



“High Park Wood” Renew My Church Update: January 2022

Discernment Process

Immaculate Conception (Highland Park) and St. James (Highwood) 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 Grob are grateful to Fr. McMahon, Fr. Beltran and the 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.

- **Immaculate Conception and St. James will unite as one parish with two worship sites, one pastor and one pastoral team, effective July 1, 2022.**
 - Both churches will continue to host a regular schedule of Masses. The specific schedule will be determined by the pastor in consultation with parish leadership.
 - Immaculate Conception will formally be designated the parish church where the united parish’s sacramental records will be kept.
 - The local community will discern possibilities for the new permanent name, 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 pastor candidate to recommend for the newly unified parish, with priority on bilingual English and Spanish capabilities. More information will be shared when it is available.
 - The united parish’s leadership team, with support from the Renew My Church Organizational Transitions Team, will investigate the potential lease or sale of campus property. The sale or lease of parts of each property were identified by the GFDT as opportunities to generate income for investment in ministry and reduce ongoing operating and capital costs.
 - Parish leadership will review the ongoing viability of continuing both worship sites with Bishop Grob and his vicariate team on an annual basis.

Rationale

- The GFDT articulated a clear vision for how the two parishes can unite as one parish to serve the Highland Park and Highwood communities, honoring the distinct historic cultures of each community as well as the established ministries of each parish.
- The RMC Commission was impressed with the forward thinking proposed by the GFDT for best using each campus’s properties for ministry and for generating funds to further invest in ministry.
- Further, the RMC Commission appreciated recognition by the GFDT that the sustainability of continuing both campuses will need to be part of the parish’s ongoing stewardship.

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 community 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.