

Committee recommendations

In May 2007, the Cleveland Catholic Diocese asked regional groups of parishes in the city to recommend ways to consolidate churches. The clusters have until Nov. 15 to submit plans to Bishop Richard Lennon. Lennon is expected to make final decisions by March 2009. The following list describes the latest committee recommendations.

| Cluster | Goal | Proposal |
|--|-----------------------------|---|
| CLEVELAND CENTRAL EAST | | |
| St. John Cathedral (established in 1848), St. Peter (1853), Conversion of St. Paul (1931) | No more than one parish | St. Peter and Conversion of St. Paul to consolidate into St. John Cathedral. St. Paul Shrine would no longer be a diocesan parish but likely would be kept open for Masses as a convent church. St. Peter would close. |
| Immaculate Conception (1865), St. Andrew (1906), St. Francis (1887), St. George (1895), St. Paul (1902), St. Vitus (1893) | No more than three parishes | St. Andrew has closed. St. Francis and St. George to close. |
| St. Adalbert (1883), St. Agnes-Our Lady of Fatima (1980), St. Aloysius-St. Agatha (1898), St. Philip Neri (1914) | No more than two parishes | St. Philip Neri has closed. Two scenarios proposed: The first would consolidate the three remaining churches into a new parish at St. Adalbert; the second would close St. Adalbert and keep open St. Agnes-Our Lady of Fatima and St. Aloysius-St. Agatha. |
| Holy Redeemer (1924), Our Lady of Perpetual Help (1929), St. Mary (1905), St. Jerome (1919) | No more than three parishes | St. Jerome to merge with Our Lady of Perpetual Help. |
| CLEVELAND CENTRAL WEST | | |
| Blessed Sacrament (1903), St. Barbara (1905), St. Boniface (1903), St. Michael the Archangel (1883), St. Rocco (1922) | No more than three parishes | Blessed Sacrament and St. Barbara to close. |
| Community of St. Malachi (1975), St. Malachi (1865), St. Patrick (Bridge Ave.) (1853), St. Wendelin (1903) | No more than two parishes | St. Malachi to merge with St. Patrick. Community of St. Malachi to merge with St. Wendelin. |
| La Sagrada Familia (1997), Our Lady of Mount Carmel West (1926), St. Colman (1880), St. Procop (1872), St. Stephen (1869) | No more than three parishes | St. Procop and St. Stephen to close. |
| Our Lady of Mercy (1922), St. Andrew Kim (1888), St. Augustine (1860), St. John Cantius (1898) | No more than three parishes | Our Lady of Mercy to close. |
| CLEVELAND NORTHWEST | | |
| Annunciation (1924), Ascension (1946), Our Lady of Angels (1922), St. Patrick (Rocky River Drive) (1848) | No more than three parishes | Annunciation to merge with Ascension. |
| SS. Philip and James (1950), St. Ignatius of Antioch (1902), St. Mark (1945), St. Mel (1945), St. Vincent de Paul (1922) | No more than four parishes | SS. Philip and James to combine with St. Ignatius. |
| Corpus Christi (1935), Our Lady of Good Counsel (1873), St. Charles Borromeo (Parma) (1923), St. Leo the Great (1948), St. Thomas More (Brooklyn) (1946) | No more than four parishes | Corpus Christi and Our Lady of Good Counsel to merge with St. Leo the Great. |
| CLEVELAND SOUTHEAST | | |
| Epiphany (1944), Our Lady of Peace (1919), St. Cecilia (1915) | No more than one parish | Two scenarios proposed: One would merge the three churches into a new parish at Our Lady of Peace; the other would keep open Our Lady of Peace and combine Epiphany with St. Cecilia. |
| Holy Name (1854), Immaculate Heart of Mary (1894), Sacred Heart of Jesus (1888), St. John Nepomucene (1902), St. Lawrence (1901) | No more than three parishes | Immaculate Heart of Mary and St. Lawrence to close. |
| Our Lady of Lourdes (1883), St. Casimir (1891), St. Hyacinth (1906), St. Stanislaus (1873) | No more than two parishes | St. Casimir and St. Hyacinth to close. |

THE PLAIN DEALER

CHURCHES

FROM A1

Panels' decisions on closings due

In May 2007, Lennon ordered a third of 69 regional groups of parishes to come up with plans to close or merge churches in response to suburban flight, growing red ink and a worsening clergy shortage. Clusters in Lorain County and Cuyahoga County suburbs submitted plans in September and October, and plans for Summit County are due in mid-December.

The heaviest burden is falling on the urban churches built in the 19th and early 20th centuries to meet the needs of immigrants. The migration to the suburbs has left them with smaller congregations caring for older buildings with shrinking resources.

No place in Northeast Ohio has been hit harder than Cleveland, where Lennon ordered all 14 regional groups to plan for at least one fewer parish. The committee recommendations would close up to 26 of the 61 parishes in the Cleveland clusters. The city's population is less than half of what it was in the 1950s, with the Catholic population declining from around 287,000 in 1960 to 90,000 today.

Now the 10 largest diocesan parishes are in the suburbs, while nearly half the 63 parishes with fewer than 500 households are in Cleveland.

Lennon said the diocese will do its best to build strong, lasting parishes among the remaining congregations in the city and will continue to provide social services and education opportunities to all city residents. The bishop said he is more concerned about the church's ministry in the city than how many buildings are left standing.

In the pews, however, many parishioners who have attended a particular parish nearly all their lives — often through baptisms, weddings and funerals — are mourning the potential loss of their churches.

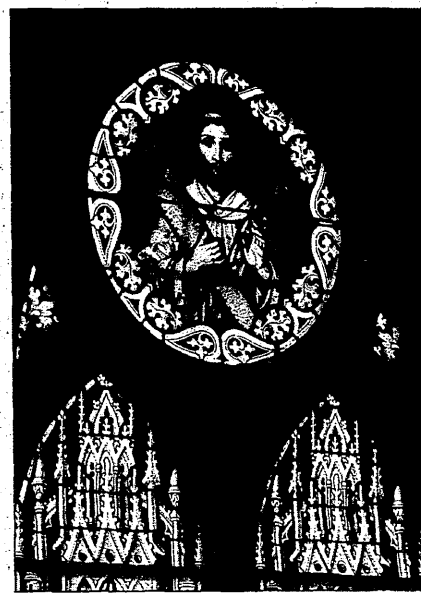
"It means everything, just as God does," said Ronald Jurcak of his parish, Our Lady of Good Counsel. "It's more than words. It's something within the heart."

Cummins said he and others also are concerned about the impact on the West Side of proposals to close St. Barbara and Blessed Sacrament along with merging Corpus Christi and Our Lady of Good Counsel with St. Leo the Great.

"You're really wiping out a church presence to low- to moderate-income households on the West and Southwest Side," he said.

On the East Side, Ward 11 Councilman Michael Polensek is joining with parishioners at St. Jerome and Our Lady of Perpetual Help to protest the proposed merger of the churches. St. Jerome would close, and Our Lady parishioners are concerned the parish to be created on its site would lose its Lithuanian heritage. It is a particular concern because the other Lithuanian parish in the city, St. George, is also recommended for closing.

"These churches are critical to my neighborhood," Polensek said. "How many hits can we take in this neighborhood and still have a viable city?"



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St. Stephen is portrayed on a stained-glass window at St. Stephen Church.

Over the next four months, the proposals will be reviewed by diocesan officials and sent on to Lennon. Many churches such as St. Casimir and Our Lady of Good Counsel are trying to make their case to stay open by building up church attendance, writing letters to the bishop and organizing community support. Polensek said parishioners at St. Jerome are considering putting up signs imploring passersby to help them save their church.

At St. Stephen, a national historic landmark on the West Side, some members are trying to save the building even if it means giving it up as a parish.

Paul Beargie, president of the St. Stephen Society, said the acoustics and architecture of St. Stephen make it an excellent site for concerts and special services such as German and Latin Masses and weddings and funerals.

Among minority congregations, predominantly black churches also face substantial losses. Earlier this year, St. Catherine and St. Henry in Cleveland merged with St. Timothy in Garfield Heights to create a parish at the site of St. Timothy. Under the regional committee proposals, the future of churches such as St. Adalbert, in the east central area, and Epiphany and St. Cecilia in the southeast are up in the air.

Until March, Beatrice Wells said, she and others at St. Adalbert will be "praying and praying. We'll be praying and praying very hard every day and every night."

Sister Sheila Tobbe, pastoral associate at St. Cecilia, said the process is painful at her church, like everywhere else in the city.

"But thank God it's painful," Tobbe said. "Because if it wasn't painful, it would say we didn't care about our churches."

NATION

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ANCHORAGE, ALASKA Palin lashes out at GOP critics

Alaska Gov. Sarah Palin called her critics cowards and jerks Friday for deriding her anonymously and insisted she never asked for the expensive wardrobe purchased for her use on the presidential campaign. "I never asked for anything more than a Diet Dr. Pepper once in a while," Palin said as she returned to the governor's office from her two-month odyssey as the GOP vice presidential nominee. "Those are the RNC's clothes. They're not my clothes. I never forced anybody to buy anything," she said. She was particularly angry at the anonymous Republican campaign sources cited in a Fox News report who said she did not know Africa was a continent, not a country. "I consider it cowardly" that they did not allow their names to be used, she said.

Byrd steps down from committee post

Sen. Robert Byrd, the longest-serving senator in history, is stepping down from his cherished post as chairman of the Senate Appropriations Committee. Byrd, 90, has become increasingly frail in recent years. The West Virginia Democrat is a legend in his own state, where he's single-handedly responsible for directing huge sums of federal largess for roads, universities, and economic development projects.

Deficit climbing in new fiscal year

Just one month into the fiscal year, the federal budget deficit has already reached \$232 billion, according to estimates released Friday. That's the way the deficit would look as measured by the Treasury Department, the rival

Congressional Budget Office said. Treasury is going to put the \$115 billion in bank stock purchases made as part of the bail-out of the financial system last month directly onto the deficit ledger.

ATLANTA Trial escapee convicted of murder

A man who escaped from custody during his rape trial and launched a deadly courthouse shooting spree that claimed the lives of a judge and three others was convicted of murder Friday more than three years after the rampage. Brian Nichols, 36, could face the death penalty for killing a judge, a court reporter, a sheriff's deputy and a federal agent in the violence that began at the Fulton County Courthouse in the heart of downtown Atlanta.

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STEPHEN KOPY AND MARGARET REAKSTEIN | THE PLAIN DEALER
Fifty-five years ago, the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. stood on the marble steps of the Lincoln Memorial and in a lifetime once dreamed of when people would not be judged by the color of their skin. Rev. King's historic 1963 march on Washington, D.C., was a turning point in the struggle for civil rights. It was also a turning point in the history of the nation's capital. King's dream was not just a dream. It was a reality. It was a vision that has inspired generations. It was a vision that has shaped the course of our nation's history. It was a vision that has led us to this day. It was a vision that has led us to this moment. It was a vision that has led us to this day. It was a vision that has led us to this moment.

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