetings that have contributed to the development of a neighborhood or urban area. Most importantly, these religious buildings and their congregations have become local institutions and provide many community services to a wide or niche group of clientele that are desperately in need. So, although buildings owned by congregations are not only historic in their

architectural characteristics, connection with historic events, cultural significance and material/aesthetic sense, they have helped to build communities, serve them directly and define their center.

The Urban Life Center Model

When a religious property is being considered for dispossession, such as in the current consolidation process in Boston, there is opportunity for preservationists and religious organizations to collaborate about the future of the house of worship. There are situations when preservation planning is beyond the resources of a large presbytery and this can result in opportunities for preservationists to become involved and be particularly useful for ensuring the future of a physical structure by generating plans based on experience from professional practice. The alliance of the congregation with community through the formation of an Urban Life Center, an umbrella organization based in a house of worship that is driven on using their building for social programming to meet the community's needs, is one that should be promoted by preservationists, congregations, and community members. This type of building usage can be found in many major metropolitan cities and has become increasingly popular over the last two decades.

The process and success of forming an Urban Life Center as a strategy for preserving the future of a house of worship is inherent in the organizational structure of a congregation. Since most religious organizations have non-profit status already, they are able to obtain 501(c)(3) status as a non-profit tax-deductible entity in order to spearhead a restoration campaign. This tool that has been highly effective in many instances of fundraising but it requires the members to be organized and resourceful in how they present their capital campaign since. These faith-based 501(c)(3)s are much more likely to be eligible for state and local grants since the group is defined as

autonomous from the religious organization. But this separate entity, whether born from the few remaining members of the congregation or from those in the community can undertake the capital campaign and dictate the future uses of a building.

This Urban Life Center model or structure differs from a typical urban congregation in the sense that although the congregation still uses the building for services, they are allowed to do so by an agreement from the new nonprofit 501(c)(3) entity that has become both building owner and manager. Also, the new nonprofit becomes an umbrella group and has its own board of directors, by-laws and center manager to oversee the use of the building by the other nonprofits or local associations. In a sense, Urban Life Centers solve the problem of a religious building being used sporadically during the week and creates an organization of users and functions to maximize the potential of a structure.

A tenant of the building space can be the original congregation or a new group that likes the feel of the sanctuary. But essentially the congregation has surrendered sole possession of the property and put it into the hands of a group of caretakers that are thinking in the interest of maintaining the building and filling it with partners.

One of the common attributes of the congregations that have formed an Urban Life Center and completed transfer of the property, is that they face problems due to the condition of the building. In each of the four case examples that follow, the cost of repairs for the building, separate from any alterations for space sharing, involved rehabilitation costs in the millions of dollars. And in each of the four case examples is that the congregation that has owned the building does not have the financial resources that allows them to maintain a historic, landmark property where repairs are expensive. Importantly though, that even though the number of people attending Sunday service has declined, the community services or amount of people using the building has

stayed the same, or even increased over time. The bottom line for the group that holds ownership of the building is that the expenses of repairs to the building is too much for the worshippers and internal fundraising is not an option.

The second attribute is that the religious building is important to the neighborhood and city history due to its architectural prominence, location, and age. This creates an advantage for receiving assistance with grant writing or hiring consultants through assistance with a local historic preservation office due to its recognized importance for its historical or architectural significance. But unfortunately the age and architectural characteristics can also be the cause of extra expenses. Along with a large space comes utility bills, and an experienced sexton or maintenance person needs to know the property. Often times, these former churches are located in an urban downtown location, within a neighborhood that is in transition. The case examples in Oakland, Philadelphia and Denver are in neighborhoods that were once affluent, then suffered from urban decay and are back on the upswing again.

A third and defining characteristic of the Urban Life Center model is that the congregation has a history of serving the community. The use of a building has been shaped by multiple programs and tenants. This also places a congregation in the forefront of knowing what services the community requires. Typically, many historic urban religious buildings have been designed or renovated to accommodate multiple groups to share space.

Many congregations already feel that their building is primarily used as a community center and are interested in following an Urban Life Center model so they can continue to develop their community services. Others may want to insure that their sacred space will be kept for prosperity by performing restoration work and have experienced difficulty for funding religious organizations while applying for grants.

Some feel that by forming a new non-profit, the separate organization will bring in a wider audience of donors or potential level of supporters who are attracted to giving to a non-sectarian group. Overall, rooted in the idea of creating an Urban Life Center for both the congregation that forms it and those that donate money to it, is the goal for the non-profits existence is for serving the community at large and creating a space that is open, rather than insular.

The reasons for beginning a new non-profit specifically for building maintenance, restoration, and capital campaigns are based on the economic advantages of having a separate organization for tax purposes. When a congregation has historically opened its doors to the needs of the neighborhood and has begun to experience a sharp decline in membership, the benefits for the congregation, their building and the community by forming a 501(c)(3) to manage the building space separate the responsibility of paying for building operations and management apart from the congregation's dwindling budget. The definition of a non-profit 501(c)(3) corporation is the section of the federal Internal Revenue Code that describes non-profit, charitable organizations with educational, religious or scientific purposes that are considered to be tax-exempt. A 501(c)(3) organization (institution, agency, group, etc.) is one that is gift supported. By having a simple tax status, donations can become tax-exempt and more enticing to donors.

Urban Life Centers Currently in Operation

Since an Urban Life Center is an established non-profit dedicated to helping manage a historic building, it also becomes a non-profit that is supported by other organizations and programs through the buildings uses. The non-profit has the primary responsibility of coordinating the numerous programs, meetings and

community service tenants that use the building. The activities that go on inside the building may be similar to the mission projects that many urban congregations provide, but are always separate non-profit tenants or partners with their own administration and lease agreements. The tenants pay the managing non-profit monthly for leases and utilities. It is important to emphasize that an Urban Life Center is not just a separate entity in name only, but also an organization to which ownership and the responsibilities of maintaining the building space are transferred.

The tenants leasing or renting building space are a wide array of community programs and organizations that provide crucial social services. Samples of tenants across the country have been as diverse as day care or after school programs for youths, practice space for choirs or bands, administrative offices for senior citizen service providers, or space to rent on a weekly basis for Brownie troops or Alcoholic Anonymous groups. Over time, the Urban Life Center can go beyond providing a place to rent for groups and non-profits. It can provide the organization for concerned community members to meet and create ideas for building community.

The most important element of creating this new partnership is the transfer of ownership or possession of the building from the congregation to the non-profit entity. Establishing the non-profit will need to be timed with looking for tenants and funding sources to pay for restoration work. Setting up the non-profit and the direction that this organization will go must be well planned with consensus among the steering committee along with the congregation and community members or whomever is involved in the transfer process. The building is transferred from the congregation to the separate non-profit with a director who is experienced and able to manage multiple tenants with lease agreements that are within the guidelines established by the congregation.

The ownership of the property by a non-profit in effect will: (a) create a more sophisticated organization to have control of the property to insure better building management; (b) secure the longevity of the building and community services; (c) enable donations and grants; (d) transfer debt from the church to another entity; (e) allow the building to become self-sustaining by being effectively managed and maintained with the revenue generated from rent.

Below are some of the examples of property transfer agreements between congregations and their non-profits, reflecting a wide and diverse set of strategies.

First Unitarian's Center for Urban Family Life⁶⁴

At the First Unitarian Church's Center for Urban Family Life (CUFL) in Oakland, CA, the congregation leases their building to the non-profit organization, although the congregation has priority of space usage. The congregation maintains an office and a strong presence in the building. Since the congregation has grown over time with community members joining the congregation, the uses of the building align with both the church and community's vision of creating programs. Over time the issues that CUFL addresses are primarily focused on capacity building for local underserved youth.

In the early 1980s and 90s, the building had been severely hampered by delayed maintenance and an earthquake. In order to successfully preserve the building, a community and citywide capital campaign was required. While raising

⁶⁴ Phone interview with Jacque Warren, former Director of Development, First Unitarian Church of Oakland - Center for Urban Family Life. July 15, 2003.
Phone interview with Mary Ganz, former Program Manager First Unitarian Church of Oakland - Center for Urban Family Life. July 25, 2003.

funds for the bricks and mortar rehabilitation work, they were able to attract the attention of a wide variety of funding sources that both benefited their building and their mission. One example was a donor who established a scholarship fund to be overseen by the CUFL members. Although the scholarship fund requires no office space or does not provide a daily or weekly service for the area residents, it has indeed shaped the future of high school students who may have not had an opportunity to go to college without this financial assistance. Another example was the city and federal grants they received to pay for their seismic retrofit and building restoration.

The success of the CUFL was the way in which the congregation began looking at its goals and principals and how they could also involve the community at large. When CUFL was initially organized, the Board of Directors consisted of eight church members. This included the ministers of the congregation, a building restoration committee representative and an ex-officio member of the church. Four years later, prior to beginning a major capital campaign to cover the costs of expensive structural repairs and improvements for space sharing, congregation members began to actively include representation on the board from community members. Around this time the church received a National Trust seed grant to support the cost of publicity and materials relating to the restoration project. The total amount of capital raised over time from local residents, city agencies, congregation members, and people who share the mission of CUFL has reached over 2.5 million dollars, largely attributable to the dedicated and energetic tenacity of people involved in CUFL as well as the important mission of the programming that occurs in the First Unitarian Church.

In the case of First Unitarian Church, the creation of the Center for Urban Family Life has lead to a partnership between church and residents who shared a vision for programming and the building creates a space for these two groups to come

together to discuss what occurs at the Center for Urban Family Life and ways to address the community more adequately.

Trinity Memorial Episcopal Church's Trinity Center for Urban Life⁶⁵

For the Trinity Memorial Church in Philadelphia, a fire struck midway through a substantial restoration project in the early 1990s. This cataclysmic fire gutted out the interior of the sanctuary to such an extent that it forced the rector and congregation to re-evaluate their plan for the building uses. From brainstorming meetings with the congregation, community members, preservationists, architects, and many others, the group decided that to incorporate more building users and uses, they could help cover the new unforeseen rehabilitation costs while making their building a more lively and functional space. The decision was to form a separate non-profit entity modeled after the Center for Urban Family Life in Oakland, CA. Naming it the Trinity Center for Urban Life, the group began soliciting private and public donors through this new 501(c)(3) status.

The congregation currently leases its church to the Center for Urban Life on a yearly basis so they hold the power to dissolve the partnership easily. There are twelve seats on the Board of Directors with no cap on the number of members according the by-laws. The members consist of the president and vice-president that represent the church or the vestry, and the treasurer and secretary that represent the community. Although there is no limit, there have consistently been 12 members

⁶⁵ Interview with the Reverend Lou Temme, Rector and Committee Member, Trinity Center for Urban Life in Trinity Memorial Episcopal Church, Philadelphia. July 29, 2003. Phone interview with Richard Ihrig, Manager of Trinity Center for Urban Life in Trinity Memorial Episcopal Church, Philadelphia. July 24, 2003.

throughout the eight years of being organized. In July 2003, the board was composed of a representative from the day care, a design professional from the community as well as a member of the Community Outreach Partnership, an organization that directs community programs and local resident volunteers. The Rev. Louis Temme would like to organize board membership that may lead to more consistent contributions through donor cultivation.

Central Avenue Church's Old Centrum Foundation⁶⁶

Like many urban churches in the United States, the Central Avenue Methodist Church in Indianapolis had experienced a stark decline in attendance and had seen many of its members move out of the area. Three local residents, one who attended services there, decided to pursue purchasing the aging church from the Methodist conference to start a non-profit organization to inhabit the church rather than have it lay vacant or sold to a developer. In order to begin the Old Centrum Foundation, the Methodist conference agreed to sell the Central Avenue Church property. Included in the deed is the guarantee that the congregation will have priority over using the sanctuary for worship.

The organization of the Old Centrum Foundation has required that many different things are done simultaneously in order to see their goal bear fruit. Initially, a core group of community residents, along with some church members, organized a steering committee to oversee the establishment, direction, and function of the non-profit. As the Old Centrum steering committee waited for 501(c)(3) status from the

⁶⁶ Phone interview with Marie Beason, Manager of Old Centrum, July 9, 2003. Phone interview with Andrea Neal, Old Centrum Foundation Board and Steering Committee Member. July 30, 2003.

government, it worked with the local conference to establish by-laws for the future organization and set up a board of directors to oversee the management. The steering committee was a necessity for creating guidance for the group by pushing for the timely transfer of the property from the conference as well as organizing the non-profit and writing grants.

Currently, the former Central Avenue Church congregation has representation on the Board of Directors and each tenant considered, or partner as they call it, must have approval from every board member. Also, a by-law stipulates that alcohol is not allowed to be served when there are children present at events. The building space is not purely dictated by the congregation or conference but the uses are guaranteed to be in line with the beliefs of the Methodist conference.

At the Old Centrum Foundation, the Board of Directors is defined by the by-laws of the organization written in 1999 that came about after spending much energy researching supported organizations, Urban Life Centers, and community centers across the country. The three members of the steering committee, one of whom was a congregation member whereas the others belonged to local Methodist churches, worked with the conference to establish the rules for the Board. To insure the responsibility of the building to a historic preservation group if Old Centrum should ever fail, the Historic Landmarks Foundation of Indiana has four appointments. The Central Avenue Methodist Congregation, the neighborhood Old Northside Foundation, and Central Indiana Community Foundation all have one appointment each. The Board is capped at thirteen members and the four supporting organizations can elect to have any person represent their interests.

Grant Avenue Church and Community Center⁶⁷

Like many city churches, the Grant Avenue Church in Denver was in poor shape due to deferred maintenance issues. With only twenty members there was little the congregation could do to pay for repairing windows, completing structural work and making the building envelope watertight. The church building was at a crisis point of deterioration with estimated cost of repairs at over 2 million dollars. And like other city churches, if the congregation was going to continue owning the building and running their community services, they would have to ignore fixing a roof that leaked, replacing broken windows, and much needed internal improvements for their service programs.

At the Grant Avenue Church and Community Center in Denver, the non-profit has a long term lease of the former church from the Methodist Conference with a permanent lease for the congregation to use the space renewable 3-times for a 99 year contract period. The congregation has two positions on the 12 member board and a majority vote is used for considering tenants.

The Board of Directors uses by-laws that require a representative from the original congregation and consists of representation from a number of design and preservation professionals, tenants, and the director of the community center.

⁶⁷ Phone interview with Clancy Wells, Director of Grant Avenue Community Center in the Grant Avenue United Methodist Church. July 18, 2003. Phone interview with Nicole Hernandez, Program Coordinator Faith Action/Historic Denver. July 25, 2003. Phone interview with Reverend Robert Miyake, Methodist Congregation that originally owned the Grant Avenue Methodist Church. July 24, 2004. Phone interview with the Pastor Joseph O'Meara, Pathways Christian Congregation that rents the Grant Avenue Methodist Church. July 21, 2004.

Establishing a Board of Directors

Establishing a non-profit and hiring an experienced director to lead this new endeavor requires that transfer the responsibility of building management to a person who is trained and equipped to deal with leases, contracts and tenant issues. If the non-profit establishes a board of directors to help with planning for the building's future, members can come from the congregation or preservation, design or philanthropic fields with a wide variety of experiences and skills. Professionals and community members collaborating with congregations about planning for the future of their older buildings can lead to dynamic change and growth. Also, collaboration can help share the load of responsibilities that go along with the ownership and restoration work.

The congregation and community members can establish the non-profit organization and concurrently, the steering committee should begin to assemble the Board of Directors who will oversee and administer the space. The complex structuring of the steering committee, applying for non-profit status and establishing a Board insures the representation of multiple interests during both the formation and operation of the Urban Life Center. The Board will determine the use of the building, the tenants of the Urban Life Center, the scope of restoration and repair work, and the methods for paying for it.

To form the Board, by-laws to an article of incorporation are written at the outset of the formation of the non-profit. The rules will dictate everything from the number of members on the board and the group they represent (congregation or tenants are always included) to how often the board will meet, process of members resigning, and amendments to the code of by-laws.

The representation on the board usually consists of the director of the Urban Life Center that administers using the space, the non-profit tenants or partners that use the space, congregation members that can determine or prioritize who is using the space or how the space is being used, and local community members. Sometimes a board will profit from having a local foundation having representation to assist with grant writing and fundraising experience. Urban Life Center have had success with having a person with design experience represented in the board to assist with the scope of restoration work and fees involved.

The Board has a general committee that meets once a month and other subcommittees that meet more frequently. If the building is going through construction or restoration work, the Board and any tenants will need to keep open the line of contact about responsibilities and coordinating work being done, so as to not impact the project schedule or tenant's space. Also, if there are requests by the tenant to make their space improved, communication is crucial to figuring out costs and how it could impact the scope of work originally planned by the architect. If there are changes to be done to the building by the tenants, the Board and manager must know if they need to get permission from the judicatory body or conference.

Operation of the Building After Transfer of Ownership

A manager must oversee scheduling space sharing, lease agreements and communicating with the Board. The manager's salary can come from a number of sources, and the responsibilities that go with the job can be stressful and almost always is a full-time obligation. During restoration work, the responsibilities can increase and may take on some of the responsibilities of construction project manager.

Each of the four case examples captures the different experiences with designating or hiring a manger for the building space. In Oakland, the director of their Center for Urban Family Life, and member of the Board, was an employee of one of the tenants leasing space. She took a leadership role for a number of reasons – she was experienced in successfully running a non-profit and felt that securing grants for bricks and mortar work for the building would benefit her organization. In Indianapolis, the Old Centrum Board was able to get an early grant from the Indianapolis Foundation to pay for a part time salary employee to oversee the space, although she works full-time. In Denver, the first manger was the pastor of the congregation. She managed the space for the first nine months until it was turned over to a director with prior experience running an adult care facility. His salary was paid by a Piton community development foundation grant that promised to cover a significant portion of operating expenses until the building was self-sufficient. In Philadelphia, Trinity Center for Urban Life has become self-sufficient enough to pay for a director and administrative assistant from the rental fees with the building. The rector of the parish is funded by the church contributions and endowment.

A positive relationship between the Director and the Board is essential for envisioning the future of the building space and generating creative solutions to any problem-sharing issues that might arise. If the manager of the Urban Life Center is the grant writer as well, then the communication between the two parties is key to success. Most Urban Life Centers have the manger as a leading board member, such as secretary. The grant applications are contingent upon building a strong identity for the space, or essentially creating a market niche by the non-profit or community organization tenants that are using the building. Grants are won by unique and practical visions of community usage.

Planning the building usage and creating a marketing strategy relies on the way that the Urban Life Center represents itself as organization. If the organization prides itself on being a hub for inner city youth or as an art focused organization, this will dictate the tenants or partners it will attract, as well as grants or outside funding. Some boards have utilized what is called a future search or community needs assessment that is a neighborhood canvas of needs for community services. Performing a community needs assessment can be done by engaging residents in focus groups on-site or distributing surveys. Finding this niche of providing community activities will mesh with applying for grants and donor cultivation. It will also create an institutionalization of the congregation's outward focus and most importantly, can force the board and manager to create a timeline for grant applications, getting space filled and what the bottom line will be for operating expenses.

Planning Tenants and Developing Leases

An Urban Life Center is akin to running a business. There can be support for maintaining the property that comes from the congregation that is using the space on the weekend, but the goal should be to make the building as self-sufficient as possible. To do this, the rent generated from the property must cover the cost of utilities and operating expenses. This means that everything needs to be written down and agreed upon by both the tenant and board. Some Urban Life Centers have benefited greatly from having an attorney on their board.

Creating a formal relationship will offset hardships in the future by outlining the expectations for use of space by every one involved in the Urban Life Center. Also, although a lease may not guarantee that all rent is paid, it does provide a baseline projection of income for the property and allow the director of the space to forecast

vacancies and need for future tenants. The formality of leases and operating the building will show any visitors to the space, such as potential donors, that the use of the building is organized and any money donated will be used efficiently.

Conclusion

The Urban Life Center model applies for congregations that are fully committed to walking through the steps of organizing a separate non-profit to administer their church building. The task of hiring a director is just one part of many steps that requires consensus among the congregation to proceed with forming an Urban Life Center. While the congregation may oversee the transference of the property, the Board oversees the use of the building after turnover.

The activities that go on within the building walls can be as regular as daily childcare service for preschool kids or it can be a unique as providing a space for at-risk youth to play chess against the only African-American chess champion in history. These types of activities can provide essential services for parents with a limited budget or for children who need an inspiring role model. The Urban Life Center has as much of an opportunity to shape the future of a community as a church can shape a member's spiritual life.

More importantly, this type of model could be aptly used in a number of the parishes considered for closure by the Archdiocese in Boston. Since many of the properties are vast and consisting of numerous structures, there is ample space for community usage in some of the oldest and most historic of Boston's parishes. The process of gentrification is accentuating the need for low-income housing, a suitable use for the parochial schools or rectories, and as suggested, the interior of the cavernous churches could be suitably altered to provide space for numerous

community service groups. As the Archdiocese prepares to merge many ethnicities and cultures into unfamiliar and distant parishes, along with the possibility of the closure of the only Eastern rite and Latin Mass parish, the ability for the laity to plan for the future of the building that their ancestors built has never been as appropriate as this current situation. Attendance and contributions have dwindled along with many people's faith in the hierarchy of the R.C.A.B.

CHAPTER FOUR:
FAITH-BASED ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND THE ADAPTIVE-USE OF
RELIGIOUS BUILDINGS

Faith-Based Organizations

The definition of community development versus economic development activities by neighborhood organizations has traditionally been defined as the difference between tangible and intangible results. Units of housing or financial support through loans by a credit union are tangible and measurable. Less quantifiable are quality of life improvements or social services such as workforce development, literacy education and other forms of programming that have the potential to make a long term impact in a community but are less quantifiable.⁶⁸ The information pertaining to both community and economic development by faith-based organizations is largely referential rather than specifically analytical about these institutions.⁶⁹ The fact that faith-based organizations (FBOs) are active in a variety of community service roles that fit the definition of community and economic development, yet these services are not reflected in government reports, shows how loosely organized these programs are. Many FBOs begin programs and services on an as-needed basis and report only to their own organization.

Rather than attempt to provide services that require grants or continual external funding, FBO programs respond to immediate community needs and are rarely measured and not easily quantifiable by people outside of the service area. Since they

⁶⁸ Vidal, Avis. "Faith-Based Organizations in Community Development." Prepared for U.S. Department of Housing and Community Development and Research, August 2001, 2.

⁶⁹ Reese and Shields. "Economic Development Activities of Urban Religious Institutions." Center for Urban Studies, Wayne State University: (self-published), 7/23/03.
http://www.spaef.com/IJED_PUB/v1n2_rese.html, 1.

are acting largely independently and without public funding, small, loosely organized FBOs operate frequently without reporting their programs' performance to an outside public auditing or grant institution. Once the FBO becomes a formalized non-profit, they become applicable to employer, state and federal laws, as well as audits by the Internal Revenue Service. Much work done by faith-based organizations remains anonymous to government bureaucracy and only visible to those who are involved or affected by the FBO, although some FBOs would prefer to keep an arms distance from collaborating with the government on their community initiatives..⁷⁰

The other difficulty with understanding the work of FBOs can be connected to how some authors may write about a community development corporation without acknowledging the background or history of the CDC. For instance, in William Peterson's Neighborhood Planning and Development, a handbook for planning practitioners and grass-root organizers, he discusses measuring the impact of Bethel New Life in Chicago's new housing units produced during the 1980s.⁷¹ Although this church group entered housing construction in response to the needs of their community as well as beginning a fundraising campaign to save their church, Peterson never refers to New Bethel as a faith-based organization.

The faith-based organizations that arise from the historic religious institutions in our country's cities have a dynamic ability to connect many levels of community development. An inherent advantage for these congregations is their location within a building that has been part of a neighborhood fabric for generations and is frequently perceived as the local inhabitants as a readily, identifiable landmark as an easily

⁷⁰ House Committee on Government Reform, *The Role of Community and Faith-Based Organizations in Providing Social Services*. Serial no. 107-69. Washington DC: GPO, 2001.

Salamon, Lester A., ed. *The State of Nonprofit America*. Lester M. Salamon, ed. Brookings Institution Press: Washington DC, 2002. Chapter entitled *Religious Congregations* by Mark Chaves, 290-295.

⁷¹ Peterson, William. *Neighborhood Planning and Development*, 50-51.

recognized neighborhood attribute. Being in an older neighborhood can also mean that there are other congregations that have a similar outlook on community service and see benefit in networking with other area churches, mosques or synagogues. This type of coalition building is being researched by the Lilly Endowment and John McKnight of the Asset-Building Community Development group at Northwestern University. Much of the information about how associations can empower their surroundings shows that, in addition to the location of the house of worship, these congregations have already formed an association of people who are familiar with one another and sometimes have shared vision and goals. The network of these congregations and existence as an already organized group is referred to by McKnight as an association importance for asset building with the potential for community development activity and provide resources for social programming.

One of the components of community development work that Peterson discusses is the issue of “diversification” of the interests of CDCs. “More recently CDC leaders have begun to recognize the lack of social services and job training for their own residents and for others in their neighborhood threatens the viability of their developments, and they have explored the possibility of expanding their efforts to include these activities.”⁷² Peterson recognizes that it might benefit these organizations to move from “physical community development”⁷³ to widening their focus on the less tangible, measurable forms of community programs. Some of these can be as simple as offering job training or filling the role of linking neighborhood residents to growth sectors in the region and playing an intermediary or advocate for local employees to a growth sector.⁷⁴ The links from the neighborhood center to the regional economy

⁷² Peterson. *Neighborhood Planning and Development*, 54.

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Nowak, Jeremy. “Expanding the Scope of Community Development.” <http://www.nhi.org/online/issues/97/nowak.html>. Downloaded information June 9, 2003.

depends on the links available to the residents, and one of the institutions available in nearly every community is a religious congregation that is the local bedrock for providing support.

The Industrial Areas Foundation, created by Saul Alinsky in Chicago, identified the strength of congregations for building the network of families and neighbors to support community development activity and civic education.⁷⁵ The lifeblood of a city is loosely based on the longevity of these institutions and the networks that they help connect together. They also “provide a framework within which civic education, character development, and leadership development must be nurtured.”⁷⁶

Defining the Attributes of an Adaptive Use

One of the major initiatives of community development effort being led by groups other than faith-based organizations and community development corporations are Adaptive Use projects undertaken by non-profits with 501(c)(3) status. Adaptive Use in this sense is both economic development on a community level as well as historic preservation. Religious property that has been adaptively used was previously used as house of worship, abandoned and has been purchased by an investor. The projects are similar in the sense that the buyers choose to open the building to a wide variety of community groups and uses. Rather than Adaptive Use as defined as altering the space into residence or retail store, the Adaptive Use model as explained in this chapter uses case examples that are highly effective method for keeping the properties maintained.

⁷⁵ Ernesto Cortes “Reweaving the Fabric: Iron Rule and the IAF Strategy for Power and Politics.” Cisneros, Henry. *Interwoven Destinies*, 303.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

These models differ from the Urban Life Center model in the sense that the uses of the building do not include the original religious congregation as users of the building and the sanctuary is modified to a degree that it is not recognized as the home of a specific denomination or congregation. Also, unlike in the cases of the Urban Life Centers profiled, a religious space is not leased a congregation as a goal. If that occurs, it is by chance or evolution rather than an initial planned usage for the building.

Rehabilitating these buildings appeals to some local developers and community members since the alteration of a property used primarily for worship involves altering the space in a sustainable way. Though the end uses are typically not religious in nature, there are sometimes spiritual groups that rent and use the building for meetings. The collective character of an open building with a coffee shop or performance space lends itself to furthering a sense of community for many of the users. Over time, these buildings move from being sacred space for the congregation to a vibrant place for the community.

The purchase of a former religious property is akin to buying a commercial structure, possibly with some conveyances in place from either the congregation selling the building or the local landmark commission. The stipulations for developing the building involves coalition building among local community members to identify market needs and creating informal networks of like-minded individuals to possibly provide financial support or professional advice. Cultivating and enticing investors, or utilizing sources of personal investment, are similar to a private development venture. The financial risks associated with the re-use of a religious building can be high if substantial rehabilitation costs are involved. Also, if the owners have no credit, they can experience much difficulty with getting loans for these

types of re-use projects from conventional lenders, especially if the end use of the building is not feasible or profit generating in the eyes of the lending institution.

Old St. George–Cincinnati, OH⁷⁷

The new uses for the former Catholic church utilizes the idea that a piece of property has a social focus while also being an economic incubator for small, locally owned businesses such as a coffee shop and craftspeople or merchants. The restoration work has kept much of the religious iconography and many murals intact as well as creating office space that is not permanently altering the building.

This type of Adaptive Use project falls carries on the idea of continuing to keep the building open for local residents, and has a mission that aligns with promoting a place for spiritual contemplation and inter-faith conversation. Old St. George as a non-profit group also continues to offer the building to others as a neighborhood institution and place for weddings, celebrations, and musical performances. The building has a conference center area that caters to a wide variety of group uses and the building has areas for informal discussion in the Old St. George Coffee shop. Knick-named as a “Great Good Place for Community and Spiritual Renewal” in Ray Oldenburg’s The Great Good Place, it rents office space for twelve non-profit groups.

Union Project in Pittsburgh, PA⁷⁸

What began as a group of Mennonite youths interested in a vacant Baptist church that was slated for demolition to make room for a strip mall has been transformed in a community oriented rehabilitation project where volunteers learn

⁷⁷ www.osg.org

⁷⁸ Phone interview with Jessica King, Executive Director of the Union Project in Pittsburgh, PA. April 27, 2004. Project details on www.unionproject.org.

conservation skills as they restore the building. The Union Project has an active group of volunteers who have the end goal of using the building as an artist's cooperative, a workforce training incubator, and possibly provide space for a congregation to worship. Although the restoration work is permanently replacing some of what a visitor would consider the historic features of the church, many of the alterations are to fixtures that are not original to the building. The pews that were installed when the Union Project began have been sold to pay for restoration costs and the original pews that were in storage have been put back in place.

The project is a collaboration of the faith community in Pittsburgh, art and youth groups, and various professionals from the area who are inspired to participate in the restoration work. Besides beginning an eclectic board to lead the direction of a new non-profit 501(c)(3), the group has received notoriety for its success in attracting a diverse group of volunteers, both skilled and unskilled.

Jessica King, Executive Director of the Union Project, has developed a business plan for a former Baptist Church to be turned into a coffee shop and office spaces for non-profits. She has begun to consider keeping the sanctuary intact possibly for use as religious congregation but has also realized that there are other ways to keep the building spiritual. Along with using building projects as an opportunity to utilize volunteers, the Union Project is also viewing their project as a form of job training. Instead of paying for the stained glass window restoration from loans or removing them outright, she estimates that by offering community workshops on window repair for a summer, they will be able to fix most of the broken or damaged windows. The estimate from stained glass window companies for the repair costs was 1.5 million dollars.

Prairie Churches of North Dakota

The rural church preservation movement was begun in the late 1980's to address the abandonment of the prairie churches that had been abandoned over fifty years prior. The abandonment was due to population shifts to larger cities and many towns had a population of less than 200 residents, many of them aging and unable to maintain their church building.⁷⁹ The National Trust for Historic Preservation, the State Historical Society of North Dakota, and Preservation North Dakota collaborated to begin a community photographic survey for documentation resources. The result two years later was a compilation of 1,200 churches which were determined to have potential or re-use either as community centers or for new congregations.

The prairie churches, many of which were heavily influenced or modeled after the wood frame Icelandic churches of the home country of the early settlers, have become rehabilitated and are now used as community centers and places for cultural events. These restoration projects have repaired churches that were in dire straights and created a new, used place for community gatherings. The preservation community has also created a comprehensive guide of resources and National Park Service Briefs available on the Internet, particularly suitable for the widely dispersed communities of North Dakota who may not have the ability to travel distances for information.

The groups that have organized to re-use religious structures appear to be attracted to the building because of its original use and architectural features. As with the Union Project, the process of surveying the threatened Prairie Churches by the community increased the capacity of area residents and their investment in the built environment. The amount of volunteer labor that has been involved in the rehabilitation has lead to the introduction of new skills and resources for those

⁷⁹ www.prairiechurches.org. Downloaded information April 22, 2004.

involved in the work. When the Prairie Church project was beginning, a community level survey was performed where local town people photographed and researched their churches.

CONCLUSION

Although religious buildings have received special considerations in city planning issues due to land use laws like RLUIPA, there is still a gaping lack of funding for bricks and mortar work from local, state, and federal sources. The lack of financial allocations to these historic resources ignores the contributions that religious congregations and their buildings make to civic life. Many congregations have organized innovative and relevant social programs and due to their unique position as an already existing organization of shared beliefs and values, are able to efficiently tailor their programming to true community need. It is the resources of these religious organizations that makes those who believe in a separation between sectarian and governmental organizations uneasy with federal or institutional funding. The capacity that many congregations have to quickly assemble and actively respond to an issue is fearful to those who have a vested interest in the opposing viewpoint. The ability for religious groups to organize and fight what they see as an injustice has covered the spectrum of human rites from abolition to abortion, and segregation to stem cell research.

For the preservationist and city planner, this thesis may obscure the lines of the role of the professional. Numerous questions regarding what happens when planners and the government begin to assist religious groups have arisen while writing this thesis. Although an entire thesis could be written on the conjecture of this idea, I have developed a few opinions of my own. For the preservationist, it would be narrow-minded to ignore that the foundation of this country was based on the importance of the separation of church and state as established in the United States Constitution. But also, the design and construction of Congregational Churches were based to accommodate large percentages of New England town populations for meetings and

discussions on politics and town affairs. To overlook these buildings due to their religious nature ignores the strong democratic ideals inherent in their design and function. City planners and preservationists are often concerned about community but hesitate working with religious groups when trying to accomplish community development tend to ignore the writings of Saul Alinsky and Robert Putnam. These influential theorists identified congregations as key groups who already exist and organized around a shared set of values and ideals. They are crucial links to improving the United State's urban areas. The essence of many religious congregations since the beginning of our country's history has been the ability to adapt their building space to community needs and their ability to fill crucial gaps in providing responsive community services that the government ignores.

The issue regarding religious buildings that are in a dismal state of decline is not about the belief of those in the congregation. Rather it is the fact that like the majestic theaters of a by-gone era, these buildings no longer have the patrons to pay for their maintenance. And unlike theaters that only provided entertainment as a service, these churches, temples, synagogues and meetinghouses have provided tangible and important goods to not only the religious patrons but the community at large in terms of providing space for Alcohol Anonymous meetings, after school and summer day camps, computer training, homeless shelters, food banks, English as a second language tutoring, life skill training, and refuges for those in need.

Religious buildings have traditionally been visible landmark features that have defined neighborhoods, towns, and cities. They have captured periods of wealth and excess in their ornate and architecturally significant features and building materials. They also provide a storyboard for how urban landscapes have changed historically, representing immigration patterns and the growth or demise of America's communities. Sometimes the humble exterior of a storefront church can show the

multiplicity of religions and ethnicities that have inhabited their space by a small Star of David still evident in the transom windows just above the name of the current Spanish speaking Evangelical congregation.

Many would like to believe that these buildings and the religious entities that own them have the ability to persevere through periods of economic downturns. As shown in the situation of the Boston Archdiocese, however, epidemics of religious organizations either mismanaging their money or not having the foresight or resources for properly maintaining their house of worship are widespread. Since beginning this thesis research, the Christian Scientists announced huge budgetary shortfalls and schisms between Episcopalians, Lutherans, and Methodists over homosexuals as clergy could mean that congregations may split, forcing the abandonment of their buildings.

How do we solve the problem of so many abandoned houses of worship? For those concerned about the loss of these buildings, negotiating future uses with denominational bodies can be easy or highly problematic. For someone interested in preserving a religious building by creating a non-profit organization, the process requires input by area residents and community organizations. Since the uses of the building will be dictated by the needs of the area, such as after-school programs or activities for the elderly, one must understand what programs will attract users. The uses of the building are also limited by what the neighbors will allow—such as a homeless shelter or medical clinic. Since many of these religious properties have been local institutions for a number of years, the motivation for residents to join forces with the congregation members or new-comers interested in preserving the building would seem innate, there are subtle attitudes that can sometime arise due to preconceptions about the accessibility of a religious structure.

Whether it is due to a community's ignorance of a religious persuasion or how the current or former congregation melded with the neighborhood, the most defining factor to determine the future of a building is the importance of understanding about the building's importance and potential usage by others. And most importantly, the trump card in order to create a new use for a deteriorating religious building is the attitude of the religious congregation that has control of the structure or the synod, presbytery, archdiocese or higher judicatory body that is the owner. For the religious body hierarchy to listen to input from the community and include non-members about the possible uses for their property, there must be a concept of the values of the denomination in order to create new ideas for the future of the building and the users.

It cannot be emphasized enough that many denominations have strong perceptions of who can make decisions about their property. To say that members of a church should decide what to do with a building, especially if it is a Catholic parish, is not applicable to many religious buildings. Even if it has been the parishioner's contributions that have built the building, does not mean that the denomination will see the laity as the owners of the property, even if it has been the contributions of the congregation that may have originally built the church and funded the clergy's salaries. Creating a plan for perpetual care of a Catholic church whether it stays in use as an active house of worship, becomes an Urban Life Center or is de-sanctified to convert to condominiums is likely going to be a decision made singularly by the diocese. The notion of participation in a democratic institution doesn't translate to the hierarchal structure of religion, and particularly in American Roman Catholicism. Hence, laity giving input about what to do about the fate of their house of worship and the advice being followed by the judicatory is an anomaly rather than routine.

If input from the laity is considered, as has been the case with Lutheran and Methodist churches in urban areas affected by population shifts, the denominational

definitions of a “member” that may make recommendations to the synod can be incredibly specific and difficult. An example of the complexities of identifying members: even though urban and rural populations have shifted dramatically since the 1950s, Methodists are continued to be defined as a member of the church in which they were baptized regardless of where they currently attend. In the case of the Central Avenue Methodist Church in Indianapolis, which is in the transition of becoming the Old Centrum Foundation, the synod required the consensus of the members to release the control of the building to the non-profit entity. Although the women who organized the non-profit attended the church regularly, lived in the community and were active in religious and community organizations, and the weekly attendance for services had shrunk to around thirty-five, the synod was adamant of having the input of members who had moved to the suburbs decades before. Some of the organizers of the non-profit had attended the church for decades but were not identified as members, or eligible for input about the future of the building since they were members of a separate church.

There is ample room for further examination of what strategies preservationists and city planners could utilize in order to prevent large scale disposition of religious properties. Those who understand the workings of large, denominational, sectarian organizations are usually people who are of that faith. Contributions by professionals within the planning field will result when we begin to discuss the current practices and problems facing religious groups. In order to preserve these structures for future generations, capital is required to make any idea a reality.

For further study, one could examine how important is Charitable Choice and federal funding for saving historic religious buildings that still house small but benevolent and socially active religious congregations. Would they be receptive or organized enough to apply for outside aid even if it is only by filing for 501(c)(3)

status? One gauge of understanding this is by looking at the rate of religious groups that utilize local and state grants by applying for them and utilize them if awarded.⁸⁰ Interestingly, people in the faith community frequently will refrain from applying for state grants for preservation projects due to feelings of apprehension. This could be due to the perception that by receiving government money, their position as an independent religious group may be compromised. Other factors are being unaware of the programs or incentive offered, the lack of organization within the congregation to complete any grant applications, or an attitude from the religious leadership that energy is better spent on other goals. Many are oblivious or unaware that their reliance on member donations will not sustain their building maintenance requirements over time.

Further areas of studies would be looking at faith-based organizations, community development organizations, or others that contribute to social capital and their origins. Do a significant percentage of these groups come from historic religious buildings? Did they raise capital effectively to make an improvement to their building and become inspired to apply that methodology to community development work?

Most importantly, it would be worthwhile to cover the good and bad that coincides with current laws and ordinances in regards to religious property. A place to begin understanding how religious congregations fit in a community context would involve mapping and documenting, either through Geographic Information Systems, or an analysis of land parcels and see how and where they are within census tracts. From there, surveys can be performed in order to understand what social services they provide to a community in that area. This may help those interested in community

⁸⁰ Research performed about the rate of grants earmarked for preservation, utilized and the actual percentages of total rehabilitation costs should be an area for further study, not only for religious property.

development work understand what role faith-based organizations can have with a neighborhood that is improving or declining.

APPENDIX A

**THE ROMAN CATHOLIC ARCHBISHOP OF BOSTON, A CORPORATION
SOLE – CENTRAL FUNDS**

**Statement of Financial Position
June 30, 2003**

ASSETS	
Cash and cash equivalents	\$ 9,650,038
Interest and dividends receivable	65,058
Prepaid expenses and other assets	436,854
Accounts receivable, net	710,169
Contributions receivable, net	971,809
Land and buildings held for sale	2,097,817
Loans receivable, net	2,036,055
Investments	8,413,484
Assets held in trust	436,481
Due from other affiliated organizations	231,554
Interest in net assets of the Foundation	7,528,776
Land, buildings, furniture and equipment, net	<u>12,138,550</u>
Total assets	\$ 44,716,645

LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS

LIABILITIES	
Accounts payable and accrued expenses	\$ 1,885,903
Accounts payable - agency	2,326,573
Reserve for losses	85,000,000
Deferred revenue and support	102,272
Annuity payment liability	279,410
Mortgage note payable	<u>17,244,290</u>
Total liabilities	<u>106,838,448</u>

NET ASSETS:	
Unrestricted	(73,440,658)
Temporarily restricted	6,363,187
Permanently restricted	<u>4,955,668</u>
Total net assets	<u>(62,121,803)</u>
Total liabilities and net assets	<u>\$ 44,716,645</u>

**THE ROMAN CATHOLIC ARCHBISHOP OF BOSTON, A CORPORATION
SOLE – CENTRAL FUNDS**

**Statement of Activities
Year ended June 30, 2003**

	Unrestricted	Temporarily Restricted	Permanently Restricted	Total
REVENUES, GAINS AND OTHER SUPPORT (detail):				
Collections	\$ -	\$ 1,589,370	\$ -	\$ 1,589,370
Catholic Appeal	7,629,124	-	-	7,629,124
Contributions, bequests and grants	1,514,850	1,363,209	-	2,878,059
Investment interest	570,800	100,829	-	671,629
Rental income from affiliates	635,950	-	-	635,950
Revenue from affiliates for centrally provided services	9,049,037	-	-	9,049,037
Other revenues	258,779	37,293	-	296,072
Change in value of split-interest agreements	(32,889)	(43,063)	-	(75,952)
Revenue from and interest in change in net assets of the Foundation	597,974	192,237	(125,233)	664,978
Net assets released from restrictions through satisfaction of program restrictions	<u>3,401,769</u>	<u>(3,401,769)</u>	-	-
Total revenues, gains and other support	<u>23,625,394</u>	<u>(161,894)</u>	<u>(125,233)</u>	<u>23,338,267</u>

EXPENSES:				
Program:				
Pastoral	7,446,284	-	-	7,446,284
Education	1,818,942	-	-	1,818,942
Ministerial	4,632,541	-	-	4,632,541
Social	556,938	-	-	556,938
Central services	4,388,607	-	-	4,388,607
Health	20,640	-	-	20,640
Community relations	746,684	-	-	746,684
Auxiliary services	1,573,462	-	-	1,573,462
Total program	<u>21,184,098</u>	-	-	<u>21,184,098</u>
Management and general:				
Administration	13,230,553	-	-	13,230,553
Depreciation	2,232,367	-	-	2,232,367
Provision for losses	85,000,000	-	-	85,000,000
Total management and general	<u>100,462,920</u>	-	-	<u>100,462,920</u>
Fundraising	1,628,602	-	-	1,628,602
Total expenses	<u>123,275,620</u>	-	-	<u>123,275,620</u>
Change in net assets before (loss) gain on investments and assets held in trust and gain on sale of land and buildings	(99,650,226)	(161,894)	(125,233)	(99,937,353)
Net realized and unrealized (loss) gain on investments and assets held in trust	(425,300)	4,174	-	(421,126)
Gain on sale of land and building	<u>1,436,901</u>	-	-	<u>1,436,901</u>
CHANGE IN NET ASSETS	(98,638,625)	(157,720)	(125,233)	(98,921,578)
Net assets at beginning of year	<u>25,197,967</u>	<u>6,520,907</u>	<u>5,080,901</u>	<u>36,799,775</u>
Net assets at end of year	<u>\$ (73,440,658)</u>	<u>\$ 6,363,187</u>	<u>\$ 4,955,668</u>	<u>\$ (62,121,803)</u>

APPENDIX B

Text of Archbishop O'Malley's speech to priests 12/16/2003

Following is the text of a speech delivered by Archbishop Sean P. O'Malley to priests of the Boston Archdiocese on Dec. 16, 2003, at Boston College.

A rabbi friend of mine told me a story about a Hassidic preacher who was known for his dramatic preaching. One day, he ended his very moving talk by throwing his arms up in the air and declaring, "My God, in your presence I am as nothing," and he cast himself on the floor in front of the whole congregation. Immediately, his assistant, the cantor, inspired by the spectacle, threw his arms up in the air and said, "My God, in your presence I am as nothing," and he cast himself on the floor next to the rabbi. And then Mr. Schwartz, at the last pew of the congregation, got out to the main aisle and said, "My God, in your presence I am as nothing," and he threw himself on the floor. The rabbi elbowed the cantor and said, "Look who thinks he is nothing!"

We priests, like the good rabbi in the story, can at times be a little competitive. We are, of course, all united in our desire to serve God, but sometimes we want to serve God by ourselves or under our own terms. I am here today to say that it is only in serving God together that we will really serve Him. I am still trying to get my arms around this archdiocese. That is why I have called you here today. I want to talk to you about the settlement, and the issue of single sex unions and about reconfiguration; but I really want to talk to you first about being priests together. Alone we are nothing; together we are priests of Jesus Christ -- His eyes and mouth, His hands and His heart. Together we can do great things for the Lord.

I thank you for being priests and for all that you do for God's people. Your ministry is irreplaceable. I am grateful for all you do. I am grateful for the support you have given me since I arrived in Boston on July 30th.

I know that I let you down because the Red Sox lost the pennant. But I am glad that you have not given up on me and would venture out on a cold December day to be with me, knowing how busy you are.

Building priestly fraternity

We are in the process of restructuring the presbyteral council. We will now choose priests to represent the various vicariates. This arrangement is to allow the members of the presbyteral council to discuss with their brother priests in the vicariate the concerns that need to be taken to the presbyteral council. And, when we are discussing some topics at the presbyteral council, at times I will say: Please take this back to the vicariate meeting and see if there is a consensus.

I would like the presbyteral council to truly represent all the priests and to feel called to help build a consensus. To do this the vicariate meetings must be exercises in priestly fraternity that we take seriously. Priests must take time to come together and to minister to priests. At the Last Supper, the great commandment of love was directed first of all to priests. These are the brothers the Lord has given us. We must build priestly fraternity despite our diversity. We are not twins, but we are brothers. One vicar said a priest told him to tell the bishop to listen to the priests. I want to do that, but you are many and often do not speak with one voice. I would like to see our vicariate meetings and presbyteral council become means of building consensus and discerning God's will. We must all be committed to these goals.

I am so grateful to the auxiliary bishops and the vicars for the work they do in building priestly fraternity and for their willingness to help me in trying to revitalize our vicariate meetings and presbyteral council. This will work only to the degree that all of us are willing to make it work. It will take time and effort on our part. Our goal is not just efficiency in administration but also building a sense of connectedness among priests and bishops in a large and diverse presbyterate.

I shall not abdicate my responsibility to make the hard decisions. Since coming to Boston, I have had to make the hardest decisions of my life. Here I am constantly faced with dilemmas and every decision is fraught with problems. But I promise you that I will always try to make the decision that is best for the Church, not the one that is easiest for me.

I used to think that the Franciscan ideal of poverty was to own nothing: That, of course, was before I knew what it was like to be \$135 million in debt, which is the total of our present loans plus what we owe the Knights of Columbus.

You have been invited here today as my closest collaborators so that I can inform you personally about the legal settlement that the archdiocese is about to make to compensate the victims of clerical sexual abuse. In light of the recent Supreme Judicial Court decision concerning same sex marriage, I wish to take a few minutes today to speak about my concerns with that decision. I also want to appeal to you for your help in moving forward with the process of reconfiguration that was started years ago but which needs to continue.

Funding the settlement

First, a word about the settlement.

When we abandoned the process of trying to settle with the victims and the insurance companies simultaneously, we did so with the recognition that the funds would need to be borrowed initially and the commitment that the settlements themselves would not be funded with parish or appeal funds. Both the borrowing and the identification of sources of repayment proved very difficult.

We have taken out three loans totaling \$97.5 million. Ninety million dollars will be used to make the victim payments under the October settlement agreement, pay the costs of the settlement process, settle a handful of pre-July cases of unrepresented victims and deal with the 11 opt-out cases. The other \$7.5 million will refinance the existing debt of St. John's Seminary.

The largest loan made to the archdiocese is for \$75 million. Citizens Bank is the agent, and Century Bank is participating. It is a two-year term loan. We are grateful to both of these institutions for recognizing the great social justice that this loan makes possible and for working in a speedy and professional manner to help us meet the Dec. 22 deadline.

That loan and the other two were difficult to put together, because, as you know, the archdiocese has been losing money for some time. To make this loan possible, the archdiocese had to pledge its right to receive insurance proceeds. St. John's Seminary guaranteed the loan, pledging its real estate as collateral; \$25 million dollars of the loan was personally guaranteed by an anonymous and generous individual who is committed to the community and his Church. I wish to express my gratitude to the trustees of St. John's Seminary and to the benefactor for their collaboration.

The second loan, also to the archdiocese, was made by the Clergy Retirement and Disability Trust. That loan is for \$15 million and is a three-year term loan. It is secured by the [Holy Cross] Cathedral Parish real estate and is subordinated to the loan from the banks. It is a legitimate arms-length loan and will be returned in three years with interest. As you know, the clergy fund has been under-funded and the Clergy Fund Committee has added \$10 million to the clergy fund in the last six months. I am just as committed to repay this new loan to the Retirement and Disability Trust and make this fund grow to be commensurate to the needs of our aged priests.

The final loan is a refinancing of the outstanding debt of St. John's Seminary. It is a three-year term loan secured by a second mortgage on a portion of the seminary's land. The loan is an alternative investment for a portion of the Cemetery Association's Perpetual Care fund.

All three loans will be repaid by funds that will not impact our daily work. Without assigning dollar values to each, there will be two sources of funds used to repay the loans. The first will be recoveries from the insurance companies. No specifics are available on the amount of these recoveries at this time. As you know, discussions about the responsibility of the insurance companies have taken a backseat to the settlements process which has consumed a great deal of effort.

The second source of funding will be the sale of approximately 27.6 acres of the Brighton campus. The land we intend to offer for sale is owned about one third by the archdiocese and two thirds by Saint John's Seminary. It consists of the land on the

right hand side of the driveway as you enter the campus and includes the fields to the right of the driveway to the main gate on Lake Street and behind the main seminary building. We have not established a price for the land and we do not expect that process will conclude until some time in the spring when our real estate professionals finish exploring the comparable sales for large tracts of land in the city of Boston.

Without attaching specific amounts to these two sources of funds, which are available to us only because of the settlement and will not burden our parishes, suffice it to say that we believe that, when combined, they will be adequate to repay the debt.

We have gone the rather complicated route of arranging the loan to achieve the settlement so as to avoid having to rush to settle with the insurance companies and so as not to rush to sell the land. We need to maximize the proceeds from these two resources -- they are really all the archdiocese has. I am sure that you can see from this brief description how complicated it has been to make these short term loans in such large amounts.

I am anxious for you to explain to your parishioners that the settlement will be paid for from the sale of the Archbishop's house and adjacent property and from insurance money -- not from parish assets or diocesan or parish collections. Parishioners need to hear this from you. Words are not enough to express our gratitude to the members of the finance committee and especially to our Chancellor, Mr. David Smith, without whose hard work and genius this financing would not have been possible.

The institution of marriage

Now, I would like to turn our attention to another topic; namely, the institution of marriage in light of the recent Supreme Judicial Court decision.

Several weeks ago, I was asked to speak to a group of Protestant and Jewish religious leaders on the topic of same-sex marriage. The Church's approach to these social issues is much different from most Protestants, especially those of the evangelical traditions. And although we may coincide in our conclusions, the Catholic approach incorporates the natural law and the overriding principle of seeking the common good that takes into account the pluralistic society in which we live. Nevertheless, the talk was very well received by the ecumenical community.

To my great surprise The [Boston] Globe had the talk transcribed and printed it in its entirety in the first section of their paper the very next day.

For the first Sunday of Advent, I sent a letter, to be read at all the Masses, signed by the four diocesan bishops of the commonwealth in reaction to the court's recent decision. I know that the timing was difficult, being the first Sunday of Advent and the weekend of Thanksgiving. Still, I was disappointed to hear that a message that was so

warmly received by the ecumenical community and left uncensored by the Globe went unread by some of our priests.

I realize that not all of our people would be happy to hear the letter. In part that is due to our failure, yours and mine, to catechize our own people whose values are shaped more by TV sitcoms than by the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

A few years ago there was a play on Broadway called "Mass Appeal." The two characters were a pastor and his young curate. When the young priest preached, he rained down lightning bolts on the congregation. The pastor, on the other hand, never challenged anybody, striving to be Mr. Popularity. Both approaches are wrong and are a betrayal of our mission, which is to preach the truth with humility and love.

As a young priest I was preaching on the Independence Day of Argentina to a full cathedral -- diplomats and military personnel. I preached on the Church's social Gospel and the immoral practices of the security state, of tortures and forced disappearances and other violations of human rights. The entire church got up and rushed to the doors. I knew they were not all going to the bathroom at once. As I ended the sermon to an audience of one, a young Argentine soldier who was serving the Mass, I thought to myself, "If they have not left this one behind to shoot me, I will get to work on Easter Island."

I was comforted when the cardinal told the rector of the cathedral -- when Father Seán preaches take up the collection before the Gospel.

That was probably the most difficult sermon I have ever given -- but I have never regretted it. Even though at the time some said I was a communist. But after that day, a number of soldiers and diplomats came to me secretly because of their own crises of conscience. Later on, two presidents were arrested and one is still imprisoned in Argentina.

We must preach the Gospel in season and out of season. If a redefinition of marriage is enshrined in the law of the commonwealth, it will be a tragedy for the entire country. And if it happens because of our cowardice or inertia, we shall have to answer before God.

Marriage, as an essential institution oriented toward the rearing of children, needs to be strengthened for the good of society. The tendency of separating having children and being married has already had a very damaging effect on our society. All studies have shown that the best venue for child rearing is a stable, permanent relationship between a man and a woman.

This should not be interpreted as discriminatory. Every adult person has the right to marry, but marriage means marrying someone of the opposite sex. It is grossly unfair

that a court decision, decided by one vote, should be allowed to cause such damage to the institution of marriage.

In February there will be an important vote in our state legislature paving the way for a constitutional amendment. It is crucial that we encourage our people to call on our elected officials to defend the institution of marriage. This should not be seen as an attack on homosexual persons, but we must appeal to all peoples to defend the definition of marriage for the good of society. A strong institution of marriage does not hurt anyone and it helps everyone. A weakened institution of marriage causes a great harm to all of society. In no way should this be seen as promoting homophobia or cruel prejudices against members of our community; but we must call on all Catholics to be Catholic and to do the right thing, to safeguard the institution of marriage.

The National Marriage Project, run by Rutgers University, brings out an annual "State of Our Unions" report. In this year's report they state: "Marriage is a fundamental social institution. It is central to the nurture and raising of children. It is the social glue that reliably attaches fathers to children. It contributes to the physical, emotional and economic health of men, women and children and thus to the nation as a whole."

Marriage has been from time immemorial and into recent history an institution designed to unite men and women in the shared tasks of child rearing. The possibility or presence of children is the key reason why the state and society treat marriage differently from other intimate partnerships. In our country today, there is a shift in the meaning and purpose of marriage away from children and toward adults. Chief among these changes is the weakening connection between marriage as a couple relationship and marriage as a parental partnership. This has taken a terrible toll on society. One third of the children in our country are born out of wedlock. Fathers in these situations are typically absent or participate in the raising of the children to a far lesser degree than fathers who are married.

Last week a French news periodical, L'Express, showed the latest statistics in Europe. In Greece, Serbia and Poland the number of children born out of wedlock is still small whereas in France and England it is around 40 percent. In some Scandinavian countries, the majority of children are born out of wedlock.

In the minds of many young Americans, the connection between marriage and parenthood is fading. The legalization of same-sex marriages will only serve to weaken the connection and thus contribute to the deterioration of the American family.

It is too easy to ignore children's interests in marriage when marriage is defined simply as a couple relationship. "Yet children have a compelling stake in their parents' marriage. It is a source of social and economic advantage for them. It provides a reliable means of attaching their fathers to the family household over the long term. It brings together under one roof the two people who have brought them into the world

and who have a mutual interest in their well being." (National Marriage Project, "State of Our Unions Report": Rutgers University)

All of American society has a huge stake in creating a culture where marriage is reconnected to parenthood and where married parents are encouraged, supported and valued for their long-term commitment to marriage and family.

On parish reconfiguration

The third topic that I want to address with you is reconfiguration. I hope that everyone realizes that the cost of the settlement has nothing to do with the challenge of parish closings and reconfiguration. The need to close parishes is brought about for other reasons, most of them quite independent of the sex abuse scandal. The upside of closing parishes is that the surviving parishes should be stronger, more able to respond to peoples' needs, better staffed and with more resources for ministry.

Reconfiguration is not about closing the 50 parishes that cannot pay their bills. No, we need to analyze the needs of the Church and keep parishes where there is a need, even when this means subsidizing parishes. Special regard must be given to the new immigrants who have cultural needs, linguistic and otherwise. We need to do all we can to protect our Catholic schools and strengthen them.

With 50 parishes that cannot pay their bills, and with many other parishes that are surviving by depleting their savings, our pension and insurance programs are at risk. Difficult decisions need to be made in order to turn the situation around. Priests, parish councils and finance councils need to share their parish information with neighboring parishes in order to understand the need for reconfiguration and to arrive at the best possible suggestions for the entire faith community, not just what seems to be best for a single parish.

In my grandfather's generation of Irish people, they got married in their thirties when they had saved a little money. My grandfather actually built a house he gave to my grandmother as a wedding gift. The street was named after him. That house was the center of family for three generations. How many Sunday dinners, birthdays, Christmases and Thanksgivings, baptisms and wakes took place there. But then the children moved out, my grandfather died, and Nana came and lived with us. The house was sold. It was a sad day no one wanted to see, but that grand old house that served us so well more than fulfilled its purpose. We will always cherish the wonderful memories of so many events that took place there. But today the needs of our family are different and those needs required us to sell the homestead; to do otherwise would not have been responsible.

There is no painless dentistry. I know that people are loath to close a beloved parish and parish church. But we must help our parishioners to see that it is because of the needs of our family that we make these painful sacrifices. And that out of these

sacrifices can come stronger Catholic parishes better equipped to carry on the work of evangelization, to reach our young people, to serve our shut-ins, and to perform the corporal and spiritual works of mercy, to pass on the faith to future generations.

We must not deny our people the right to mourn the loss of a parish and a church building, but we need to challenge them to make great sacrifices for an even greater good. The future of our ability as a Church to minister in the archdiocese depends on our willingness to make the sacrifices necessary for reconfiguration.

I have closed enough parishes in my years as a bishop to know that so much depends on the leadership of the parish priests. Where pastors explain the reasons for this and give parishioners a sense of hope and excitement over the possibility of forming stronger communities, closures have been very successful.

Unfortunately, we have all seen what can happen when a pastor resists and engages in passive-aggressive behavior that immediately infects the whole parish community with a spirit of despair.

Now more than ever we must see ourselves not as free agents, but as part of a presbyterate that has the responsibility of working together with their bishop to promote the mission of the Church. Jesus Christ has told us: "As the Father sent me, so I send you." We are sent, we are earthen vessels carrying treasures -- the treasures of our faith, our fellowship, our sacraments and our mission. We are sent now in this set of circumstances, in this time of crisis and scandal. Now is our time. It is not a time of great peace and prosperity in the history of our Church, but it is our time and we must shoulder the cross right now.

Many of us went to the seminary at a time of a strong Catholic culture and family life. I did not know anyone who was divorced when I was a teenager. Everyone went to Mass. I remember in the seminary reading an interview that they published of Flannery O'Connor, about being a Catholic in the South. She recalled how as a young girl she invited one of her baptist girl friends to come to Mass with her. She was very excited about this. After Mass, Flannery couldn't wait to ask her, "What do you think?" She said "Oh, you Catholics -- I'm really impressed. The sermon was so boring, the music was so bad, but all those people were there."

Many Catholics no longer go to Mass every Sunday. Some send their children to CCD but do not see the reason to bring their children to be part of a worshipping community. Could we have ever imagined the direction our culture would have taken or the troubles that would beset our Church? But precisely because of the challenges we face, our role as priests is more crucial than ever to rebuild the Church.

As a bishop in the West Indies, I experienced the horror of a terrible hurricane. We were left without phones, electricity and water for six months. Most of our buildings were destroyed or severely damaged. Insurance did not begin to cover what was

needed. I told the people our churches and schools have blown down, but we are on our feet.

I called the pastors together and said I wanted to open the schools as soon as possible. Many of them just moaned, but one pastor, who had always given me the most problems, said: "Bishop, let's do it." Within a couple of weeks we opened the schools in tents and under trees. The public schools were closed for over a year.

Sometimes we just have to rise to the occasion. The present is one such occasion. It calls us to pull together and support one another. It is going to be a very hard time for many parishioners. We must listen to them and reassure them. We must consult with our lay leadership and hear their wisdom, but we must also allay their fears. Our Holy Father is always quoting the Gospels: "Be not afraid."

The priestly vocation: 'friends of the Bridegroom'

Love casts out fear. Our love for Christ, for the priesthood, for His people will help us to overcome our own fears and to place our trust in Him who has sent us to be His compassionate presence in the world. Love must define us as priests. The metaphor I always favor for the priest's special vocation is a phrase found on the lips of John the Baptist and of our blessed Savior -- "the friend of the Bridegroom." When they asked John the Baptist if he was the Messiah, he said: "I am not the Messiah." (As priests we may often have a Messiah complex.) John the Baptist says, "I am but the friend of the Bridegroom." And when the Pharisees complain that Christ's disciples do not fast, Jesus says: "How can the friends of the Bridegroom fast while the Bridegroom is with them?"

Scripture scholars tell us that the term "friend of the bridegroom" is like the best man in the wedding party. Jesus is the Bridegroom, not the widower. He does not exist separate from the Church. To love Jesus is to love the Church.

The friend of the Bridegroom, the "Padrino," the best man, the "compadre" is the confidant, the one who is bonded to the Bridegroom. The best man, the friend of the Bridegroom is also devoted to the Bride. He is the protector and the promoter of the love that links the Bridegroom and the Bride, Christ and the Church. A priest is Jesus' best friend and loves Jesus' Bride the Church.

To be a friend of the Bridegroom requires a deep life of prayer. I once again appeal to all of you to make prayer the cornerstone of your ministry. It is in prayer that we enter into friendship with Christ. He becomes alive to us. It is in prayer that we find healing for our own brokenness and where we find the generosity to bear one another's burdens.

Sometimes priests are divided in subtle ways: by a sense of competition, by one-upmanship or by ideological preferences. We must try to overcome these things,

become friends of the Bridegroom and friends of the other friends of the Bridegroom. In unity we will find strength. In disunity we will suffer and grow weaker and our mission will be diminished. The choice is ours. I invite you to join with me as your bishop and to be a united presbyterate as we face this very significant event in our archdiocese for the rebuilding of the Church.

One of the great strengths of the Catholic priesthood has always been obedience. It is so counter-cultural in a society where freedom and autonomy are the absolute values and goals. But our devotion to freedom in American society often undermines our quest to build a civilization of love.

For us believers, obedience is an event. It is the kenosis of Jesus -- He emptied Himself, took on the form of a slave and became obedient unto death, even death on a cross. Like the Centurion, I am a man of obedience. My vow of obedience brought me here despite my cowardice and tepidity. I feel like Gideon pitted against the might of the Midianites -- but I know the Church is Christ and we must serve Christ.

On the day of our ordination, filled with youthful enthusiasm and love for Christ, we all make a promise of obedience. Today I call upon you to allow that obedience to meld us together as one presbyterate, putting aside ideologies and petty differences and saying "yes" to the Lord who says -- "Rebuild my Church."

Reading the signs of the times

We must be committed to what is the best for the Church. What is best for the Church of Boston -- not what is best for Friar Seán or for Msgr. Bill or Father Jack. What is best for the Church of Boston. We need strong, well-staffed parishes -- we cannot fail to read the signs of the times that demand that we take decisive action in light of the present needs of the Church. Not to do so would be to court disaster in the not-so-distant future. The resources of the Church are not means or an end in themselves, but are directed toward the mission of the Church -- salvation. We can become so attached to one thing or one place that we lose sight of this. Reconfiguration allows us to use our resources -- human, monetary and physical -- so that the work of Christ may flourish.

We are all well aware of the reasons and the situations that have brought about the need for reconfiguration:

Changes in demographics: People have moved to the suburbs, they are having fewer children, there are fewer regular church-goers.

The priest shortage: As an aside here, it is my intention in a very short time to appoint two part-time vocation directors to work with Father Oscar Pratt. We need more than the 43 seminarians we have right now. This is also your work as well. I ask all of you

to invite young men to consider a vocation. In all studies, a priest who invites is the number one vocation-getter.

The financial difficulties faced by many parishes: As Bishop [Richard] Lennon made clear to you on June 17th, there are too many parishes that cannot make payroll or pay benefits for employees.

The current poor state of many of our properties: We have just completed a review of all church properties in the City of Boston, approximately one-seventh of the total number of buildings in [the archdiocese]. We would need at least \$104 million just to bring these buildings up to an acceptable standard of usability.

I have been discussing this with the auxiliary bishops since last August and last month with the Cabinet and the vicars. Today I discuss it with you, my representatives and co-workers to the people of God in 357 parishes.

Logistics for reconfiguration

Since my arrival in Boston, I have heard from many of you, my brother priests, that you recognize and understand why reconfiguration is necessary.

Together, we must work to rebuild our Church. My conviction -- a conviction I hope and pray that you share -- is that the work of rebuilding our Church entails a serious committed effort throughout the archdiocese, to realize a Church that will be better able to fulfill the mission entrusted to her by the Lord in response to the needs of the faithful. This vision means that much collaboration and cooperation has to take place as we move into the next phase of reconfiguration. As this process begins, I offer you these first principles:

- * Reconfiguration will involve a substantial number of parishes.
- * No parishes have been designated for closure. The number of parishes to be closed has not yet been determined.
- * Reconfiguration will involve more than merely those parishes unable to pay their bills.

Allow me to briefly outline the sequence of events which I envision as the process of reconfiguration moves forward.

Early in January 2004, I plan to address a letter to all the faithful announcing the reconfiguration initiative and placing it within the context of an archdiocesan-wide effort to rebuild our Church. At that time, I will provide a fuller outline of the process for this undertaking. However, since I am relying on all of you priests to be my collaborators in this work and my presence carrying the message to the people and

helping them through these efforts, let me briefly tell you the process and who will be involved.

The regional bishops, the vicars, the pastors, priests and deacons will all be involved and asked to give their input. Also, I very much desire and expect that lay staffs and the parish pastoral council and finance council members be involved in the conversations, and that there be opportunity for parishioners to be heard -- this is the work of the whole Church.

On the archdiocesan level, a central committee is being established under the chairmanship of Bishop Lennon with priestly and lay membership from each of the regions, along with a few personnel from the central offices. I look forward to working with and receiving counsel from this committee as I prepare to announce in March the specific areas, the groupings of parishes, wherein there will be need for reconfiguration. As I noted a few moments ago, along with a specific mandate to a group of parishes (for example, that three parishes in this town need to become two parishes), there will be a date noted by which the recommendation from the parishes is to be sent to the regional bishop and then on to me. Again, the central committee will be advising me as I prepare to take the recommendations to the presbyteral council for its hearing.

I envision a number of conversations will be occurring during the course of the reconfiguration process. At various times, these conversations will involve myself, Bishop Lennon, the regional bishops, the vicars, the conveners of clusters, the faithful of the parishes and all interested parties in those areas that will be asked to bring forward recommendations for change. All of these conversations, involving so broad a spectrum of people, will enrich the reconfiguration process and strengthen our archdiocesan effort to rebuild our Church.

Practical directives

To underscore the importance and seriousness of this archdiocesan-wide effort, I am announcing the following decisions effective today:

- * No new pastors will be named or reappointed until this effort is completed -- administrators will be named to parishes that experience a loss of their pastors during this time.
- * No parish capital fund-raising campaigns will be allowed to begin until this effort is completed.
- * No extraordinary initiatives in parishes (such as buying or selling of properties, new building construction or additions to present buildings, renovations to existing buildings, except in the case of safety issues) will be allowed to begin until this effort is completed.

In my judgment, given the seriousness and scope of what is envisioned, it would send conflicting messages not to institute these three directives.

I realize that particular situations may arise which on the local parish level may seem to call for special consideration regarding the second and third directives. While I hope there is not a flood of special consideration requests, I realize I need to provide a mechanism for them to have a hearing and decision. Thus, any parish that feels they need a hearing regarding the second or third directive is asked to submit their request to Mr. David Smith, the Chancellor, who in turn will pass it on to Bishop Lennon, who will make a decision regarding a waiver to the above-mentioned directive.

As we move forward with the reconfiguration effort, it will become evident that some parishes will be continuing as is. As this unfolds, the second and third directive mentioned above will be lifted for those parishes.

Timeline for reconfiguration

To recap, let me present the following summary timeline:

- * Early January: Letter released announcing reconfiguration to the entire diocese.
- * Mid-January to mid-February: Bishops and vicars meet with priests inviting them to gather in clusters to formulate suggestions for reconfiguration in their area; parish staffs and lay representatives to be involved in these conversations.
- * Late February: Regional bishops forward suggestions from above along with their recommendations to me.
- * Mid to late March: After consulting with the Central Committee and other advisors, I announce the areas that will be subject for reconfiguration. With the announcements there will be clear mandates indicating first the desired outcome of the local conversation leading to a suggestion, e.g., three parishes are to become two, and then the suggestion from the designated area parishes is to be forwarded to me.
- * The conclusions of the area discussions will be staggered so that all are not coming in at once and being implemented at once. The first group will report their suggestions in light of my mandate by June 1, 2004; the second group by Aug. 1, 2004; the third group by Oct. 1, 2004.

Conclusion: Together with Him

I need your leadership in this painful undertaking of reconfiguration. At the end of the day I am personally convinced this process will strengthen us and allow us to fulfill our mission more fruitfully. I appreciate that I am asking much of you. It will not be easy for you; it will not be easy for me. People will be disappointed, angry and hurt. Yet we have already closed 48 parishes in the last 18 years, and the people have remained faithful; we should be bolstered by this.

Being a good priest is not easy, it never has been. Being a good priest alone is impossible. We need to do it together. In the Gospels, Jesus calls the disciples together to be with Him. Their being close to the Lord molded a band of fishermen into Apostles who overcame their fears and limitations and laid down their lives just as their master had done. Now it is our turn to be called together so that we can be sent out to be shepherds after His own heart. We face great challenges, but we are not alone. We must be strong in our faith life so that we can help our people. Prayer and fraternity must be the hallmark of our presbyterate.

Thank you for being priests. Thank you for being priests together.

Thank you for being here today. Thank you for your patience.

May this Christmastide be filled with the peace and light that comes to us from Jesus who reveals the Father's love in the face of a Child. Merry Christmas, Blessed New Year.

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January 9, 2004 - Letter from Archbishop Seán Patrick O'Malley on Parish Reconfiguration

My dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

May the Grace and Peace of our Incarnate Lord Jesus Christ be with each and every one of you throughout the New Year!

During my recent Advent meeting with most of the priests serving in the Archdiocese of Boston, I informed them that I would soon write to all of the faithful of the Archdiocese about the process of reconfiguration. As I now fulfill that commitment, I invite your careful consideration of this letter.

In the course of the last twenty years or so, the number of parishes in the Archdiocese of Boston has decreased from 404 in 1985 to 357 at present. During much of these past two decades, the so-called "Boston plan" sought to develop recommendations at the cluster level for parish reconfigurations. Pastoral planning at the parish and cluster levels properly has had, as its main focus, fulfilling the mission of the Church.

Today, for a variety of reasons, such planning for mission is more crucial than ever. Among these reasons are:

Changes in demographics: people have moved; they are having fewer children; there are fewer regular churchgoers;

The priest shortage: we need more than the forty (40) Boston seminarians we have right now. All of us, clergy and faithful, need to identify and invite young men to consider a vocation to the priesthood, as we foster environments in our homes and in our parishes that encourage all our people, young and old, to respond faithfully and generously to the call of God in their lives;

Financial difficulties faced by many parishes: exacerbated, no doubt, by the sexual abuse scandal, many parishes have been struggling for years, if not decades, with overwhelming fiscal challenges, including the inability to meet all their financial responsibilities;

The current poor state of many of our buildings: as a snapshot of the dimensions of this reality, a recent review of all parish property in the City of Boston, comprising roughly 1/7 of all the buildings in the Archdiocese, determined that to bring these buildings within Boston proper up to an acceptable standard of usability would cost approximately \$104 million.

Pastoral planning for mission must be addressed without further delay. The reallocation of resources, reconfiguration, is urgently needed and must move from the

mode of planning and conversation to that of action and implementation. The groundwork has been laid in the past two decades. Much discussion has already occurred. Now is the time for decisive action.

Together, we must work to rebuild our Church. My conviction – a conviction I hope and pray that you share – is that the work of rebuilding our Church entails a serious, committed effort throughout the Archdiocese to realize a Church that will be better able to fulfill the mission entrusted to Her by the Lord in response to the needs of the faithful. This vision means that much collaboration and cooperation has to take place as we move into the next phase of reconfiguration. As this part of the process begins, please know that:

- * Reconfiguration will involve a substantial number of parishes throughout the entire Archdiocese;
- * No parishes have been designated for closure. The number of parishes to be closed has not yet been determined;
- * Reconfiguration will involve not merely those parishes unable to pay their bills.

The Most Reverend Richard G. Lennon, Moderator of the Curia, has accepted my request to oversee the reconfiguration process and serve as Chair of a Central Committee, comprised of lay faithful and clergy from each of the five regions of the Archdiocese, along with a few members of the Archdiocesan staff. I look forward to working with and receiving counsel from this committee as decisions are made in the reconfiguration process.

Not only will the regional bishops, vicars, pastors and other clergy be involved and asked to give their input, but also I expect that lay pastoral staff, parish pastoral council and parish finance council members will also be involved in the conversations and recommendations. Moreover, I want to ensure that there is sufficient opportunity for parishioners to be heard – this process must truly be the work of the whole Church. All of these conversations, involving so broad a spectrum of people, will enrich the reconfiguration process and strengthen our Archdiocesan effort to rebuild our Church. As we come together for these conversations, it is imperative that all come with an open mind rather than a self-interested plan to save a particular parish. The reconfiguration will only work if everyone involved is committed to serve the whole Catholic family of the Archdiocese of Boston.

Every parish in the Archdiocese, except those in Lawrence and Lowell who are already well into the process, will begin conversations about reconfiguration later this month. Bishop Lennon will soon communicate a more specific and detailed timeline.

Past experience has shown that it will be painful to close parishes. We must be sensitive to that reality and help each other in the grieving process as a number of our parishes close. However, even in the midst of mourning, we must challenge each other to make the sacrifices necessary to ensure that the parishes that do emerge will be stronger, more able to respond to peoples' needs, and better staffed with more resources for ministry. The painful sacrifices of reconfiguration must lead to stronger Catholic parishes better equipped to carry on the work of evangelization, to reach our young people, to serve our senior citizens and our poor, to perform the corporal and spiritual works of mercy and to pass on the faith to future generations. We must accept the challenge to make great sacrifices to achieve an even greater good. The future of our Church's ministry in the Archdiocese depends on God's grace and our willingness to make the sacrifices necessary for reconfiguration.

Thank you for your attention to so lengthy a letter. Thank you for being faithful to Christ and His Church here in the Archdiocese of Boston. Please join with me and with our sisters and brothers in Christ as we shoulder the cross of reconfiguration and accept the challenge to rebuild our Church.

I pray that our Lord Jesus Christ, who is Emmanuel, God with us, may continue to smile upon all of us who together make up the Church of Boston and bless us with His gifts of Joy, Hope and Peace, as I entrust our effort to rebuild our Church to the powerful intercession and protection of His Blessed Mother. I remain

Devotedly yours in Christ,
Most Reverend Seán Patrick O'Malley, OFM Cap
Archbishop of Boston

January 10, 2004 - Letter from Bishop Lennon on Parish Reconfiguration

Dear Monsignor / Father:

This letter is a follow-up to Archbishop Seán's letter to all the Faithful giving more specifics about the process that he has decided will be used by all the parishes of the Archdiocese for the reconfiguration initiative. This letter offers an outline of the process that I hope will be clear and helpful as we move forward with this Archdiocesan effort.

It is imperative that all parishes be involved in the conversations that are asked for so that the best possible information and responses may be forthcoming, for only then will the Archbishop be prepared to offer mandates in the spring which will, when fulfilled, bring forth a configuration of our parishes which will respond to the needs of all the faithful and will be better able to carry out the Mission of the Church.

I have asked each of the Vicars Forane to have a meeting as soon as possible with the priests of the Vicariate to discuss this process and to offer an opportunity for all as brother priests to support and encourage one another as the Archbishop calls pastors and all priests to a leadership role in this process. This will be a challenging and demanding task for all of us, as it will be for all the Faithful of the Archdiocese. However, united with one another and united around our Archbishop there will be strength and wisdom in our endeavors for the goal of Rebuilding My Church is worth all of our efforts and will be blessed by God as it is the future of His Church we are concerned about in this Archdiocesan initiative.

The process from now until March 8, 2004 calls for conversations on the cluster level leading to responses to the following two questions:

1. If the Archbishop needs to close a parish in your cluster for the greater good of the Archdiocese, how would you recommend that your cluster of parishes be reconfigured and why?
2. If the Archbishop needs to close more than one parish in your cluster, how many parishes would you recommend for closure and how would you recommend that your cluster be reconfigured and why?

It is essential that all clusters answer these questions carefully with the wider interest of the Archdiocese in mind, even though the final outcome may be that no parishes close in your cluster.

It is important that the meetings of the cluster parishes involve a number of people. These people will, as the conversations proceed, become the leadership group of the cluster. The composition of membership for the meetings includes pastors, one or two

staff persons from each parish, and a member of each parish's Parish Pastoral Council and Finance Council. The cluster meetings should begin as soon as possible after the meeting with the Vicar Forane mentioned above, unless that meeting cannot be scheduled at this time then the cluster meetings should begin before the Vicariate meeting happens.

In order to guide you, there are three points I wish to offer regarding these cluster meetings. First, the meetings should begin with prayer for it reminds us that we are the people of God in His Church. Second, there needs to be an expressed awareness that what is being called for at this time is an Archdiocesan response to the challenge to Rebuild My Church and not solely a look at the cluster parishes in isolation from the Archdiocese. And third, there must be a forthright exchange of information and data about each parish, e.g., financial viability, Mass attendance, Sacramental activity, state of physical properties, etc. To assist with this third point I have enclosed a one-sheet inventory which you may find helpful. Without such openness, the deliberations of the cluster group will be compromised as the members strive to respond to the above two questions. Without prayer, an appreciation of an archdiocesan perspective, and sharing of information, I would dare say the responses from the clusters to the two questions may not be the best responses for the Church going forward.

It will be most important that over these next several weeks leading up to March 8, 2004 that there be communication and opportunity for discussion at the parish level about what is happening. The cluster group that will be meeting and discussing these matters should not carry on their deliberations in a vacuum. Regular notices in parish bulletins should keep parishioners informed. Also, the conversations of the cluster group should be shared with staff and with the Parish Pastoral and Finance Councils. Lastly, pastors may wish to offer parish meetings for the parishioners in order to explain reconfiguration and why it is happening, along with the questions to which the clusters are asked to respond. Every effort should be made to help people understand what is happening so that our faithful Catholics are informed and may have opportunity to offer their thoughts on all of this.

Some have said that this process may be too quick; however, others have suggested that the Archbishop should just name the parishes to close and let's get on with it. What the Archbishop desires is to address the issue in a way that offers opportunity for input from parishes and clusters and at the same time to realize an outcome in a timely fashion so that we, as the Church of Boston, may begin to move forward revitalized and energized. I offer these remarks to help us understand this process and to assist us in explaining to our parishioners the desired goal as a result of reconfiguration.

The responses to the questions mentioned earlier in the letter must be received by the Vicars Forane by March 8, 2004. For your information the Vicars Forane will review the responses and pass them on to the Regional Bishop along with his thoughts about the responses. Considering the responses and the Vicars Foranes' assessments, the Regional Bishops will forward them, along with his recommendation to me, for the

Archbishop's consideration. The Archbishop will review these three items: the cluster's responses, the Vicars Foranes' assessments, and the Regional Bishops' recommendations, along with the Central Committee's advice. He will, in April, issue mandates to parishes in a town or city or in a cluster for specific reconfiguration action. The mandates may differ from the original cluster's recommendation, either in light of the recommendations of the Vicar Forane, the Regional Bishop, the advice of the Central Committee or the Archbishop's decision taking into account the overall needs of the Archdiocese.

It is my earnest prayer and hope that the contents of this letter are helpful to all of us as we embark upon this challenging work. Let us go forward with confidence and a vision that being about such an important work we do so with the support of one another and with God's Grace.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

The Most Reverend Richard G. Lennon
Vicar General and Moderator of the Curia

**Text of Bishop O'Malley's speech on church finances
2/5/2004**

In a speech broadcast live on Boston Catholic Television on Feb. 4, 2004, Archbishop Sean P. O'Malley outlined the financial crisis confronting the Boston Archdiocese. Following is the text of O'Malley's speech, as provided by the archdiocese:

Good Evening. It has been a little over six months since the Holy Father, Pope John Paul II asked me to come to Boston. As you can well imagine, I was struck by the responsibility of guiding this great Archdiocese through the period of crisis. Thank you for your patience and your understanding as I come to know the Archdiocese better, and the many wonderful people who call it home. I am also very grateful to all those with whom I work, whose goal is to strengthen the Church in Boston and the faith of its people.

Your prayers and kind words have been a great source of strength to me during these past six months. Recently, the archdiocese has settled well over 500 legal claims stemming from the abuse of young people, and we continue to work to settle those few cases that are still pending. A clear plan has been put into place to repay the 85 million dollar debt incurred to fund the settlement, so that no funds from parishes, the Catholic Appeal, the Promise for Tomorrow Campaign, or the funds used for Catholic Schools will be diverted from their intended use. The settlement moneys will come from the sale of the Archbishop's Residence and adjacent land along with the insurance settlement.

The recent independent audit of the Archdiocese's compliance with the national Policies and Procedures for handling allegations of clergy sexual misconduct shows that our efforts are succeeding, and that we have garnered high marks for our continuing effort to prevent the abuse of children, and to be diligent in handling any future allegations. The Office of Pastoral Outreach continues to work with the survivors of clergy sexual abuse and their families to provide pastoral care and to fund counseling services for them. This represents our commitment of people and resources to the continuing care of victims and their families.

Beyond the issues connected with the crisis, the time is at hand for empanelling a new group of lay leaders for the Archdiocesan Pastoral Council, and a new group of priests for the Presbyteral Council. These two councils will serve as full consultative voices in furthering the mission of the Church here in Boston. Their perspective and collective wisdom make these bodies essential to my work as the Archbishop. I look forward to working with them in formulating plans and policies for our future.

Last year's Catholic Appeal of the Archdiocese has not only realized its fundraising goal, but has surpassed it by over 1.5 million dollars. It is a great relief to know that you have come forward with your generosity to begin to help fill the gap of the last

couple of years. I am deeply grateful to those of you who have seen this need and helped us on the road to recovery.

The Gospel and our Baptism call us to live the Good News. One important way we do this is through our outreach to those who are needy. I am delighted that Fr. Bryan Hehir, a man with a distinguished record of service to the needy and attention to the Church's mission of compassion, has accepted to serve as the head of Catholic Charities here in Boston. He has recently worked as the director of Catholic Charities for the entire United States, and he understands the great role to be played by the Church and her people in serving the poor, the newly arrived to our shores, our youth at risk, and all those who, in Christ's name, we seek to console and to care for. The work of Catholic Charities is an important reminder of the incarnational nature of the Church's social teaching. Jesus' gospel imperative is enfleshed in the manner in which we as a community care for the neediest, the weakest, and the most vulnerable in our midst.

Catholic Social teachings are based on the dignity of every human being from the moment of conception to the moment of natural death. Sadly, social policy is too often formulated by pressure groups with a limited perspective, seriously compromised by the individualism and materialism of our age. The Church's social teaching is distilled from centuries of theological and philosophical reflection and the observation of the human condition and behavior, and stands in sharp contrast to the single issue pressure groups that focus solely on self interest and short term consequences. The Social Gospel is based on our origins as God's creatures, redeemed by Christ, living in the hope of eternal life. I urge Catholics to become acquainted with the Church's social teachings. Those who have taken the time and made the effort are often very pleasantly surprised, indeed, even proud that their Church has such a consistent and well reasoned approach to social issues. Far from imposing our religious dogmas on a pluralistic society we offer a well reasoned interpretation of natural law and a social ethic based on human dignity and the common good. It is an ethic that demands sacrifices but one that safeguards human rights and freedom.

Among those who have openly embraced the Church's teaching and its mission are seven men that I had the honor of ordaining to the transitional diaconate last Saturday. We all anticipate with great joy their priestly ordination this coming May. Even in difficult times like the present, God is calling men to give their lives in the service of God's people. On Saturday I had the opportunity to thank these seven new deacons who have said "yes" to a vocation, "yes" to God. I also thanked their families and friends for supporting them in their response to God's call. We are a Eucharistic people. The Church gathers around the altar, around the Eucharist. We need good and holy priests. If you are a Catholic, you have a huge stake in the priesthood and vocations. Christ has given us, His Church, the gift of the priesthood to perpetuate the Eucharist, to preach the Gospel, to forgive sins, and to help build vibrant communities of faith. It is the responsibility of the entire community to help promote vocations in the Church. Priest, parents, and Catechists must instill in every Catholic youth a sense

of personal vocation and of communal mission as part of Christ's Church. Vocations are everybody's business. In spite of the ordination of seven new deacons this past weekend, the church of Boston still faces a substantial decline over the foreseeable future in the number of priests available to serve in our parishes.

There are still many people who remain alienated from the church or who feel they cannot trust the leadership of the church. There is a growing desire on the part of priests and laity that their voices be heard and their counsel be sought. We are anxious to have effective parish pastoral councils and finance councils. We pledge the Archdiocese to complete transparency in all our financial affairs. Moneys that are realized by the sale of Church properties, as well as the use of those revenues, will be fully reported to our parishioners.

There is a myth that the Catholic Church has unlimited financial resources. Our only real wealth is the devotion and commitment of faithful Catholics. Just as the poor, the sick, and the marginalized are the protagonists of the Gospel, they must be the focus of our ministrations. The poor and the suffering have a special claim on our love and our resources.

These first six months I have spent with you in Boston have provided me with many opportunities to experience the hope that accompanies any new beginning. More people are returning to the Church. More are supporting the Church's works of mercy. As I have heard in all corners of the Archdiocese, we need to heal and we need to reach out together to renew our faith community. You and I, while continuing the important work of healing, are ready to start rebuilding the church in Boston. We are ready to move forward with some serious thinking and some hard choices that will enable us to rebuild from a solid foundation. We need to be morally solid, spiritually solid and financially solid in order to give life to our hopes and dreams for our faith community.

For that reason, we cannot speak only of the positive things that have been accomplished, but we must attend to the difficult work that needs to be done in the months ahead. In spite of the healthy trend in giving to the Catholic Appeal, the archdiocese still faces a deficit of over 4 million dollars in the next fiscal year. Half of the deficit is due to direct services given to parishes and schools by the Archdiocese. In order to meet the operating deficits that we have realized over the last few years and pay for the expenses that we will realize in the future, two years ago we had to borrow 37 million dollars from the Knights of Columbus. We will have to pay that loan back. This has nothing to do with paying for abuse settlements, but has everything to do with providing vital services to parishes and schools, funding the education of our seminarians, permanent deacons, and lay workers, fostering a solid faith formation for our children, and reaching out to young adults on college campuses and parishes who want a vital faith community.

Right now, the main task on the minds of most of us, clergy and laity, is the process of reconfiguration of parish resources. This is a process that will affect all 357 parishes in the Archdiocese. This process is not just about closing parishes; it is about building a framework to strengthen and revitalize as we go forward together as a faith community. Yes, some parishes will close. Others will welcome parishioners from nearby areas. Still others will work to renew themselves as places of spiritual renewal and evangelization.

Beginning in December at a meeting with all the priests of the archdiocese, and later in a letter to the people of the archdiocese, I set out the situation before us. In brief, there are four main reasons for our work to reallocate parish resources:

- * The changes in demographics: From 1860 until 1960, the Archdiocese of Boston built churches and opened parishes to accommodate the growing number of Catholics moving here from overseas, and the large families they established upon their arrival. In many places, the local parish became the name of the neighborhood, with people meeting and greeting each other saying things like, “You live in Saint Paul’s? So does my sister!” But since 1960, families have gotten smaller and moved out beyond the trolley line. For that reason we have some churches that aren’t the bustling places they once were, and other churches that are growing. Let me give you a few examples. In just over 15 years, the number of baptisms that were celebrated in all parishes of the Dorchester neighborhood of Boston has fallen by a drop of over 400. During the same time span, the number of baptisms in the parishes of the city of Quincy decreased by over 200. Meanwhile we have large parishes like St. Michaels’s in North Andover that jumped from 163 baptisms to over 300 baptisms and Most Holy Redeemer in East Boston that increased from 100 baptisms to 436 baptisms. Clearly, church resources have to be reallocated to meet the decrease in needs in some places, and the increase in others. In some older neighborhoods, a one-mile walk can take you past four or five Catholic churches. We just can’t sustain that kind of reduplication. Under the best circumstances it is impractical, in our present situation it would be impossible.
- * Another factor is the decline in the number of clergy. When I was ordained a priest in 1970, it was not uncommon to have more than 20 priests ordained in a single year in our Archdiocese. The number of those being ordained has decreased considerably over the following decades. In Boston, since 1988, there has been a loss of 341 diocesan priests, a decline of over 37%. Clearly this trend must be reversed. We need more than the forty (40) Boston seminarians we have right now. The median age of priests in the Archdiocese is 59 and the number of active priests over seventy is 132. In the next 10 years the number of active priests will be drastically reduced by death and retirement.

- * Many parishes have been struggling for years, if not decades, with overwhelming money problems, including their inability to meet all their financial obligations. Salaries and benefits, while not in competition with the private sector, must offer a living wage and decent healthcare and retirement benefits. You know, as do all of us, that those costs have gone up astronomically in the past ten years. The cost of insurance and of heating and repairing buildings, the cost of maintaining the services a parish must provide and the cost of something as everyday as clearing snow, have all gone up. Many parishes and schools simply cannot pay their normal operating costs. At the beginning of the Jubilee Year 2000, the Archdiocese of Boston wrote off \$26.6 million dollars in debt owed by parishes and schools to the Archdiocese. Since that time three years ago, parishes and schools that are not able to pay their bills have accrued additional operating debt of \$7.4 million dollars. Clearly, this cannot go on without putting insurance and pension programs at risk.

- * As I told the priests who gathered in December, a recent review of all parish property in the City of Boston, comprising roughly 1/7 of all the buildings in the Archdiocese, determined that to bring these buildings within Boston proper up to an acceptable standard of usability would cost approximately \$104 million. That doesn't mean making unnecessary repairs or renovations or even bringing them up to code, that means making them safe and suitable for use by the parishes and schools.

These are not the only reasons for the process of reallocation, but they are the main ones. Each of these needs, by itself, substantially affects our ability to carry out the Church's mission. When these circumstances are brought together as they now are, the case for the process of reallocation is compelling. As you gather in your clusters over the next few weeks, I ask you to participate in the process with a spirit of cooperation and openness to the possibilities before you to give our Church a firm foundation for the ministry entrusted to us. This process will, in the end, affect each and every agency and parish of the Archdiocese to provide the Church in Boston the capacity to address the needs of its people, and to fulfill its mission.

Closing a parish should make you sad... it makes me sad. Never in my wildest dreams could I have imagined having to do this. And never in a million years would I ask this of you if I were not certain that it was necessary. Please know that your feelings of sorrow, frustration and bewilderment are normal and completely understandable. As Catholics we love our parish churches, and we will grieve – together – as some close. I know many of you are having difficulty seeing where this is all going to take us.

Knowing that, this evening I come to you to ask you to work together, to be creative together, and to express your love for your faith together. As you gather in your groups, conquer your anxiety and look squarely, and without blinking, at the future you can provide for the Church, know that I am doing the same. There is not a pre-

ordained outcome. You have before you the opportunity to make recommendations for identifying some parishes for closing but others for growth. The possibility of growth will depend on our willingness to make sacrifices. It is like pruning back plants to stimulate new growth.

I'm reminded of how the author Mark Twain upon reading his own obituary remarked, "Reports about my death are greatly exaggerated." Many reports concerning reconfiguration are greatly exaggerated. Rumors are destructive and they are a waste of energy. Better to use that energy to look for the Good News in this process. The process of reconfiguration that we are all involved in is intended to elicit advice from parishes and their people, from the Vicars, Regional Bishops, and a Central Committee so that I can make decisions as to how to best use our talents and resources as Church. It is only after the process has finished that any decisions will be made about parish or school closings. Make this process work by giving me good advice, well thought-out and with an understanding of the challenges. The input of our priests and laity is crucial. We cannot afford to drag the process on over too lengthy a period. We need you to make this process a priority now. Many have suggested that the Archbishop simply draw up a list of parishes that need to be closed feeling that it is too painful to expect people to entertain closing their own parishes. I have chosen not to do this in order to obtain the input of our clergy and laity. In many parts of the diocese the process of planning closings and mergers has been going on for some time. The clusters have existed for years, some have worked hard, others have done less to further cooperation and sharing of resources.

I am reminded of a man in Dublin who went out one winter day and put on a raincoat he had not worn in years. When he reached in the pocket he found a ticket from a cobbler shop where he had taken a pair of shoes for repairs five years ago, but he had never retrieved them. So he went to the shop hoping the shoes were still there and without saying anything gave the ticket to the shoemaker who went into the back of his shop with the receipt and emerged a few minutes later to say – Your shoes will be ready on Tuesday.

We are trying to move ahead with this process knowing that until the reconfiguration is finished the life of the Archdiocese is held hostage. We hesitate to invest in buildings if we are not going to keep those buildings. We need to name pastors and establish new programs that are on hold as long as the reconfiguration process goes on. We do not have the luxury to tarry in the task at hand. That is why I am hoping that we will be able to keep to our timetable.

This hard work makes me think of the Lord Jesus, as he likened the struggle to realize the kingdom of God with the pain and struggle of a woman in labor, "When a woman is in labor, she is in anguish because her hour has arrived; but when she has given birth to a child, she no longer remembers the pain because of her joy that a child has been born into the world." (John 16:21) We are experiencing pain right now, but in the end we will give birth to a renewed local church better able to serve the needs of

proclaiming the Gospel. If you've ever painted a room, you know it's a lot of work. The work cannot begin, though, until you have a vision of what the room will look like when you finish. You think about what you would really like to have to show for all your work, what change you want to accomplish. You look at a color chart and pick a shade that will really make a difference. And then the dream has to wait while you go through all the scraping and sanding and mess to prepare the walls for their great improvement. No one wants to scrape and sand, but we all know that the effort of painting will be wasted if we don't eliminate some of the old, tired paint first. And then the day comes when all the tearing apart and scraping and sanding are finished. The time has come to go get the new paint and dip a brush into the luminous liquid and begin to cover the walls with your dream of newness. The room now changes rapidly from a state of disarray and repair to a real change for the better.

So please, as you meet in your groups over the next few weeks, take a minute to picture your dream, to flip through the paint chart of possibilities for a more responsive pastoral presence. Reflect on what you can accomplish to renew our parish life. Do you long for more participation and better music at Mass, do you hope for a vibrant youth group for your teens, do you wish there were something more parishes could do to accommodate the elderly, do you see a vision of a parish where people are eager to gather to share how they live the Gospel? Can you picture a parish that reaches out to the community with the love and support that a strong faith community can offer? Dream and plan.

Then, start by picking up your scrapers and sanders: Discover what you can trim away to make a good basis for your vision. Parishes are communities of faith, not buildings. They are gatherings of people, not bricks and mortar. Granted, the Archdiocese has some beautiful old churches among those that may close. But how can we afford to prop up crumbling buildings when we can use those same resources to build up the kind of parish of faith that we dream of.

The ultimate goal of reconfiguration is to further the Mission of the Church. It is about announcing the good news of the faith. It is about fulfilling Jesus' great commandment to love one and other. Let me tell you what all this is going to do. We are going to recapitalize and move our resources and strengthen our church so we can educate our children, feed the poor, clothe the naked, house the homeless, heal the wounded and ill and the broken-hearted. We are going to continue to support strong parishes where vibrant life and liturgy can be found. We are going to seek to spread the good news of the Gospel and Jesus' message of love. And we are going to do all that and more because you took time to dream and to share your vision with your faith community.

It is everyone's experience that when the process of reconfiguration is done well, it revitalizes the local church communities. Suddenly, two or three small parishes in a city or town that were individually struggling to make ends meet, lacked the numbers of parishioners to serve the volunteer needs of the parish, and found themselves worshipping at Sunday Masses where two-thirds of the pews were empty, now find

themselves combined into one community that has the resources to serve the financial and pastoral needs of all, worshipping and praising the Lord in liturgies alive with many voices and hearts. All of a sudden, priests and staffs who have been struggling to get by have the wherewithal in terms of staff numbers and finances to do the things that need to be done. Meanwhile, two local parish schools that have become one school with the same number of students, but with better facilities, better teachers, and a better long term forecast for continuing success.

We need to dream together about what we can accomplish as a Church. Walking together as a people of goodwill, we can make this happen. Recently, a pastor whose parish had gone through a very long process of merger with another parish that was painful and difficult received a note from a couple who had attended the parish's 4:00 PM Christmas Mass. The couple wrote:

"[We] thought we were in a cathedral in Rome... The church was radiant that evening and as the marvelous singing filled the air with the congregation actively joining in, it was a moving experience for us.... You have done an outstanding job these past few months bringing together the families of [two parishes], and it certainly was evident at this Mass that your hard efforts have come to fruition. Although it was difficult adjusting to the closing of our church, [we] believe that we now have a better religious and parish life than we had previously. We are most happy at [our new parish]. You reap what you sow and in the coming years, thanks to you and [your staff], this parish will continue to move forward and be blessed. The spirit is there and growing!"

Christ never promised that discipleship would be easy, but He promised to be with us and send His spirit to guide us. The spirit brings new life and makes all things new again. May God's Holy Spirit fill all our hearts and give us the wisdom and courage to heed His words to St. Francis, "Rebuild my Church."

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