



294 South Corridor Renew My Church Update: January 2022

Discernment Process

Infant Jesus of Prague, St. Anne (Hazel Crest), St. Irenaeus, St. Emeric, St. Joseph (Homewood) and St. Lawrence O'Toole Parishes engaged in the Renew My Church (RMC) review and discernment process over the past few months. The Grouping Feedback and Discernment team (GFDT), which was made up of members from each community, met to review and discern the future parish structure for the area. Our deepest appreciation goes to the GFDT who prayerfully discerned the parish structure during this challenging time of the pandemic.

Based on their meetings and feedback gathered from the larger parish community, they submitted feedback to the archdiocese. The Archdiocesan Standards and Recommendations Commission, which includes representatives from across the Archdiocese of Chicago, reviewed the feedback and other information, including financial summaries and parish trends.

Cardinal Cupich and Bishop Perry are grateful to the priest leaders and the entire Grouping Team who gathered together, and all who offered feedback through the recent discernment process.

Outcome

In the past few weeks, Cardinal Blase J. Cupich, archbishop of Chicago, the archdiocese's auxiliary bishops, and the archdiocese's Presbyteral Council met to discuss the Commission's recommendation. Based upon those discussions and prayerful consideration, Cardinal Cupich made the following decisions regarding the parish structure in this grouping.

- **St. Anne, St. Emeric, and St. Joseph will unite as a new parish, with a new name, one pastor and one pastoral team, effective July 1, 2022.**
 - **St. Joseph will serve as the parish church and the sole location for the parish's regular schedule of Masses.**
 - **The specific timeline to fully transition Masses to St. Joseph will be determined by parish leadership in the coming months.**
 - The Early Learning Center at St. Anne will continue to serve as a ministry of the newly unified parish.
 - The local community will discern possibilities for the new permanent name of the united parish, within guidelines provided by the archdiocese, and submit three to five options to Cardinal Cupich.
 - The Archdiocese of Chicago's Priest Placement Board will continue its discernment of a candidate to recommend as pastor of the newly unified parish. More information will be shared when it is available.

- **Infant Jesus of Prague, St. Irenaeus, and St. Lawrence O'Toole will unite as a new parish, with a new name, one pastor and one pastoral team, effective July 1, 2022.**
 - **Infant Jesus of Prague will serve as the parish church and the sole location for the parish's regular schedule of Masses.**
 - **The specific timeline to fully transition Masses to IJP will be determined by parish leadership in the coming months.**
 - The RMC Operations support team and parish leadership will work together to further investigate the possibility of retaining a portion of either St. Irenaeus or St. Lawrence O'Toole campus for continuing outreach ministry.
 - The local community will discern possibilities for the new permanent name of the united parish, within guidelines provided by the archdiocese, and submit three to five options to Cardinal Cupich.
 - The Archdiocese of Chicago's Priest Placement Board will continue its discernment of a candidate to recommend as pastor of the newly unified parish. More information will be shared when it is available.
 - Infant Jesus of Prague School will serve as the parish school.



Rationale

- The grouping team's preferred scenario included three parishes and pastors (from the original six parishes in the grouping), however the archdiocesan RMC Commission proposed forming two parishes to establish a stable foundation from which to move into the next phase of the renewal process. The Commission had significant concern about the sustainability of three parishes in the face of parish trends, lower-than-expected future priest vocations (impacting future pastor availability) and continuing declines in total local area population.
- The archdiocesan Commission also wrestled with how many worship and ministry sites to propose within the two parishes. Understanding the Grouping Team believed 3-4 total worship sites would best serve the grouping, the archdiocesan RMC Commission proposed one worship site in each united parish to provide a more manageable foundation for each parish. While maintaining additional worship sites can allow for a less abrupt transition, the experience of many parishes across the archdiocese is that the financial and administrative costs of additional worship sites negatively impact the time and financial resources needed to focus on new evangelization efforts.
- The archdiocesan RMC Commission shared concern about losing Catholic presence in the southern section of the grouping, which is why it has asked the RMC Operations support team to work with parish leadership to investigate the possibility of retaining a portion of either St. Irenaeus or St. Lawrence O'Toole campus for continuing outreach ministry.

Next steps

- The renewal process calls us to become a stronger, more sustainable presence for the future capable of reaching more people in their work of making disciples of Jesus Christ, building communities with one another and inspiring witness in the world around us.
- The newly united parish communities will embark upon the next phase of renewal, focusing on strong evangelization to the world around us. We know that this structural change is just the beginning of our journey of renewal.
- Renewal of our Church means that every Catholic, every searcher, and everyone who loves Jesus and his Church, will have to look anew at what it means to be Jesus' disciple and to live out that discipleship.
- Profound gratitude to all involved in the process to date, and prayers for all those who will take up the next phase of renewal, sharing faith and evangelizing those searching to know Jesus more deeply.