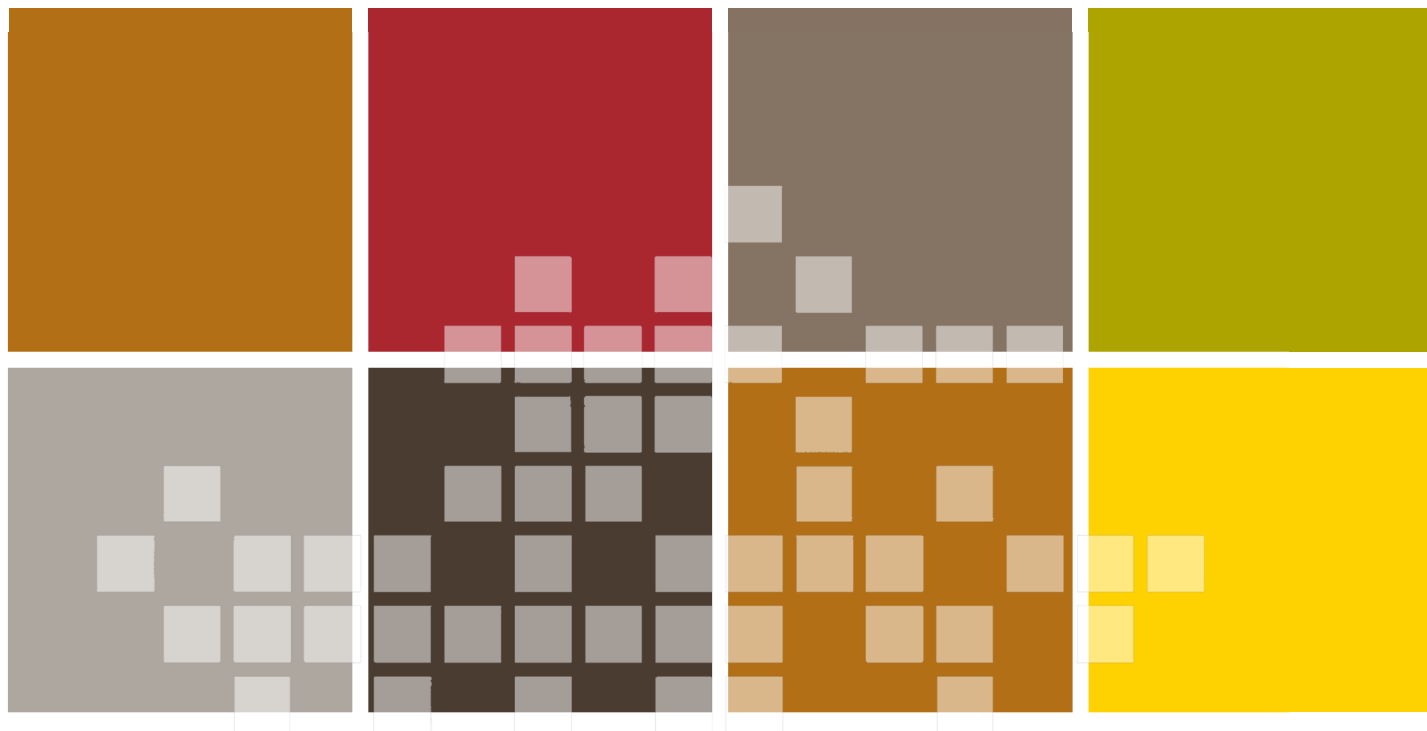

Pastoral Plan



DIOCESE OF LA CROSSE
Chippewa Falls, WI

April 2021

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LETTER FROM THE PASTORS

(The letter is completed when the final draft of the plan is approved. It is possible that Bishop Callahan may also include a “preface” to the document.)

I. INTRODUCTION

“ . . . any pastoral action that is limited to the territory of the Parish is outdated, which is something the parishioners themselves observe when their Parish appears to be more interested in preserving a nostalgia of former times as opposed to looking to the future with courage.”

(The Pastoral Conversion of the Parish Community in the Service of the Evangelizing Mission of the Church, the Congregation for Clergy, July 20, 2020.)

This sentence captures what the Congregation for Clergy in Rome views as the central goal in the needed efforts for parish reform. That goal is to move parishes from a “self-preservation” model to one of “evangelization.” Such a move will take courage on the part of leadership as well as all the faithful in the Chippewa Falls area.

At the request of parish leadership and with the approval of Bishop William Callahan, Meitler, a national Catholic school and parish consulting team based in the Milwaukee area, has been contracted to facilitate a process which will lead to a strategic plan for the parishes and schools in Chippewa Falls. Three consultants and a project coordinator are involved in the Chippewa Falls project. The proposed schedule identifies a May or June date for the completion and approval of the plan.

The study of the Chippewa Falls area began in November of 2020 with site visits to Holy Ghost, Notre Dame and St. Charles Borromeo parishes, and McDonell Area Catholic Schools. During the onsite visits, interviews with parish and school leaders were conducted. Community demographics as well as parish and school data were collected and analyzed. All highlights of this research and analysis were compiled in a document titled *Key Findings and Observations*. The Key Findings were presented at parish meetings and posted on the MACS website for all parishioners to participate in the process. At the parish meetings, polling was conducted in regard to preferences for “possibilities for the future.” The results of that polling are included in the appendix and has played a role in shaping the direction of the plan for the future.

Since January of 2021, two local committees have facilitated the planning process by taking the data and ideas for the future to develop a plan. The two groups which guide the process are: the Leadership Team and the Planning Task Force. The Leadership Team is comprised of the pastors, the school President and a school representative. The Planning Task Force is formed from representatives of each of the parishes as appointed by a pastor and representatives from McDonell Area Catholic Schools (MACS). The committees are working with the consultants to shape and build consensus for the plan among parishioners.

The parish leaders in Chippewa Falls have recognized the parishes are changing toward a new future. It has taken remarkable courage and foresight to get to this point. The membership at the three parishes is stable, MACS enrollment is high, and the Chippewa Falls area population is projected to grow. As in 1987, the parishes came together to form MACS to strengthen Catholic education in the area, this plan will address how the parishes and MACS can further strengthen their future.

We move forward with the promise that Jesus left with His disciples and all of His future followers - *“I am with you always.”* - Matthew 28:20.

II. VISION AND STRATEGY

“We must restore hope to young people, help the old, be open to the future, spread love. Be poor among the poor. We need to include the excluded and preach peace.” - Pope Francis

As Pope Francis often provides visions for the future, this certainly is one of his most profound. In undertaking a strategic plan for the Chippewa Falls area, a vision for the next five to ten years, and possibly beyond, is needed.

A vision for the future typically contains two main elements: **a vision phrase**, which summarizes the priorities and plan serving as a way of compressing the entire plan into a few words, and **the priorities**, which will guide the strategies and implementation. At this point in the planning process, the priorities are being clarified and suggestions for the vision phrase are being offered.

Some vision phrases which have been suggested so far:

- We Stand Together, One Family of Faith
- United in Faith and Mission
- A United Catholic Community, Rich in History, United and Ready for the Future
- *Corpus Unum* (One Body)
- Faith in Three
- Catholics Rich in Faith and Spiritually Grounded
- One Family of Faith Committed to Living the Gospel of Christ
- The Body of Christ is in Many Parts and Needs to be Made One
- Christ Come to Full Stature: Collaborating Together, Growing in Him, Evangelizing All

In the many discussions, priorities have emerged with the Leadership Team and Planning Task Force. These priorities are presented as suggested and as combined by the Leadership Team.

Priority	Leadership Team	Task Force
Collaborating on Personnel, Programs, and Resources	Collaboration among the parishes and school Using all resources wisely Streamlining resources	Using our resources wisely together Keep our buildings and campuses Operational vitality
Forming Disciples of Jesus to be Evangelizers	Evangelization/Growth Discipleship Making disciples	Show those outside the value of faith and welcome back Growth in numbers – growth in faith We have an “abundance” to share
Building a Community of Disciples by Fostering a Spirit of Welcome	Welcoming Community	Need more hospitable approach – can seem cold to outsiders because of lack of gathering space and childcare “Going out” starts with “Going in”

		<p>Need for “newcomer” approach with new parishioners</p> <p>Building relationships through fellowship and developing a community/family feeling</p>
Respecting the History of Each Parish and Renewing the Catholic Mission	Respect history and traditions of the parishes	<p>Rich history and tradition of the Catholic faith in Chippewa Falls</p> <p>Rebuilding our Catholic culture/mission</p> <p>Building our culture to better support our children, youth and young adults</p>

III. OVERVIEW OF STRATEGIC PLAN

(This page will be a summary of all the recommendation in the plan under each ministry section.)

IV. PROPOSED RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PARISHES

A. Parish Organization

Since the consolidation of the Catholic Schools of Chippewa Falls into MACS in 1987, the parishes of Holy Ghost, Notre Dame and St. Charles Borromeo have considered some formal and informal proposals for parish and ministry organization. The parishes have chosen to collaborate in a number of ministry areas and the current pastors have developed a strong level of trust and a good working relationship. The degree of unity among the pastors and parishes is likely higher now than at any other point in the past thirty-plus years. If the parishes were to collaborate further, what would that look like?

Collaboration among parishes follows a continuum or range of relationships. The two most common ways of describing these relationships are:

- **Collaboration, Clustering or Multi-Parish Ministry** - some degree and amount of sharing personnel, programs, finances and facilities has been mutually agreed by two or more parishes. Some Catholics like to use the concept of “dating” as an analogy for collaboration. The parishes are serious about each another but not yet ready for marriage.
- **Merger** – the joining of two or more parishes under a new name is both a civil and canonical or church process. It is the ultimate form of collaboration. Some Catholics use the concept of “marriage” as an analogy for collaboration. After dating for a period of time, the parishes have decided to become “one.”

What are the pros and cons of further collaboration or merger? The box below offers some ideas which have surfaced over the early months of the planning process.

PROS	CONS
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Have been moving in this direction since 1987• Churches would keep their names and identities but all would be unified under a new name• Creates administrative and financial efficiencies• All ministries will be combined and shared• Continuity in the parishes since there is one pastor• Priests become freer for pastoral and spiritual concerns of their people• Rather than trying to find 3 good pastors, it is easier to find one• Costs more money to operate four institutions or entities• Frees up money to better address other ministry and facility needs• Creates new enthusiasm and excitement• Same number of priests	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Will be more difficult for a pastor to know his people• Things are working well now. Maintains the status quo with a few improvements• Could lose parish identity and history• Could lose parishioners• There could be a loss of a sense of community• Emotional impact on people may be divisive• Move is not mandated by the diocese• Could have cultural clashes between parishioners• Individual parish finances will be pooled• Challenge to create and build a small community environment and a feeling of welcome and belonging.

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Introduces a greater presence and visibility in the city because of the size and influence of combining the parishes | |
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Several options for parish organization which follow are not motivated by any of these factors:

- Reduction in the number of priests serving in Chippewa Falls;
- Financial condition of any or all parishes;
- Diocesan mandate to work together or merge.

These options for parish organization are proposed as ways to optimize and fully realize the vision for the future of the Catholic church in Chippewa Falls.

Option 1:

1. Merge the parishes of Holy Ghost, Notre Dame and St. Charles Borromeo over a 12-to-18 month period, with three churches, one pastor, and a new name.

- There is one pastor with several parochial vicars.
- The current churches will retain their names and create a new name for the new parish.
- One parish staff that connects all three communities at one parish office.
- One parish pastoral council and one finance council.
- All financial activity is conducted by the new parish.
- All committees are combined and function under the new councils.

Option 2:

2. Merge the parishes of Holy Ghost, Notre Dame and St. Charles Borromeo as pastors change assignments or retire, over a period of years, with three parish sites, one pastor, and a new name.

- Each parish retains its own pastor until reassignment.
- As a pastor of one of the other two parishes is changed, an already existing pastor at the other parish will become the new pastor for that parish and a parochial vicar will likely be named to serve the parishes.
- Eventually, there will be one pastor for all three parishes.
- The merger of the parishes can take place either in phases as a pastor is replaced or when all three parishes are formally merged.
- All actions noted in the first option would then apply.

Option 3:

3. Become a multi-parish community of Holy Ghost, Notre Dame and St. Charles Borromeo parishes, within either a specified period of months or as pastorates become open, with one pastor and the potential for a common name, such as “The Catholic Parishes/Community of Chippewa Falls.”

- One pastor would be appointed to serve the three parishes. Other priests would serve as parochial vicars.
- The parishes would function best with one staff at one office.
- Parish pastoral councils should be combined to serve the common ministry of the area.

- Each parish must retain its own finance council and finances. Councils could meet on the same night so that the pastor has only one night meeting for finance councils.
 - The parishes could choose a name for the parish collaboration, such as “Catholics Parishes of Chippewa Falls” or “Chippewa Falls Catholic Community.”
4. **(Option A): Determine pastoral staff needs for the community and establish one staff for the parishes and school administration at one office location. The finance office at MACS would be combined with the parish finance office. A pastoral staff directory may be modeled after the one in the next option.**
 5. **(Option B): Determine pastoral staff needs for the community and establish one staff for all parishes at one parish office. The pastoral staff directory may look something like this:**
 - Pastor
 - Parochial vicars, including one who will serve as chaplain/instructor at MACS
 - Administrative Assistant(s) for the parish office
 - Director of Administrative Services – oversees finances and facilities, including the maintenance staff
 - Director of Child and Family Religious Education – oversees faith formation programs for children and middle school students as well as their families
 - Director of Youth and Young Adult Ministries – oversees high school catechesis and ministry to young adults – age group of 20’s and 30’s
 - Director of Liturgical Music and Adult Faith Formation – oversees liturgy preparation at all sites and coordinates adult faith formation opportunities
 - Director of Outreach Ministries and Evangelization – oversees social justice projects and volunteers as well as organizes and forms evangelization teams and activity
 - Director of Stewardship and Communications – oversees parish community building activities and coordinates the print, media and electronic flow of information to parishioners and the area
 - Prepare for two, parish mission-like events at the parishes. The first, would focus prayerfully on the changes which the parishes have planned for the future and how this can create a new spiritual vitality in the Chippewa Falls area along with an invitation for parishioners’ prayer and support. The second, would be closer in time to the actual transition into a new organization and provide an opportunity for parishioners to become more fully engaged in the mission and ministry of the new parish organization.

B. Faith Formation and Evangelization

1. Coordinate all religious education programming for children and youth through MACS.
2. Develop a total youth ministry for adolescents which includes service opportunities, prayer experiences, and social events.
3. Establish a ministry for young adults in their 20’s and 30’s.
4. Create small faith sharing groups and/or retreat experiences for adults to deepen their understanding of discipleship and to challenge them to become evangelizers.
5. Create evangelization teams which will contact current and former parishioners to listen to them and invite them to fuller engagement with the parish community.

C. Worship and Prayer

1. Develop a Sunday and weekday Mass schedule which provides for a variety of Mass times and maximizes seating capacities at the churches.
2. Maintain and expand opportunities for common prayer experiences and devotions.
3. Study and implement ways for the parishes to expand the ministry of welcome and hospitality at all liturgical celebrations and other parish activities.

D. Social Justice

1. Combine all individual parish social justice committees and projects under one, common committee.
2. Study how the needs of all people in the Chippewa Falls area can best be served by the parishes and in collaboration with and supportive of local organizations.
3. Recruit and train more volunteers to support the social justice ministries and projects.

E. Stewardship and Communications

1. Create an area-wide approach to communications with parishioners under the direction of a parish staff member.
2. Develop and conduct an area-wide process for personal financial stewardship under the direction of a parish staff member.
3. Determine a process for all fund-raising and capital campaigns by the parishes and schools to be coordinated so that their events and activities do not compete with one another under the direction of a parish staff member.
4. Establish ways to welcome and orient new parishioners as well as assess and invite parishioners to use their gifts and talents in the service of the Kingdom of God under the direction of a parish staff member.

F. Finances and Facilities

1. Begin a study of parish and school facility needs by a Facilities Study Committee and devise a common, long-range strategy and master plan for their maintenance, updating, improvement and possible replacement to be initiated in March of 2021 and concluded by September of 2021. The Study Committee, appointed by the pastors, will compile a report and present it to the councils of all the parishes. The final recommendations in the study will be considered as part of this strategic plan for this section.
 - Evaluate the needs for primary and elementary education with the current facilities and determine whether a new facility should be constructed on the McDonell campus or improvements made to existing facilities.
 - Evaluate the costs of maintaining and improving older facilities with that of new construction.
2. Reduce the parish investment or subsidy to the schools over a specified time period, from 59% to 50% with the potential for further reductions as development income increases in the school.

V. PROPOSED RECOMMENDATIONS FOR MCDONELL AREA CATHOLIC SCHOOLS

1. Emphasize the role of advancement and fundraising in the revenue stream of the school.
 - Hire additional personnel,
 - Provide appropriate training,
 - Focus on the development of an annual fund
 - Develop a process for the identification, cultivation and solicitation of new donors.
2. Phase out the program for one- and two-year-old children.
 - The pre-school program does not provide any revenue to MACS and in fact is an additional expense.
 - Survey data indicates that enrollment in the pre-school program does not significantly influence a parent’s decision to enroll their child into MACS.
3. Promote MACS as a 3-year-old to 12th grade school, which includes BB4C with wrap-around care.
 - Research a robust curriculum model to implement into the 3-year-old program such as The Creative Curriculum for Preschool, Montessori, Little Saints Catholic School Preschool Curriculum.
 - Consider developing educational opportunities for the wrap-around care to extend learning beyond the school day. This could include but is not limited to music lessons, tutoring, STEM programs, physical activities, art, drama, international languages.
4. Create a facilities master plan for MACS.
 - Evaluate the feasibility of constructing a new building on the middle/high school campus to serve grades 3-year-old to 5th grade.
 - Evaluate the wisdom of removing primary grades from the parish church context.
 - With the understanding that there should be a certain flexibility with fluctuating enrollments at specific grade levels, evaluate the advantages of relocating the 3K and BB4C to Grade 2 program from the St. Charles school building into the Notre Dame school building. The school building at St. Charles is at capacity while Notre Dame has more classroom space available. Facility analysis of both buildings indicate the Notre Dame building will cost less to upgrade.
 - a. If needed, consider moving the 3rd grade from the Holy Ghost school building into the Notre Dame school building to free up space for additional 4th and 5th grade sections.

VI. IMPLEMENTATION AND TIMELINE

The implementation will begin when the plan is approved in either May or June of 2021. There are several elements to the implementation.

1. The Leadership Team and the Planning Task Force, which have both played such an essential role in the planning process will end. Their role will have been completed.
2. The specific implementation of the recommended goals in the plan will pass to the parishes and school. Pastors, parish pastoral councils, and finance councils will play key roles as will parish staff. Responsibility for the implementation of the goals and accountability to see that they are implemented will be critical.
3. The parish pastoral council is responsible for the implementation of the plan. The Council will regularly monitor and review progress to ensure implementation continues. The Council will monitor until all recommendations have been put into place.
4. Prioritization and timelines will be necessary for each recommended goal. Parishes simply cannot implement every goal at the same time. The greatest amount of energy, enthusiasm and activity is usually evident in the first year of implementation. It is helpful to view and present all the recommended goals in a type of sequence where one goal builds on another or where preparation needs to take place before the goal can be fully realized.
5. The implementation itself is a process to build relationships and to invite parishioners to greater involvement in and engagement with the parish. There are parishioners who will be inspired to become involved in new or expanded ministries. The implementation process can and should be a time of increased vitality and spirit in the community.