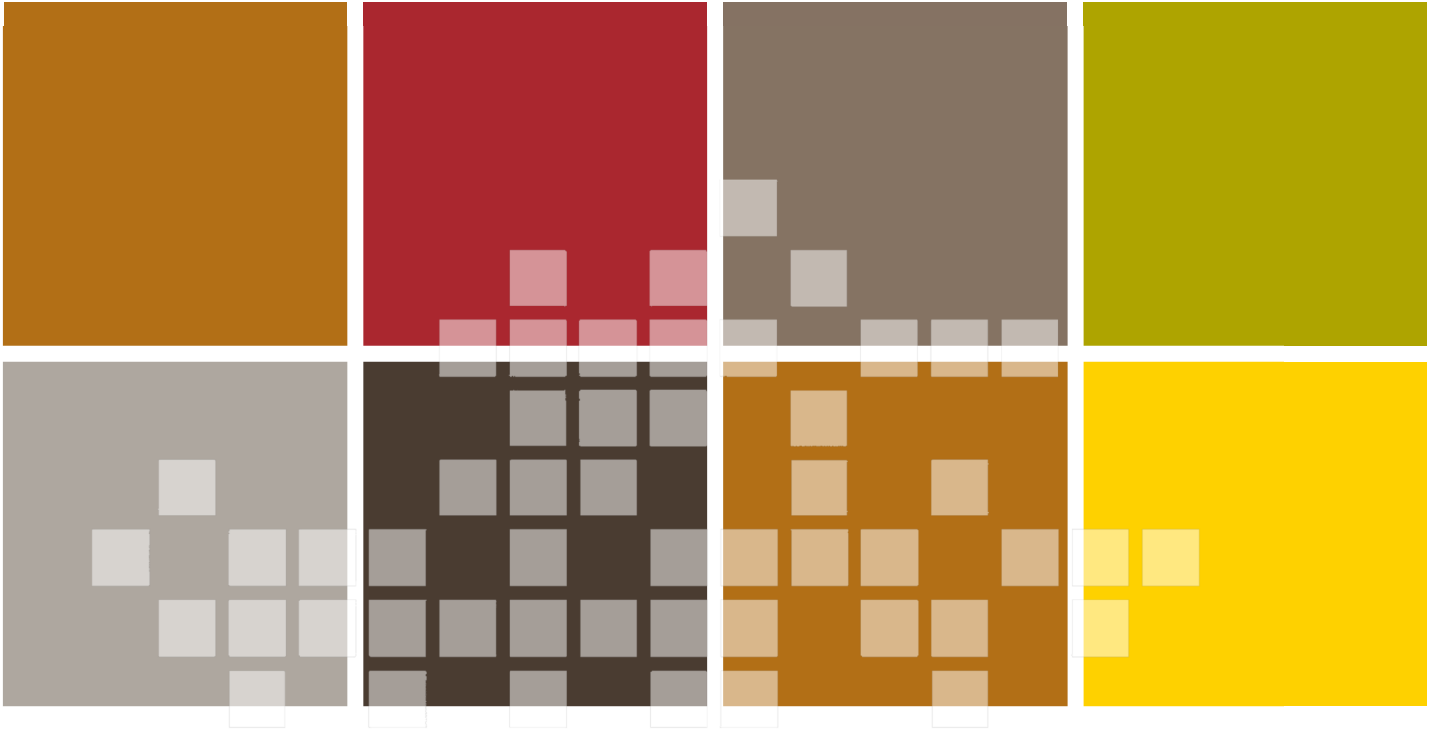

Pastoral Plan



DIOCESE OF LA CROSSE
Chippewa Falls, WI

June 2021

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LETTER FROM THE PASTORS

June 15, 2021

Dear Parishioners of Holy Ghost, Notre Dame, St. Bridget, St. Charles Borromeo, and St. Peter Parishes,

This planning process could not have happened without you. We are very grateful to the representatives from each parish and the schools who served on the Planning Task Force. Their dedication and collaboration have resulted in this plan for the Chippewa Falls area. We thank all the parishioners who attended parish meetings and participated by completing the survey. Your insights and cooperation helped shape the plan into this final form.

Planning for the future is an act of hope. It requires courage and wisdom to honestly assess the present reality and to respond to the potential for the future. At the heart of any planning effort is the realization that change will be required. It is much easier to maintain the status quo than to envision a new future even if that means change which may make life even better. The parishes in Chippewa Falls were not under any immediate pressure to change but did so out of a desire to more effectively carry out the mission of Jesus and the Church.

Throughout history God has promised to be with us. Our plan for the future is ambitious and will require the efforts of many people and a considerable amount of time to be put into place. With the guiding presence of the Holy Spirit, however, the vision of parishes working more closely together, sharing their resources, focusing on evangelization and welcome and building a vital community of faith is a dream which we can make a reality.

As we accept the challenge to bring this plan to fruition, we ask for your continued prayer, support and help in these efforts to make the Chippewa Falls area a shining light of God's presence and love. May all who work on the implementation of this pastoral plan be blessed and all the efforts for greater parish vibrancy be realized.

Sincerely in Christ,

Rev. Jesse Burish, Pastor
Notre Dame Parish

Rev. Msgr. Michael Gorman, Pastor
St. Charles Borromeo Parish

Rev. Justin Kizewski, Pastor
Holy Ghost Parish

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“...any pastoral action that is limited to the territory of the Parish is outdated, which is something the parishioners themselves observe when their Parish appears to be more interested in preserving a nostalgia of former times as opposed to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, was contracted to facilitate a process which led to a strategic plan for the parishes and schools in Chippewa Falls. Three consultants and a project coordinator were involved in the Chippewa Falls project. The proposed schedule identified 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 regarding 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 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 guided the process were: the Leadership Team and the Planning Task Force. The Leadership Team was comprised of the pastors, the school President and a school representative. The Planning Task Force was formed from representatives of each of the parishes as appointed by a pastor and representatives from McDonell Area Catholic Schools (MACS). The committees worked 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 and a new future is emerging. 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 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 frequently as Pope Francis speaks of visions for the future of the Church, these three sentences may be some 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. Priorities – Four Principles for the Plan

A vision for the future typically contains two main elements: **a vision phrase**, which summarizes the priorities and the plan, serving as a way of compressing the entire plan into a few words, and **the priorities**, which will guide the strategies and implementation. Four priorities for the future have been identified by the Leadership Team and the Planning Task Force as well as affirmed by the participants at the parish meetings.

The four priorities for the future are:

1. Collaborating to a greater extent on personnel, programs and resources

This priority builds upon the history of collaborative efforts between the Chippewa Falls parishes going back to the formation of an area Catholic school system. In addition to continuing their support for the system, the parishes have further collaborated on various ministries and programs.

2. Increasing evangelization efforts

The mission of the Church is “to proclaim the Good News of Jesus.” At this moment in time, the parishes must be more intentional and active in their efforts to evangelize.

3. Building a community of disciples by fostering a spirit of welcome

Parish efforts to build community are rooted in those efforts which prepare disciples for mission and ministry. Following Jesus’ example, the parishes will strive to welcome all into the community – including the last, the lost, the least and the lonely.

4. Respecting the history of each parish while renewing a common focus on mission

The history of the parishes and schools in Chippewa Falls is remarkable and should be cherished. At the same time, there is an opportunity before us to start a new chapter in the local history of the Church.

B. Vision Phrase - “United in Christ, Called to Mission”

The Leadership Team and Planning Task Force have discerned a final vision phrase. They have selected “**United in Christ, Called to Mission**” as the vision phrase which will guide the implementation of the plan over the coming years.

III. OVERVIEW OF STRATEGIC PLAN

A. First Phase – 2021 to 2026

1. Parish Organization, Worship and Prayer

- a. Cluster Holy Ghost and Notre Dame parishes; St. Charles Borromeo has its own pastor.
- b. Establish a group to study pastoral and administrative needs and form a shared staff for all three parishes. Parishes will retain certain staff positions for ministry at their sites.
- c. Maintain and expand opportunities for common prayer experiences and devotions.
- d. Study and implement ways to expand the ministry of welcome and hospitality at Sunday Mass.
- e. Establish a schedule for joint meetings of parish pastoral councils.
- f. The finance councils will remain separate by canon law but will meet jointly on a regular basis to review and discuss common issues and concerns.
- g. Conduct mission-like events to prayerfully prepare for transitions and changes.

2. Faith Formation and Evangelization

- a. Study if and how all religious education for children and youth can be coordinated through MACS.
- b. Develop a total youth ministry for adolescents.
- c. Establish a ministry for young adults in their 20's and 30's.
- d. Create faith sharing groups and/or retreat experiences for adults.
- e. Create evangelization teams to contact present and former parishioners.

3. Social Justice

- a. Study the personal and social needs of people in the Chippewa Falls area to better serve and collaborate with local organizations.
- b. Recruit and train more volunteers.

4. Stewardship and Communications

- a. Create an area-wide approach to communications with parishioners, including bulletins, websites, social media and regular personal contact.
- b. Determine a process for scheduling fund-raisers and capital campaigns within each parish so they are coordinated.
- c. Establish ways to welcome and orient new members and to invite them to share their gifts.

5. Finances and Facilities

- a. Complete a facilities study by September of 2021 and devise a facilities master plan for all parish and school sites.
- b. Reduce the parish investment or subsidy to the schools from 59.1% to 50% of ordinary income.
- c. Conduct a coordinated capital campaign as part of the Diocese of La Crosse campaign.

6. McDonell Area Catholic Schools

- a. Emphasize the role of advancement and fundraising in the revenue stream of the school.
- b. Investigate whether the pre-school program for one- and two-year-old children should be phased out.
- c. Create a facilities master plan for MACS.

B. Second Phase – 2026

After the completion of the recommendations in the first phase over a five-year period, the parishes will likely be able to consider expanding the cluster or to consider a merger of the three Chippewa Falls parishes.

IV. PHASE ONE 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 various 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.

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 during the planning process.

PROS	CONS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Have been moving in this direction since 1987 ● The three churches would keep their names and identities, but all would be unified under a new parish name ● Will create 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 ● It is more expensive to operate four institutions or entities ● Money is freed up to better address other ministry and facility needs ● Creates new enthusiasm and excitement ● Accommodates the same number of priests ● Introduces a greater presence and visibility in the city because of the size and influence of combining the parishes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● It might be more difficult for a pastor to know his people ● Things are working well now. Maintain the status quo with a few improvements ● Could lose parish identity and history ● Could lose parishioners ● There could be a reduced sense of community ● Emotional impact on people may be divisive ● Move is not mandated by the diocese ● Cultural clashes between parishioners could emerge ● Individual parish finances will be pooled ● Challenge to create and build a small community environment and a feeling of welcome and belonging

It is important to point out that the recommendations in this section are neither influenced nor motivated by any of these factors:

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

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

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. Cluster the parishes of Holy Ghost and Notre Dame under one pastor, with an associate pastor, and each parish retaining its own finance council and finances. The finance councils can meet on the same evening at a common location.
 - a. St. Charles Borromeo will continue to be served by its own pastor. When the pastorate becomes vacant, the parishes can consider expansion of the cluster or a merger of all three parishes.
 - b. St. Peter in Tilden and St. Bridget in Springfield will continue to be served by their pastors unless the Diocese of La Crosse were to consider another configuration. Neither St. Peter nor St. Bridget will be partners in the further clustering or merging of the Chippewa Falls parishes.
2. Maintain the current pastoral staff positions at the parishes throughout the fiscal year of 2021/2022 unless other circumstances arise. In that case, Holy Ghost, Notre Dame and St. Bridget will determine the structure for their parish staffing needs.
3. St. Charles and St. Peter will operate with the following staff:
 - a. Administrative assistant who will serve at the St. Charles parish office.
 - b. Deacon who will serve primarily at St. Peter but also at St. Charles.
 - c. Finance Director who is shared by both parishes.
 - d. Liturgical musician
 - e. Religious education coordinator
 - f. Maintenance director
4. Establish a committee to study and determine pastoral staff needs for all the parishes and establish some common staff positions which will be located at one parish office. The committee should be comprised of representatives from all the parishes. The committee should meet regularly to compile a report with recommendations for staffing and budget as early in the year of 2022 as possible. The pastoral staff directory may look like this:
 - a. Pastors - Holy Ghost, Notre Dame and St. Bridget will share a pastor. St. Charles Borromeo and St. Peter will share a pastor for at least the next five years.
 - b. Associate pastors, including one who will serve as chaplain/instructor at MACS.
 - c. Administrative Assistant for the parish office serving Holy Ghost, Notre Dame and St. Bridget.
 - d. Director of Administrative Services who oversees finances and facilities for Holy Ghost, Notre Dame and St. Bridget.

- e. Director of Child and Family Religious Education who oversees faith formation programs for children and middle school students as well as their families - this ministry can be shared by all the parishes and will be studied by a joint committee as part of the implementation of the plan.
 - f. Director of Youth and Young Adult Ministries – oversees high school catechesis and ministry to young adults, age group of 20’s and 30’s.
 - g. Director of Liturgical Music and Adult Faith Formation – oversees liturgy preparation at Holy Ghost, Notre Dame and St. Bridget and coordinates adult faith formation opportunities. St. Charles and St. Peter would continue to have a separate staff position.
 - h. Director of Outreach Ministries and Evangelization – oversees social justice projects and volunteers as well as organizes and forms evangelization teams and their activity.
 - i. Director of Stewardship and Communications – oversees parish community building activities and coordinates the print, media and electronic flow of information to parishioners in the area.
 - j. Director of maintenance for buildings and grounds and assistants - these positions would serve all the parish buildings and sites – this service can be shared by all the parishes and could possibly include MACS.
5. Establish a schedule for joint meetings of parish pastoral councils to assist the pastors with fostering pastoral activity in the Chippewa Falls area. At some point, the councils should consider the potential for one parish pastoral council with representatives from all the parishes in Chippewa Falls.
- a. Those committees of the pastoral councils with shared staff should be combined into a single committee for each area of ministry except for the liturgy/worship committees which will remain separate at St. Charles and St. Peter.
 - b. Finance councils should have joint meetings on a quarterly basis to discuss common issues.
6. Prepare for two, parish mission-like events at the parishes. The first would focus prayerfully on the changes which the parishes have planned and how these can lead to a new spiritual vitality in the Chippewa Falls area. This could be held during Lent of 2022. It would also invite parishioners to pray for and support these efforts. The second would be closer in chronology to the actual transition into a new organizational model, most likely in the Fall of 2022, which would 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. Study if and how all religious education programming for children and youth can be coordinated through MACS.
 - a. Identify a task force of representatives from each parish and MACS who are familiar with the existing faith formation programs and are open to possibilities to improve the programs. Representatives should be selected by the pastor of each parish and the President of MACS. This committee should be formed by the Fall of 2021.
 - b. Meet regularly to develop a report with recommendations and budgets for a system-wide religious education program to be presented at a joint meeting of parish and finance councils, as early in the year of 2022 as possible, so that any changes can be incorporated into the parish budgets.
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, including contact with families formerly enrolled in the religious education programs to invite them to consider enrollment.

C. Worship and Prayer

1. Maintain and expand opportunities for shared prayer experiences and devotions among the five parishes.
2. 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. Study how the needs of all people in the Chippewa Falls area can best be served by the parishes in collaboration with and supportive of local organizations.
2. 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. Determine a process for scheduling 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.
3. 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. Study parish and school facility needs to be initiated in March of 2021 and concluded by September of 2021. Devise a common, long-range strategy and master plan for facility maintenance, updating, improvement and possible replacement. A Long-Range Planning Commission has been appointed by the pastors and 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 the strategic plan for this section.
 - a. Evaluate the needs for primary and elementary education at the current facilities and determine whether a new facility should be built, or improvements made to existing facilities.
 - b. Evaluate the costs of maintaining and improving older facilities with the benefit of new construction.
2. Reduce the parish investment or subsidy to the schools over a specified time period, from 59% to 50% of ordinary income. Anticipate the possibility for further reductions as MACS development income increases.
3. Conduct a coordinated capital campaign as part of the Diocese of La Crosse campaign and determine a common case statement for the parish portion of the campaign which will benefit facility projects at the parishes and McDonell Area Catholic Schools.

G. McDonell Area Catholic Schools

1. Emphasize the role of advancement and fundraising in the revenue stream of the school.
 - a. Hire additional personnel
 - b. Provide appropriate training
 - c. Focus on the development of an annual fund
 - d. Develop a process for the identification, cultivation and solicitation of new donors
2. Phase out the program for one- and two-year-old children.
 - a. The pre-school program does not provide revenue to MACS and in fact is an additional expense.
 - b. The 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.
 - a. Research a robust curriculum model to implement into the 3-year-old program such as The Creative Curriculum for Preschool, Montessori or Little Saints Catholic School Preschool Curriculum.
 - b. 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.

V. PHASE TWO RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PARISHES – 2026

The first phase of implementation lays the foundation for strengthening the organization, creating efficiencies and building relationships, which will open the possibility of even greater degrees of collaboration. By this time, the parishes will likely be able to consider expanding the cluster or to consider a merger of the three Chippewa Falls parishes. The discernment can follow certain aspects of the process which was used to develop this plan: meetings with leadership, meetings for parishioners, and a survey. Whether the parishes choose to expand the cluster or to merge, the following recommendations can be considered for implementation.

A. Parish Organization

1. Review and determine pastoral staffing needs for the community.
2. Consider whether there should be one staff for the parishes and school administration at one office location.

B. Faith Formation and Evangelization

1. Evaluate the evangelization efforts and the impact on enrollments of changes to the religious education and adult faith formation programs.
2. Determine any changes which may be needed to the evangelization efforts and religious education programs.

C. Worship and Prayer

1. Develop Sunday and weekday Mass schedules which provide for a variety of Mass times and maximize seating capacities at the churches.

D. Social Justice

1. Evaluate the parish efforts in social justice as well as the collaborative efforts with local agencies.
2. Determine any changes which may be recommended to the social justice efforts.

E. Stewardship and Communications

1. Develop and conduct an area-wide process for personal financial stewardship under the direction of a parish staff member.

F. Finances and Facilities

1. Review the results of the capital campaign and determine whether there is need for additional campaign efforts to either retire debt or begin the next phase of the facility master plan.

VI. APPROVAL PROCESS AND IMPLEMENTATION

A. Approval Process

1. Pastors will make further edits to the document, as needed.
2. A final draft of the plan will be submitted to all the parish pastoral councils for review and approval.
3. The approved plan will be sent to Bishop Callahan, Fr. William Dhein and the Superintendent of Catholic Schools.
4. The plan may be officially announced and “rolled out” with the completion and approval of the facilities study by the parish councils in October of 2021.

B. Implementation

The implementation of the plan can begin in June of 2021. Parish and school staff members, the parish councils, finance councils, and combined committees will share in the implementation of the recommendations. The following aspects of the implementation should be understood and followed by those implementing the plan.

1. The terms for and roles of the Leadership Team and the Planning Task Force, which have both played such an essential role in the planning process, end in June of 2021.
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 and accountability for the implementation of the goals will be critical.
3. Joint parish pastoral council meetings, presided by the two pastors, will be responsible for overseeing the implementation of the plan. The councils will meet regularly to monitor and review progress to ensure the full implementation of the plan.
4. Timelines and action steps will be necessary for each recommendation. Parishes usually are not able to 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 that goal can be fully realized.
5. The implementation itself is a way 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.
6. The plan is designed so that each area of ministry is easily assignable to either a staff member or a team of staff members and a committee of the pastoral council. Early in the implementation process, assignments of a particular section should be made by the pastors and councils with the understanding that the individual or group will be responsible for the implementation of the recommendations.

APPENDIX A – POLLING RESULTS

APPENDIX B – Survey Report on the Future Vision
for the Catholic Church in Chippewa Falls