

# **PASTORAL PLAN**



**FEBRUARY 7, 2006**

## **Pastoral Plan February 2006**



### **MISSION**

We, the Five Saints West Pastoral Planning Council, believe that through collaboration and sharing our talents and wisdom, we will build the structures to maintain and increase the vitality of all our parishes in these changing times.

Building on our strengths, we will take creative and practical steps which will enrich our pastoral and social ministries, expand our evangelical efforts, enhance our worship opportunities, and allow the Gifts of the Spirit to continue building God's Kingdom as we have been called to do.

We live in a time of much change; not unaffected are the organizations of our community parishes. We are led by our bishop who is challenging us to recreate and revitalize our churches under the guidance and inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

### **BACKGROUND**

Pastoral Planning for the New Millennium began with each of the four parishes (St. Christopher, St. Columba/St. Patrick, St. Mary of the Assumption and St. Vincent DePaul) undergoing a parish assessment process in the winter and spring of 1998.

We came together, named ourselves "5 Saints West", developed our first five-year plan, and began collaborative efforts based on our common needs in the areas of adult education and volunteerism. The parishes shared semi-annual adult education programs from fall 1999 through spring 2002 as well as a joint parish retreat in fall 2003. Two members of the original planning group leadership team developed a workshop on volunteer recruitment and retention, which was presented to pastoral councils and committee chairs from three of the four parishes.

Our parishes started to get to know each other and share our histories and the gifts we bring, through bulletin articles, pulpit and presider exchanges, common pastoral council and staff gatherings, surveys, and other shared events.

We are now actively engaged in our second phase of Pastoral Planning. The primary challenges we face in the foreseeable future are declining number of priests, declining Mass attendance and greater economic pressures.

In September 2003, Bishop Clark challenged us to:

1. Examine our schedule of weekend Masses: a careful analysis of Mass attendance in light of the capacities of our churches might suggest that reducing the number of Masses in some churches would result in fuller participation by the congregation and more vibrant liturgies.
2. Address the best structure for our communities when fewer pastors or pastoral administrator/sacramental minister teams are available for assignment to our planning group (between 2009 and 2014.)
3. Address the advisability of more coordination and collaboration in our Holy Day Mass schedules.
4. Enhance the quality of faith formation and youth ministry programs.
5. Explore areas for further cooperation, e.g. training of liturgical ministers and musicians, and ministries for seniors and the sick and dying.

## **THE PLAN**

During the next six years (2005-2011), St. Mary of the Assumption, St. Columba/St. Patrick and St. Vincent de Paul will move toward becoming a cluster (three independent parishes sharing one pastoral leader). Two priests—one who may be pastor—will serve the cluster, providing pastoral presence in all communities. We propose the clustered community be formed by 2011 but recognize that unforeseen events could lead to the need for clustering at an earlier date.

St. Christopher will remain a single parish for the present, a vital and integral part of 5 Saints West. To this end, ministries and staff may be shared with the clustered parishes. A ministry to Catholic students at Roberts Wesleyan College will be developed.

The projected reduction in the number of priests available to 5 Saints West will result in a schedule of two weekend Masses each at St. Mary of the Assumption, St. Columba/St. Patrick and St. Vincent de Paul, and three Masses at St. Christopher. A Mass schedule will be developed with input from parishioners at large before implementation.

After a comprehensive study of facilities and ministerial needs has been completed, a plan will be presented for the best use of the buildings which will include a ministry center, offices, residences and other ministerial uses.

A common Pastoral Council with equal representation from each clustered parish will be formed.

We envision a Staffing Plan for the clustered parishes that includes:

- Business Manager and full-time secretary for the cluster
- Director of Faith Formation for the cluster with 3 local site coordinators
- A ministerial (or staff) presence at least part time in all locations.
- Attention to the sick and elderly, Youth Ministry, Evangelization, RCIA process, social ministry, liturgical ministries and other pastoral needs
- The availability of a priest or pastoral minister in times of need will be maintained.

Staff planning for the clustered parishes and St. Christopher will formally begin in 2010. Any staff changes in the next six years will take into consideration the future needs of 5 Saints West.

Every effort will be made to alternate activities between all sites of 5 Saints West, using the facilities of all parishes.

## APPENDICES

### Appendix 1: Process of Pastoral Planning

- Parish pastoral council members, parish staff, and planning team members participated in a 5-hour orientation workshop during September 2003 to pray together, receive background information, and prepare for the second phase of pastoral planning.
- The planning team began meeting regularly immediately afterward to start the process of developing a second 5-year pastoral plan. Each meeting's progress was reported verbally to parish pastoral council members. At the beginning of the process parishioners received weekly bulletin announcements to give them the context for planning and later on they received bulletin inserts updating them on the progress made at each planning team meeting. They were also regularly asked for their input, comments, and questions.
- During April 2004 the pastoral councils and staffs shared a dinner with the planning team. A speaker from another planning group that had already completed its second 5-year pastoral plan made a presentation on what to expect.
- Twice—during November 2004 and April 2005—parishioners were surveyed regarding their weekend Mass time preferences, what they valued most about their parish, why they attend the particular Mass they do, and what they might do if their current Mass was changed.
- The planning team participated in a visioning retreat in December 2004 to help choose a preferred long-term future for the parishes.
- The draft pastoral plan was completed during the summer of 2005.

## Appendix 2: Planning Approval Process

- The plan will be presented to a joint Pastoral Council and Staff meeting in September 2005 for initial feedback.
- The plan will be revised by the Planning Team and distributed to the Parishioners in October/November 2005; feedback will be gathered through listening sessions scheduled at each parish
- The Planning Team will revise the draft pastoral plan in December 2005 and distribute the new version to pastoral councils
- At their usual January 2006 meetings, pastoral councils will address the question of whether they can affirm the pastoral plan as it is currently written.
- Parish Council Affirmation will be obtained in February 2006 during a joint meeting of all pastoral councils and then the affirmed plan will be sent to Bishop Clark for his approval.

### Appendix 3: Transitional Activities:

1. MARCH 2006
  - BISHOP'S APPROVAL
2. 2006
  - FIRST ANNUAL FIVE SAINTS WEST SOCIAL EVENT
    - i. MASS AND PICNIC?
    - ii. MARDI GRAS?
    - iii. ADVENT SOCIAL?
    - iv. ST. PATRICK'S DAY PARTY?
    - v. ST. VALENTINE'S DAY DANCE?
    - vi. SUGGEST SOMETHING YOURSELF!
3. 2007
  - INCREASED COLLABORATION (FIVE SAINTS WEST) IN THE AREAS OF:
    - i. FAITH FORMATION
    - ii. YOUTH MINISTRY
    - iii. LITURGICAL EVENTS
    - iv. SOCIAL MINISTRIES
    - v. EVANGELIZATION
4. 2008
  - MORE JOINT COLLABORATION ON MINISTRIES
  - FIVE SAINTS WEST MASS OF THANKSGIVING
5. 2009
  - CLUSTER ORGANIZING ACTIVITIES
    - i. JOINT PPC MEETING
    - ii. JOINT FINANCE COUNCIL MEETING
    - iii. JOINT STAFF MEETINGS
6. ONGOING ACTIVITIES
  - ANNUAL FIVE SAINTS WEST PLANNING COUNCIL RETREAT AND ORIENTATION OF NEW MEMBERS.
  - AT LEAST 4 PLANNING COUNCIL MEETINGS ANNUALLY
  - FIVE SAINTS WEST JOINT PPC AND STAFF GATHERING ANNUALLY

## Appendix 4: Definitions and FAQs

As you read through the draft pastoral plan, the following definitions may help.

**Permanent Deacon** – an ordained man appointed by the Bishop to a parish or particular ministry. Deacons are ministers of Word, Sacrament and charity. They proclaim the Gospel and preach; preside at baptisms, wakes, funerals, and communion services; witness marriages and assist at Mass.

**Pastoral Leader** – a generic term for the person the Bishop appoints to lead a parish or cluster.

**Pastoral Associate** – a lay person, religious or Deacon hired by a parish to coordinate particular areas of ministry – e.g. adult education, liturgy, social ministry, pastoral care of the sick and bereaved.

**Pastor** – a priest appointed by the Bishop to lead a parish or cluster.

**Pastoral Administrator** – a lay person or Deacon appointed by the Bishop to lead a parish or cluster in accord with Canon 517.2. Any community led by a Pastoral Administrator also has a priest assigned as Sacramental Minister to provide the sacraments.

**Sacramental Minister** – a priest assigned by the Bishop to provide sacramental ministry for a parish or cluster led by a Pastoral Administrator.

**Cluster** – two or more parishes served by a single pastor or pastoral administrator. Each parish retains its own identity according to both church and civil law. Ministry programs and staffing can be autonomous within each parish or may involve partnerships with other members of the cluster. Clustered parishes in our diocese should be involved in working toward becoming a single parish, possibly with multiple worship sites.

**Single parish with multiple worship and ministry sites** – typically this would result from the merging/consolidation/amalgamation of two or more parishes into a single parish under both church and civil law. While the physical facilities of the previous parishes could be used as worship and/or ministry sites, there would be only one parish and a single faith community.

Some Frequently Asked Questions about the pastoral plan:

### ***Is my parish going to close?***

No there is no intent to close any of the churches within Five Saints West.

### ***What happens to the current pastoral leaders of St. Columba/St. Patrick, St. Mary of the Assumption, and St. Vincent DePaul when the 3 parishes cluster?***

If the draft pastoral plan is approved, by 2011 the 3 parishes will be clustered. The opening for a pastoral leader for this new cluster will be advertised within the diocese. Any priest and any pastoral administrator—including our current pastoral leaders—can apply. The Priest Personnel Board will make a recommendation to Bishop Clark and he will make the final decision.

***How do finances work in clusters?***

With clustered parishes, each parish, still a separate corporation, maintains separate accounts and financial records. The finance councils and staffs work together with the pastor/pastoral administrator to develop each year's budgets. Several expenses are shared (e.g. the pastor/pastoral administrator's salary and benefits, salary and benefits for any shared staff positions, office costs if there is only one office). The finance councils, staff and pastor/pastoral administrator agree on how these expenses will be prorated between the two (or three) parishes. One parish takes responsibility for paying these and bills the other(s) for their portion.

***If parishioners attend a different church, what happens to their envelopes?***

Envelopes are returned to their own parish; loose cash remains with the parish where it is received.

***What happens to special, restricted funds, including Partners in Faith donations, parish capital improvement funds, and donations made to specific parishes for specific purposes?***

Because clustered parishes are still separate corporations, these remain the assets of the parish to which they were donated. Partners in Faith monies must be used for the purpose for which they were donated.

***How are current staff positions going to be affected?***

No immediate staff changes are envisioned. However, in order to use financial resources more carefully, the intent of this plan is to develop more shared ministries and staff positions over time. Beginning now, for instance, when any parish has an open staff position, the four pastoral leaders will talk together to see if a shared position makes sense or if job descriptions should be changed. The pastoral plan names several staff positions that we would like to have in place when St. Columba/St. Patrick, St. Mary, and St. Vincent cluster or soon afterwards.

***Where will Baptisms, First Communions and Confirmations be held?***

Baptisms and First Communions will be celebrated in the church where those receiving the sacrament belong—just as they are now. Preparation for sacraments, though, may be done together for the churches of the cluster or for all 5 Saints West churches. Confirmation will continue to be celebrated at Sacred Heart Cathedral.

***How will Mass schedules be decided when we have one fewer priest?***

This draft pastoral plan calls for there to be two weekend Masses each at St. Mary, St. Columba/St. Patrick and St. Vincent, and three Masses at St. Christopher. The four pastoral leaders and the Five Saints West Planning Council will work together to develop a schedule that best meets the needs of the people in each of the four parishes and will do so with input from pastoral councils, liturgy committees and musicians, and parishioners at large.

***How seriously will opinions from the listening sessions (town meetings) be addressed/accepted?***

We need parishioners from all of the parishes to participate in planning for the future of our church communities. Please read through the draft pastoral plan carefully. Then come to one of the town meetings—being held during October/November in all of the parishes—and contribute your ideas. We particularly want to hear from parishioners regarding ways to strengthen the draft pastoral plan. The plan will be revised based on your input.

***What is the approval process for the draft pastoral plan?***

The draft pastoral plan will be revised as needed in December after the town meetings at each parish. This revised plan will be presented to pastoral councils for their affirmation. Only when all of the councils can support the pastoral plan as it is written will it then be sent to Bishop Clark for his approval. We hope to send him an affirmed plan by February 2006.

***What is the Diocese doing to get at the root cause of the problem—a shortage of priests?***

The number of non-retired diocesan priests available to serve the Catholics in the 12 counties of the diocese declined from 370 in 1966 to 145 today and is projected to decline to 62 by 2025. These numbers are similar to those of other dioceses in the United States. Surprisingly, the parishioner to priest ratio is actually lower in the U.S. than in other parts of the world. Although efforts at encouraging and supporting vocations to the priesthood continue to be strengthened, the number of priests who will retire over the next several years is simply much greater than the number of men preparing to be ordained (our average is 15 priests ordained every 10 years).

Only one diocesan priest currently works full-time in the Pastoral Center, but he also provides critical coverage for priests who are ill or on vacation. Others have concurrent assignments as pastors or part-time sacramental ministers. We currently have 18 extern priests (priests from other dioceses and, indeed, often from other countries) serving in parish assignments in our diocese. These priests are here primarily for study or sabbatical and generally expect to go back to serve in their own dioceses afterwards.

The Diocese has an Office of Vocations Awareness—a team of ordained, religious and lay Catholics--to assist faith communities in their efforts to promote vocation awareness and nurture vocation discernment. Some of their tasks are to help the people of the Diocese of Rochester (especially parents and grandparents) to bring the vocation message to all those searching for their path in life, to assist pastors and pastoral administrators in their role as vocation leaders in their faith communities, to preach vocations as requested, to receive inquirers to priesthood formation and to act as mentors, when requested, in their process of discernment. Those directly charged with the task of vocation awareness—the Vocation Awareness Team—include Bishop Clark (Director of Vocations), Rev. Timothy Horan (Director of Priesthood Vocation Awareness and Discernment), Mrs. Carol Dady (Coordinator of Priesthood Vocation Awareness and Discernment) and 8-10 priests serving regions throughout the Diocese.

Appendix 5: Current Five Saints West Members and Important Contributors

St. Christopher

Fr. Bob Gaudio  
Tom Staccone

Jeff Small  
Larry Maslanka

St. Columba/St. Patrick

Fr. Mickey McGrath  
Judy DePalma

John Formella  
Mike Stephany

Teresa Lang

St. Mary of the Assumption

Irene Goodwin  
Sean Esposito

Dolores Loftus  
Donna Treat

St. Vincent de Paul

Charlotte Bruney  
Matt McCormick

Pat VerWeire  
Joe Dombrowski

Diocesan Liaison    Karen Rinefierd

Communications    Nancy Bodziak

Past Contributors    Diane Gannon, Fr. Walt Plominski, Sr. Barb Stinard, Marie Morabito, Jim Dollard, Bill Rabjohn, Ellen Alhart, Mary Catherine Hamilton, Pat Rountree, William Pickett, Sr. Carol Fox, Deacon Mike Mahoney, Carol Podgorski, Fr. Bill Darling, Deborah Rowe Jarrett, and everyone else who assisted this effort.

Appendix 6: The Bishop's letter of September 14, 2003

Attached