



Mission Alignment Process Phase 1 Implementation Report

Background

It has been more than two years since the Bishop of Oakland, Michael C. Barber, S.J., called for the formulation of a task force to assess how to meet the challenges of declining Mass attendance and underutilized parish facilities in our diocese. These challenges are not unique to the Diocese of Oakland. Dioceses throughout the United States are impacted with similar challenges¹.

The priests of the diocese were asked to recommend candidates to contribute to this task force, and in March 2021 this task force was introduced as the Mission Alignment Process (MAP) Commission. The Commission was composed of 15 members representing laity and clergy of the diocese. The composition of the MAP Commission is contained in Appendix 1.

The Commission commenced meeting in April 2021 to evaluate and guide the parishes of the diocese in a process of self-reflection and renewal. Data from our parishes, parishioners, schools, priests, and diocesan demographics were analyzed and a presentation was developed for presentation to the presbyterate of the Diocese. This data included facts about parish-by-parish Mass attendance, the historical decline in priests serving in parish ministry, and projections of a decline in the number of future priests under 70 years old for parish ministry. Over a period of 14 months, a series of additional meetings with clergy and parish and school lay leadership at the region and deanery levels were held. Input was sought for dealing with these challenges and to increase our focus on Bishop Barber's

¹ <https://angelusnews.com/news/nation/pew-mass-attendance/>

three priorities for the parishes. See Appendix 2 for an explanation of these priorities.

In September 2022 an [interim report](#) was produced by MAP co-chairs, Very Reverend Lawrence D’Anjou, Vicar General and Mr. Rick Medeiros, Chancellor to the diocese. This report contains the information provided at the region and deanery meetings and the feedback received. In November 2022 Bishop Barber arranged 14 additional meetings of the priests assigned to each deanery to discuss feedback from the region and deanery consultative meetings and to deliberate on a path forward for each deanery. This path forward included the consideration of clustering, merging, or closing of parishes. See Appendix 3 for an explanation of these terms. These meetings began with an extended time of prayer before the Blessed Sacrament. Our Lord assures his Church, “I am with you always.” (Mt 28:20).

Recent Developments

On May 8, 2023 Bishop Barber announced that, as there are over 300 potential lawsuits against the Diocese of Oakland brought about by passage of California Assembly Bill 218, the diocese is filing for Chapter 11 bankruptcy. Though MAP did not anticipate this eventuality, the work done through MAP will be useful as the courts assess how the Diocese can restructure and constitute a source of funds for settlements of cases. Aware that the Chapter 11 process will affect how MAP is implemented, it has been decided that a phased approach to MAP implementation is best. This report contains recommendations for MAP Phase 1 implementation. These are expected to begin in the 2nd half of 2023.

Moving Forward

Bishop Barber recognizes that these changes will be a challenge. But we have a track record of successful parish clusters, mergers, and closures which we have learned from and will improve upon. The Diocese intends to take the greatest care to help ensure that every Catholic is assisted as best as possible in each parish transition so that each parish may become an even more vibrant and faith-filled Catholic community. The Diocese is assembling resources to assist parishes as they transition.

On the topic of “Healing the World” at a general audience in September 2020 Pope Francis said, “Everyone must be listened to. Everyone — those on the top, those on the bottom. True change comes about with everyone, all the people,” who make up a community. From the beginning, our Mission Alignment Process has been about engaging our clergy and the people of our parishes and schools in a process of self-reflection and renewal. With God’s help and with the resilience of our common faith, we press on to bring our hopes for parish renewal and revitalization to fruition.

MAP Phase 1 Recommendations:

Merger of Christ the King-St. Stephen. Completed April 2022

Merger of St. Barnabas under St. Joseph, Alameda

Merger of St. Benedict under Divine Mercy

Cluster of Our Lady of Lourdes under Corpus Christi, Piedmont

Cluster of St. Ambrose under St. Joseph the Worker

Cluster of St. Leo the Great under the Cathedral of Christ the Light

Cluster of Transfiguration under Our Lady of Grace

Cluster of St. Mary Walnut Creek under St. John Vianney

Cluster of St. Patrick Oakland under the Cathedral of Christ the Light

Inter-Parish Association of St. Joseph the Worker and St. Augustine Oakland

Compiled by:

Very Rev. Lawrence D’Anjou, Vicar General, Diocese of Oakland

Mr. Rick Medeiros, Chancellor, Diocese of Oakland

Appendix 1

Composition of Mission Alignment Process (MAP) Commission

1. Fr. Brandon Macadaeg, Cathedral of Christ the Light Rector/Amazing Parish Initiative
2. Mary Fair, Diocesan Planning Board/Catholic Charities, St. Charles Livermore
3. Fr. Anthony Huong Le, pastor St. Joseph Fremont/Amazing Parish Initiative
4. Jocelyn Pierre-Antoine, Diocesan Catholic Schools representative
5. Fr. Jimmy Macalinao, Diocesan Director of Faith Formation & Evangelization
6. Amanda Wehrman, Parish Council Chair, Newman Hall, Holy Spirit Berkeley
7. Fr. Jason Landeza, pastor, St. Benedict Oakland
8. Cristina Torres, Lay Minister, Our Lady of the Rosary, Union City
9. Fr. Mark Ruiz, Boston Archdiocese Cluster Parish model
10. Fr. Leo Edgerly, Diocesan Presbyteral Council Vice-Chair
11. Eric Hom, Business Manager, St Michael Livermore
12. Fr. Lawrence D'Anjou, Vicar General (co-chair)
13. Rick Medeiros, Director, Order of Malta Oakland Diocese, St. Isidore parish (co-chair)
14. Steve Wilcox, Chancellor (retired August 2021. Replaced by Rick Medeiros, new Chancellor)
15. Paul Bongiovanni, CFO, Diocese of Oakland

Appendix 2

Bishop Michael C. Barber's Three Parish Priorities

1. **Greater attention needs to be paid to the Sunday Mass**, and everything associated with it: an intelligent and inspirational homily, sacred music that communicates the presence of God, friendly and warm hospitality. We do the “horizontal church” well, and that is important -- but what about the “vertical” dimension of worship? Celebration of the Sunday liturgy should be a personal and communal encounter with Jesus Christ. Pope Francis said that every Mass should be like the experience Peter, James and John had at the Transfiguration. They were so overwhelmed at the beauty, mystery and transcendence of Jesus, they exclaimed, “It is good for us to be here!” How many of our parishioners can say that on Sunday?

2. **We need to continue to emphasize the Corporal and Spiritual Works of Mercy.** The “Year of Mercy” has been a big success in our diocese, from people coming back to Confession to be reconciled with God after many years, to students and young people who have discovered the joy of helping the poor and destitute. The Catholic Church is always having a “Year of Mercy.” It is what we are and what we do.

3. **We need to form our people as Missionary Disciples.** It is not enough just to practice our faith on our own. We need to spread our faith. We do that by sharing it -- by communicating the joy and consolation we have received from Jesus with others. How can we practice Pope Francis’ call for engagement with social justice? How can we grow in our spiritual life?

Appendix 3

Definition of Terms related to MAP implementation.

Cluster: Two or more parishes remain separate and retain their names but share one or more priests and one administration.

Merger: Two or more parishes are combined to form one new parish while consolidating membership, property, and finances.

Closure: Church and other buildings sold, rented, or used for other purposes. Parishioners are assisted to attend a neighboring parish.

Inter-Parish Association: In this situation, two or more parishes remain separate and retain their names. Leadership of the parishes work together to serve the pastoral needs of the Association.