

## **DIOCESE OF GAYLORD**

### **PARISH AND PERSONNEL TASK FORCE**

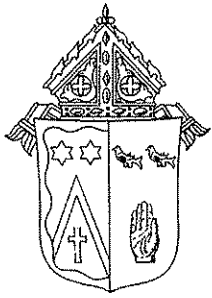
September 5, 2007 – April 2, 2009

### **FINAL REPORT** **LONG TERM RECOMMENDATIONS**

Submitted to:

Bishop Patrick R. Cooney  
April 27, 2009





## DIOCESE OF GAYLORD

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April 27, 2009

Dear Bishop Cooney,

On behalf of the entire membership of the Parish and Personnel Task Force, I am pleased to present you with our Final Report of recommendations for the long term future of the Diocese of Gaylord.

The long term recommendations presented here are made following an extensive and unprecedented consultative process which took place throughout the Diocese of Gaylord. The Task Force made substantial and concerted efforts to provide opportunities for every parishioner to offer input into this process. I assure you, as well as the faithful of the Diocese, that every comment and piece of correspondence received by the Task Force was thoughtfully and prayerfully considered. This report ultimately reflects our best efforts to propose recommendations to best serve the faithful in view of the challenges faced not only by our diocese, but other dioceses across the country.

The Task Force recognizes that change can be very difficult and the fact that some parishioners are going to experience sadness and disappointment cannot be avoided. We strongly urge that appropriate resources be allocated to assist parishes in the transition process.

The Task Force believes that the Catholic Church in the Diocese of Gaylord stands at a point in history filled with great opportunity and open possibilities. We hope the faithful -- laity and clergy alike -- will embrace this opportunity to minister even more collaboratively as we serve the Lord and our communities, and thereby more fully express God's love and our shared Catholic faith.

Finally, I would like to personally thank each member of the Parish and Personnel Task Force. These individuals have been extraordinarily dedicated and faithful to the work and timelines set before them. The tremendous personal sacrifices made by these men and women over the past three years stand clearly as an example of their great faith and commitment to the well being of our diocese. I am extremely proud to have served with them.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Francis J. Murphy".

Rev. Francis J. Murphy, Vicar General  
Chair, Parish and Personnel Task Force



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## **MISSION STATEMENT OF THE DIOCESE OF GAYLORD**

The Father through His Son, Jesus the Christ, has poured forth the Holy Spirit and made us into a “holy nation, a royal priesthood, a people set apart.” Inflamed by the vision of what that reality means for us and for our world, we — the laity, religious and clergy of the Diocese of Gaylord — feel compelled, with God’s help, to become that to which we have been called.

Therefore, in an authentic spirit of thanksgiving, we will work to bring about in all Catholics such an enthusiasm for their faith that they freely share it with others and thereby truly become an evangelizing people. We will also endeavor to build our families, our parishes, our diocese and our world into that faith community whose compassionate ministry to the world embodies and witnesses to God’s power that works to heal and save all humankind.

We recognize that alone we cannot fulfill these desires; but we know we are not alone, God is with us always. Therefore, we are committed to receive his nourishment and power in evermore conscious and active celebrations of His sacraments. We will be open to His saving truths which lead to personal and communal conversion which we find in our love for and study of both the Scriptures and the teachings of the Church. We will respond to His love by giving our time, talent and treasures in pursuit of gospel justice and peace which will be our personal and communal part in the continuing mission of the Risen Lord.

We, through all of our thoughts and actions, want to be an authentic, effective and visible sign of His goodness to us and thereby be a wonderful sign of hope to all.

October 1996

## **MISSION STATEMENT OF THE PARISH AND PERSONNEL TASK FORCE**

The mission of the Parish and Personnel Task Force is to provide recommendations to the Bishop, in consultation with the faithful, to care for the sacramental, pastoral, spiritual and administrative needs of the Diocese of Gaylord.

December 2007

## **INTRODUCTION**

The Parish and Personnel Task Force was appointed by Bishop Patrick R. Cooney in the fall of 2006 following consultation with Rev. Francis Murphy, Vicar General. Rev. Murphy served as Chair of the Parish and Personnel Task Force.

Members of the Task Force were selected following consultation with parish leadership from throughout the diocese and after a personal interview. All Task Force members were required to have knowledge, experience and history with the Catholic Church in the Diocese of Gaylord as well as demonstrate a commitment and vision toward the common good of the entire diocese. Though efforts were made to have representation from throughout the diocese, the primary goal was to select individuals who would work for the benefit of the whole diocese and not simply their own individual faith communities or particular organizational interests.

Task Force members were volunteers and met bi-weekly for most of the two and a half years of their service. In addition, a well-qualified and experienced facilitator was hired to facilitate the meetings of the Task Force. A recording secretary was recruited and the diocesan Director of Communications was appointed to serve as spokesperson. Hundreds of other volunteers assisted in the endeavor by serving in roles such as town hall and regional meeting facilitators, local meeting coordinators, scribes, hosts, etc. The Task Force hereby specifically acknowledges their ministry and assistance with great appreciation and gratitude. It is because of the collaboration and cooperation of leadership and parishioners throughout the diocese that the comprehensive process utilized by the Task Force was made possible.

The Task Force was charged with looking to both the short term and long term in providing recommendations to Bishop Cooney as to how best to minister to the needs of the people in northern Lower Michigan with the resources that are currently available.

The Task Force submitted short term recommendations in April, 2007. This report focuses on the long term recommendations which are being submitted to Bishop Cooney for his consideration with a vision for the future developed over the last two years.

The role of the Task Force remains solely advisory to the Bishop of the Diocese of Gaylord. It is understood that it is ultimately the responsibility of the Bishop alone to decide which, if any, of the recommendations of the Task Force should be acted upon or implemented as well as any timelines for implementation. He may, of course, consult with others and accept, modify, or reject any of the recommendations offered by the Task Force. However, it is important to note that these recommendations are made following unprecedented consultation with the faithful throughout the Diocese of Gaylord. This report represents the best efforts of the Parish and Personnel Task Force to provide for the common good of the people of northern Lower Michigan and to preserve the Catholic faith and presence in our area. We pray that our recommendations will be received in the spirit in which they are offered which is one of hope and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ and the People of God in the Diocese of Gaylord.

The Task Force now entrusts this work to the wisdom of our leadership as guided by the Holy Spirit.

## **MEMBERS OF THE PARISH AND PERSONNEL TASK FORCE**

Rev. Francis Murphy, Chair  
St. Ann, Cadillac

Kathleen Lame, Facilitator  
St. Mary, Charlevoix

Janet Darr  
St. Mary-St. Charles, Cheboygan

Sr. Rita Epple, Pastoral Administrator  
St. Dominic, Metz

Rev. Charles Donajkowski, Pastor  
St. Ignatius, Rogers City

Rev. Donald Geyman, Pastor  
Immaculate Conception, Traverse City

JoAnn Gibes  
St. Augustine, Boyne Falls

Robert Hallead  
Guardian Angels, Manistee

Betty Hartmann  
St. Mary Cathedral, Gaylord

Edward Howe  
Sacred Heart, Oscoda

Judy Krussell  
St. Francis Xavier, Petoskey

John Mischel  
Sacred Heart, Elk Rapids

James Moffit  
St. James, Houghton Lake

Rev. Robert Nalley  
St. Mary, Grayling

James Rich  
St. Mary, Lake Leelanau

Rev. Dennis Stilwell, Pastor  
St. Francis Xavier, Petoskey

Wally Wrzesinski  
St. James, Houghton Lake

Rev. Robert Zuchowski, Pastor  
Sacred Heart, Elk Rapids

Candace Neff, Dir. of Communications  
Diocese of Gaylord

Mary Herst, Recording Secretary

## **GUIDELINES OF THE PARISH AND PERSONNEL TASK FORCE**

The Task Force worked within the following guidelines:

- All members would work for the benefit of the “whole diocese.”
- Members understood that all options for meeting the sacramental needs of the faithful in the Gaylord Diocese were open for discussion.
- Members understood the role of the Task Force is advisory only, with final decisions to be made by the Bishop.
- The Diocesan Communications Director would be the official spokesperson for the Parish and Personnel Task Force.
- Closing (suppressing) parishes was to be considered as a last resort.



## **THE PROCESS UNDERTAKEN BY THE TASK FORCE**

In the course of its work, the Parish and Personnel Task Force reviewed a 1986 report which laid out a possible long term plan for the Diocese of Gaylord which was not formally implemented. The Task Force also studied a 2003 National Study of Parish Reorganization in an effort to learn from, and build upon, the work of others already grappling with the same issues. Members also reviewed numerous other books, documents and articles regarding parish viability, national church trends, change and possible solutions. In addition, the members received current information regarding regional population, finances, local trends as well as other reports.

The Task Force also received projections regarding the number of diocesan priests expected to be available to serve in the Diocese of Gaylord over the next several years. This area has been extremely blessed with many retired, extern and religious order priests who have faithfully ministered in our diocese as full time Pastors, Sacramental Ministers and providers of additional weekend assistance. This ministry becomes even more critical in the summer months when the natural beauty and quality of life in Northern Lower Michigan swells our year-round population with visitors. While it is hoped that such gifted priests will continue to be available to serve in our diocese, the Task Force determined that any long term plan must be able to be carried out utilizing only priests ordained or incardinated into the Diocese of Gaylord.

It has been projected that in 2010, 30 diocesan priests will be available to serve this diocese. In 2012, 27 diocesan priests will be available; and in 2015, 24 diocesan priests will be available. These numbers are based on ages and years of service of the diocesan priests as well as projections for future ordinations. The Task Force recognizes and appreciates that many priests often work well past their approved retirement age. For purposes of planning, utilizing the same thought process as with religious and extern priests, the Task Force feels planning for the future should include the presumption that these men may be unavailable for service.

The Task Force studied the processes used by other dioceses in the United States facing similar challenges and developed a model that would include as many people in the decision-making process as possible. The process implemented by the Task Force allowed for every parishioner in the Diocese of Gaylord to have an opportunity to offer input.

The Task Force spent many months and used a variety of means to gather information at every level before the work of making long term recommendations commenced.

- In April and May, 2008, two meetings were held for Priests, Deacons, Parish Life Coordinators, and Lay Administrators to inform them, enlist their support and receive their feedback as to the proposed process and written materials. Suggestions made by participants were incorporated into the process as adopted.

- In May and June, 2008, two meetings were held for the full membership of Parish Pastoral and Finance Councils to inform them, enlist their support and receive their feedback as to the proposed process and written materials. Suggestions made by participants were incorporated into the process as adopted.
- In August, 2008, two facilitator training sessions were held for the forty-six volunteers who agreed to facilitate Parish Town Hall meetings under the direction of the Task Force. Further refinements to the process were made as a result of suggestions from these facilitators.
- In August, September and October, 2008, sixty-one Parish Town Hall meetings were conducted across the Diocese involving all eighty-one parishes. The meetings were facilitated by the trained volunteers. The purpose of the Town Hall meetings was to inform and gather information from the parishioners of each parish as to their strengths, weaknesses, concerns, questions and suggestions. At each Town Hall meeting, scribes were utilized to provide the verbal comments offered at the meeting to the Task Force. Each facilitator also provided a brief report of the meeting. Further, comment sheets were provided to each parish and were available at the Town Hall meetings for individuals to provide their own written comments directly to the Task Force. Photocopies of all comment sheets were also returned to the respective parishes for their own internal consideration and planning.
- Each parish completed a written self-evaluation tool developed by the Task Force to elicit information about every aspect of parish life.
- Each Catholic school completed a written self-evaluation developed by the Task Force to elicit information about Catholic school education and stability.
- In the fall of 2008, Regional Committees, consisting of the Pastor and one other person from each parish, were formed. The Regional Committees were organized roughly along existing vicariate lines creating eight Regional Committees. Every parish was also represented during this process. Each member of the Regional Committee was provided the completed self-evaluation tool for each parish in the designated region. Each member also received materials and criteria to help assist in reviewing the region.
- In October, 2008, an additional training session was held for facilitators who agreed to facilitate meetings of the Regional Committees.
- In October, November and December, 2008, the various Regional Committees met to discuss the parishes in their region and make recommendations for their region to the Task Force. In most regions, multiple meetings took place to accomplish this task. In addition to reviewing materials and making general recommendations, Regional Committees were also asked to further discuss how their recommendations would change if one, and then two, fewer priests were available in the area to provide sacramental care. A written report with recommendations from each Regional Committee was then provided to the Parish and Personnel Task Force.

Once this information gathering was complete, the Parish and Personnel Task Force divided into three teams. Each team was assigned different regions to review. Each member was given information on several parishes to review, analyze, and report back to the team. With only one exception, members of the team did not review the region which included their own parish. The reviewed information included all Town Hall meeting notes and comment sheets, Parish and School Self-Evaluations, any notes and letters received by the Task Force, Regional reports and the recommendations from the Regional Committees. Virtually every report or piece of correspondence provided to the Task Force by any parish or individual was reviewed during this process. The teams then agreed upon recommendations for their assigned regions and presented their findings to the full Task Force for discussion and review.

Upon review by the full Task Force, some recommendations were restructured or modified to reflect the collective wisdom of Task Force members in view of the totality of circumstances facing the Diocese of Gaylord. Recommendations were further reviewed and refined by the full Task Force in response to prayerful consideration and questions of Task Force members at their final meeting as well as through the process of completing this report.

The recommendations contained in this Final Report are the product of the comprehensive process described above. It is important to reiterate that the Task Force was charged with looking at the entire diocese. While recommendations from the regional committees were carefully considered, they may have been modified in order to address needs in other areas and to serve the common good.

Each recommendation in this report is made with consensus of all members of the Parish and Personnel Task Force.

### **CRITERIA UTILIZED IN THE DECISION-MAKING PROCESS**

Each recommendation by the Parish and Personnel Task Force was judged by a set of criteria developed by the members.

The criteria included:

1. Does the recommendation provide access to sacramental care in the area?
2. Does the recommendation represent a reasonable workload for our priests?
3. Does the recommendation support current and/or shared programming?
4. Does the recommendation support other ministries in the affected locations?
5. Is the recommendation cost effective?
6. Is the option viable in the long term?
7. Is there consensus of the entire Task Force for the recommendation?

## GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS

1. **Collaborative Ministry of All Believers:** Throughout the consultative process undertaken by the Task Force, priests indicated a desire to spend the majority of their time in the ministry to which they were called – that is, preaching, teaching, providing sacramental care, and other direct ministry to the People of God – and less time on the administrative tasks of parish life. The same sentiment was also expressed by many lay people at various gatherings. The Task Force recognizes that pastoring a parish is more than just providing sacraments, but also involves taking an active role in the total life and ministry of the parish and helping parishioners grow in their own faith development so that every Catholic may more fully live the Gospel in their daily lives as an example to the world.

The laity also clearly indicated a desire and willingness to take a more active role in the ministries and governance of their parishes if provided the opportunity and proper guidance. Though the Church maintains a hierarchical structure, the Holy Scriptures and many Church documents support shared responsibility and the need for collaborative ministry among all of the faithful -- those called through the Sacraments of Initiation as well as those called through the Sacrament of Holy Orders -- to carry on the mission of our Lord Jesus Christ:

- a. “Each one of you has received a special grace, so like good stewards responsible for all these different graces of God, put yourselves at the service of others.”

*1 Peter 4:10*

- b. “The classes and duties of life are many, but holiness is one -- that sanctity which is cultivated by all who are moved by the Spirit of God, and who obey the voice of the Father and worship God the Father in spirit and in truth... Every person must walk unhesitatingly according to his own personal gifts and duties in the path of living faith, which arouses hope and works through charity.”

*Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, Lumen Gentium, No. 41*

- c. “The Christian faithful are those who, inasmuch as they have been incorporated in Christ through baptism, have been constituted as the people of God. For this reason, made sharers in their own way in Christ’s priestly, prophetic, and royal function, they are called to exercise the mission which God has entrusted to the Church to fulfill in the world, in accord with the condition proper to each.”

*Code of Canon Law 204 § 1*

- d. “Through the sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist, every Christian is called to participate actively and co-responsibly in the Church’s mission of salvation in the world. Moreover, in those same sacraments, the Holy Spirit pours out gifts which make it possible for every Christian man and woman to assume different ministries and forms of service that complement one another and are for the good of all.”

*USCCB, Called and Gifted for the Third Millennium p. 15*

The Parish and Personnel Task Force emphasizes that the following recommendations may only be successfully carried out with collaborative ministry and cooperation between parishes, clergy and laity. Trained, professional, paid staff will be required in each cluster. Roles and responsibilities of all ministers and staff must be clearly defined and supported by the Bishop, the diocese and the parish.

The Task Force embraces the guidance offered for the development of lay ecclesial ministry through the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops in their statement *Co-Workers in the Vineyard of the Lord* which states:

“The service of those men and women who are called to lay ecclesial ministry should be characterized by:

- *Authorization* of the hierarchy to serve publicly in the local church.
- *Leadership* in a particular area of ministry.
- *Close mutual collaboration* with the pastoral ministry of bishops, priests and deacons.
- *Preparation and formation* appropriate to the level of responsibilities that are assigned to them.”

The Task Force cautions that without appropriate paid and volunteer ministry personnel to assist in both the administrative and pastoral ministry of the parish, a willingness of all parishioners to adopt a vision for the common good with sacrificial love, patience and perseverance, the recommendations as presented will not be able to be carried out and it will undoubtedly become necessary to close a significant number of parishes.

2. **Assignment of Pastors:** All parishes should have an assigned canonical Pastor at all times who is not the Bishop of the Diocese. Further, only those priests who are ordained or incardinated into the Diocese of Gaylord should be named Pastor of any parish. The role of the Pastor in the proposed collaborative ministry should be clearly defined.
3. **Continuing Formation for Priests:** Additional programs for personal faith development and growth for priests, as well as increased opportunities to gather for mutual sharing and support, should be developed to help address the issues of possible isolation and to promote health and well-being given the decreasing numbers of priests and each one’s responsibility for a larger territory.
4. **Parish Clustering:** In many areas the Task Force is recommending additional clusters of parishes be created. The Task Force was instructed to plan for the long term future of the Diocese and feels very strongly that, if adopted, sufficient time and support should be given to allow the collaborative ministries to develop and grow in the various areas. It has been recognized that over the course of history, clusters of parishes have been established and then broken apart before they had time to develop or even after they were working well. This has occurred both because additional clergy became available to

serve in an area or a priest newly assigned to an area chose not to continue in a collaborative ministry style. While the Task Force hopes such “cluster-busting” will be avoided, certainly additional clergy should be welcomed to work collaboratively in the ministries of the cluster under the direction of the Pastor.

5. **Mass Scheduling:** Parishioners must be willing to sacrifice “Masses of convenience” and be willing to compromise and adjust Mass times in order to serve the common good of the wider community. Because the Eucharist is the source and summit of Christian life, we must first strive toward well executed, spirit-filled liturgies with appropriate parish liturgical ministers. We must also protect the health and well being of the priests and ensure they have adequate time to greet parishioners before and after Masses, along with suitable time for travel between parishes.

Task Force recommendations are based on the premise that, to the greatest extent possible, priests should not be required to regularly celebrate more than three Masses each weekend. It is understood that additional Masses may be allowed, or even necessary, in certain unusual circumstances. The Task Force recommends following existing guidelines of the universal Church with regard to the number of Masses allowed on Sundays and other days.

In considering regions and recommendations, the Task Force reviewed existing Mass schedules, seating capacities of churches, along with actual summer and winter average attendance figures as reported by the parishes. In several areas, the number of weekend Masses could be reduced and schedules coordinated with neighboring parishes to ease the burden on priests and liturgical ministers while still providing access to the Eucharist. Coordinated Mass schedules would also allow for emergency coverage. While requiring a measure of personal sacrifice by parishioners, implementing this simple recommendation would truly serve the common good of our brothers and sisters in faith.

The Task Force recognizes that offering fewer Masses may present a particular difficulty for some parishioners, particularly the elderly or disabled. The Task Force calls on all parishes to work toward helping these parishioners to participate in all aspects of parish life which might include providing transportation to Mass, faith enrichment and fellowship opportunities, home visitation and other ministries.

6. **Parishes Without Weekend Masses:** In some areas, the Task Force is recommending that a parish remain open but that no weekend Masses be celebrated there. Through the consultation process, the Task Force discovered that some of the smaller parishes are carrying out important ministries to the wider community or that parishioners gather for programs or activities as a faith community separate from the celebration of the weekend Eucharistic Liturgy. Indeed, some parishioners expressed an understanding and acceptance that given the circumstances facing their area, and our diocese as a whole, weekend Masses may no longer be able to be offered at their parish.

In order to maintain a Catholic presence in the area and allow for such ministry to continue, the Task Force believes these parishes should be given an opportunity to remain open as part of a cluster as long as a sustainable faith community exists at the parish. While parishioners would need to travel to a neighboring church for weekend Mass, weekday Masses, outreach ministries, programs, faith formation, Bible studies, pot lucks, or other activities could continue. In addition, this would provide additional facilities for the benefit of the wider community of the cluster.

Parishioners would remain as registered members of their local parish and be expected to fully participate in the worship, ministries and support of the larger faith community. Parishioners would receive donation envelopes for their parish which would be deposited in the weekend collection, counted in accord with diocesan policies, and designated for the parish even though weekend Masses will not be celebrated at that particular church. That parish should then be billed a portion of the cost for the cluster's priests, staff and programming to support the mutual ministry of the cluster, and the remaining funds deposited in an account for the parish in order to maintain its buildings and ministries.

Parishes designated as remaining open without any weekend Masses should be given 18 months to determine if a viable, sustainable faith community exists. This determination should be made by the Bishop, Pastor and parishioners based on the following criteria:

- a. Does the parish have a continued desire to remain open without a weekend liturgy?
- b. Does the parish have the human and financial resources to remain open without weekend liturgy?
- c. What activities are taking place on a regular basis at the church?
- d. What percentage of the registered parishioners is participating in the events taking place at the church?
- e. Are the activities at the church impeding the faith community from integrating into the larger faith community?

If it is determined that a viable, sustainable faith community exists, then the arrangement should continue with periodic consultations utilizing the criteria above. However, it must be noted that a faith community gathering on a regular basis as described above should not do so in hopes a weekend Mass will resume being offered in their parish. Given the totality of the circumstances facing the Diocese of Gaylord, it is most likely that once weekend Masses cease in a particular parish they will not be reinstated.

If it is determined that the parish is no longer a sustainable faith community, then it should be closed (formally suppressed).

7. **Ministry models:** No single model of clustering or leadership will fit all circumstances or situations. At the same time, it is also evident that in order to exercise prudent stewardship of all resources (human, financial and structural) and to best serve our communities with nourishing liturgies, faith enrichment, ministries, programming and outreach, the sharing of qualified staff and establishing combined councils within the cluster would be most beneficial. In some areas, the Task Force has made specific recommendations based on the information learned during the consultation process. In most clusters a qualified Pastoral Associate as well as a qualified Business Manager will likely be required. However, the Task Force believes the local parishes, working in collaboration with one another and the diocese, will be best equipped to make decisions regarding staffing and structures. In addition, a variety of multi-parish cluster models exist which have been accepted and successfully implemented in other dioceses which can be utilized in the Diocese of Gaylord. (See Appendix 3.)
8. **Roles and Qualifications:** The Diocese should work with parish leadership to develop a standardized set of positions, qualifications, job descriptions and evaluation processes for various leadership roles throughout the Diocese of Gaylord. Many appropriate position titles and job descriptions exist in materials accepted in the Catholic Church nationwide and should also be utilized locally.
9. **Formation of Leaders:** The Diocese, through the Center for Catholic Studies, should review and expand formation programs to prepare laity for leadership roles in the parish. Further, participation in professional ministry programs should be made available in order to “grow our own” leaders of the future. It is hoped that scholarships may also be offered to encourage and enable qualified individuals to engage in such programs. The Task Force once again echoes the sentiment of the U.S. Bishops that proper preparation and formation should be demonstrated or offered for all leaders appropriate to the level of responsibilities that are assigned to them.
10. **Parish Councils:** In order to promote further collaboration and communication, as well as to reduce the amount of administrative work for clergy in multi-parish models, guidelines should be developed to assist parishes in moving from separate pastoral and finance councils to a model where there is one pastoral and finance council with representation from all parishes in the cluster.
11. **Shared Programming:** Support and assistance should be made available to parishes to help them in creating shared programming and ministries to reduce costs, increase efficiency and exercise appropriate stewardship of resources.



12. **Implementation of Recommendations:** The Task Force recommends an implementation committee and a process for transition should be established in order to assist parishes and leadership as changes are carried out. Assistance in dealing with personnel concerns, financial issues and stewardship, training and formation, along with the spiritual, psychological and grieving issues due to experiencing change, should all be available, particularly if a parish is going to be closed, merged, clustered or without weekend Mass. It is recognized that substantial expertise in each of these areas exists within the Diocesan staff and existing structures. Additional qualified individuals also exist in most areas of the diocese who would likely volunteer in this important ministry. Further, transition processes have existed in this diocese in the past and other dioceses have also recently completed similar restructuring processes. The experience of the Task Force with local individuals as well as those from other dioceses is that substantial assistance and models for implementation of changes already exist and everyone has been graciously willing to share ideas, materials and experiences for the benefit of all. It would not be necessary to create brand new models or processes, but instead to carefully review and adapt existing models and processes to fit the Diocese of Gaylord.
13. **Existing Leadership:** As stated in the Introduction, the Diocese of Gaylord has been blessed with retired, extern and religious order priests as well as Pastoral Administrators/ Parish Life Coordinators who faithfully serve and care for the people of our diocese. In areas where these individuals currently have assignments, the Task Force recommends the Bishop and Assignment Board evaluate how these individuals might be best utilized, particularly during the transition process. It may be that a retired, extern, religious order priest or Pastoral Administrator/Parish Life Coordinator successfully serving a parish should remain in that position in order to assist parishioners in the transition as well as to allow time for new structures to be put in place or for newly assigned Pastors to get acclimated to the area. In all cases, however, in order to remain in their current position, these individuals must be willing to work collaboratively toward a successful transition.
14. **Deacons:** It is apparent that confusion exists among a number of faithful of the diocese as to the appropriate role of ordained deacons in the Church and within the Diocese of Gaylord. Additional education to provide more clarity regarding the role and ministry of deacons in this diocese should be made available. Further, there is significant support for reinstating the Deacon Formation Program in the Diocese of Gaylord and for expanding the ministries of deacons as deemed appropriate by the universal Church and in accordance with their particular gifts and training.
15. **Sunday Celebrations in the Absence of a Priest (SCAP):** A significant number of parishioners requested the Bishop reconsider the possibility of including distribution of Holy Communion during Sunday Celebrations in the Absence of a Priest. The Task Force recommends further education take place to explain the appropriate occasions for utilizing this rite of the Church as well as the rationale for the Bishop's decision not to offer Holy Communion during the Sunday Celebration in the Absence of a Priest.

16. **Catholic Schools:** The Task Force strongly supports continued accessibility to Catholic School education in the Diocese of Gaylord. In 2008, the Diocese hired a full-time Superintendent for Catholic Schools. The Superintendent is charged with responsibility for the operation of schools as well as working collaboratively to ensure academic excellence and faith formation are maintained in our Catholic schools. With the assignment of the new Superintendent, the time constraints for completion of the Final Report and a desire to have additional expertise on the committee with regard to education, the Task Force did not complete a thorough review of Catholic schools. Therefore, the Task Force has made few specific recommendations regarding Catholic schools in this document. However, the Task Force does recommend that a committee with appropriate expertise and vision be appointed to work with the diocesan Superintendent as well as school and parish leadership to develop recommendations to maintain Catholic school education in this diocese. Further, the Task Force recommends that all parishes in the vicinity of a Catholic school work together to provide a measure of support to the school which may include a commitment of both human and financial resources. Finally, the Task Force recommends the possibility for providing diocesan-wide support for all Catholic schools should continue to be explored and encouraged.
17. **Evangelization:** Many parishioners expressed a desire for assistance in the area of evangelization and for particular outreach to youth, young adults and families. The diocese is requested to continue, and even expand, opportunities which will assist parishes with the development of programming and ministry in these areas.
18. **Parishioner Responsibilities:** Within 12 months the Bishop, in consultation with parish leadership, should develop guidelines and expectations for an individual to be considered an active Catholic parishioner in the Diocese of Gaylord. This would allow for consistency in calculating numbers as well as determining who should properly have a voice in decision-making.
19. **Continued long range planning:** The recommendations of the Parish and Personnel Task Force are made based upon history, current circumstances and future projections. Because change is inevitable, the Task Force recommends that a similar committee be appointed every five years to review implementation progress. Their goal should also be to review, research and provide updated recommendations reflective of the facts and circumstances of the time as well as to look forward into the future.

## **COMMON THEMES SHARED BY PARISHIONERS**

Throughout the Parish Town Hall meetings, as well as in written correspondence received by the Task Force, a number of common themes or questions were voiced by parishioners. The Task Force recognizes that in some instances the concerns raised cannot be decided by the local parish or by the diocesan bishop, but are matters that can only be resolved by the wider Church and the Holy Father. Some of the concerns presented in this section have also been addressed in other areas of this report. The Task Force is including these common themes here in an additional effort to assure parishioners their voices were heard and presented to the Bishop.

The Task Force suggests further education may be necessary to both educate the faithful about these issues and to promote further dialog.

Common themes expressed included:

1. The Church should allow married clergy.
2. The Church should allow women clergy.
3. The Diocese should recruit more foreign clergy.
4. Prayer services with the distribution Holy Communion should be permitted.
5. The laity should be allowed to take on some of the pastoral and administrative functions of the parish, thus allowing priests to have more time for sacramental duties.
6. There is universal concern about the workload of the clergy in today's Church.
7. Parishes and parishioners need continued formation and expanded assistance from the Diocese to minister effectively.
8. Efforts to promote vocations, particularly to priestly ministry, must be expanded at all levels.
9. Parishioners are willing to accept additional responsibility for local parish administration and ministries, but need and desire guidance as to what to do and the appropriate processes and methods to do so.
10. There is significant fear surrounding possible parish closings.
11. Many parishes, and parishioners, are experiencing financial difficulty. There is a lack of understanding about why Catholic Services Appeal (CSA) targets continue to increase and how those targets are determined.

**SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PARISHES**  
**WITHIN THE DIOCESE OF GAYLORD**

*The specific recommendations for parishes as presented in this report are organized, for the most part, by existing regions simply for ease of locating a particular parish within the total recommendations. The Task Force anticipates the Bishop, in consultation with appropriate advisors, will redraw vicariate lines for the Diocese which will best serve the parishes once decisions are made.*

**ALPENA REGION: 5 PARISHES**

St. Bernard (Alpena), St. Mary (Alpena), St. Anne (Alpena), St. John the Baptist (Alpena), St. Rose of Lima (Herron)

**Recommendation #1:** The parishes of St. Bernard, St. Mary, St. Anne, St. John the Baptist (Alpena) and St. Rose of Lima (Herron) should be assigned one Pastor and one Parochial Vicar effective with the 2009 appointments.

**Recommendation #2:** The Alpena Mass schedules should be adjusted so that one of the two priests can provide one weekend Mass at Herron.

**Recommendation #3:** The leadership and parishioners of the parishes of St. Bernard, St. Mary, St. Anne, St. John the Baptist should work collaboratively with the goal of formally merging into one parish for the city of Alpena within five years (by 2014).

**Recommendation #4:** The Bishop/Diocese should provide support and assistance to help the parishes develop a plan to maximize resources and exercise appropriate stewardship to address the current debt in the area, strengthen collaborative ministry programs, aid in transition and ensure quality Catholic school education continues in this region.

**Recommendation #5:** A comprehensive review of staffing needs, qualifications and available human and financial resources within the cluster, including the school, should be undertaken without delay. This review should be conducted utilizing the expertise and services of the Diocesan Director of Administrative Services and Director of Human Resources in collaboration with parish and school leadership. No employee contracts with parish or school staff should be renewed beyond one year, nor should any new contracts be created, until this review is completed.

### **CHEBOYGAN REGION: 12 PARISHES**

St. Mary-St. Charles (Cheboygan), St. Casimir (Posen), St. Ignatius (Rogers City), St. Dominic (Metz), St. Paul (Onaway), St. Anthony (Mackinaw City), Cross in the Woods (Indian River), St. Monica (Afton), St. Ignatius (Good Hart), St. Mary (Burt Lake), Sacred Heart (Riggsville), St. Clement (Pellston)

**Recommendation #1:** St. Monica (Afton), St. Ignatius (Good Hart) and St. Mary (Burt Lake) should be closed (formally suppressed) with the process completed no later than September 1, 2009. A transition team should be assigned to assist the parishioners with the transition. Appropriate arrangements should be made to provide appropriate future care for the cemeteries and burial grounds of these parishes.

**Recommendation #2:** A consultation with the local Native American tribes should be undertaken to determine if they have an interest in purchasing and/or maintaining the churches at Burt Lake or Good Hart.

**Recommendation #3:** Cross in the Woods (Indian River) should remain as a stand-alone parish and National Shrine. In the future, if the Franciscans leave the area, it is suggested the Diocese consider the facilities at Cross in the Woods as a location of residence for retired priests.

**Recommendation #4:** The parishes of St. Mary-St. Charles (Cheboygan), St. Anthony (Mackinaw City), St. Clement (Pellston) and Sacred Heart (Riggsville) should become a cluster with one Pastor and one Parochial Vicar. During the transition process, a Pastoral Administrator should be maintained at St. Anthony. Mass times should be arranged so that the two assigned priests can provide weekend liturgies and sacramental care. Additional priestly ministry from the Franciscans at Cross in the Woods, or a retired or an extern priest, will likely be necessary during the summer months when visitors to Mackinaw City increase.

**Recommendation #5:** The parishes of St. Ignatius (Rogers City), St. Casimir (Posen), St. Dominic (Metz) and St. Paul (Onaway) should become a cluster with one Pastor and one Parochial Vicar. During the transition process, a Pastoral Administrator should be maintained at Metz.

St. Dominic should continue to have a weekend Mass as long as a retired priest can provide it. If the two priests assigned to this cluster can stay within the three-Mass per weekend limit, a decision made at the local level might allow for one of them to continue to provide Mass at St. Dominic once a retired priest is no longer available. Otherwise weekend Masses at St. Dominic should be discontinued but the parish maintained as long as a sustainable faith community exists in Metz.

**GAYLORD REGION: 9 PARISHES**

St. Luke (Bellaire), St. Mary (Grayling), St. Francis of Assisi (Lewiston), St. Mary (Mio), St. Mary Cathedral (Gaylord), Holy Redeemer (Vanderbilt), St. Thomas Aquinas (Elmira), Jesus the Good Shepherd (Atlanta), and St. Augustine (Hillman)

**Recommendation #1:** St. Mary (Grayling) should be added to the existing cluster of St. Mary Cathedral (Gaylord), St. Thomas Aquinas (Elmira), and Holy Redeemer (Vanderbilt). Two priests should be assigned to this cluster with one being named Rector of St. Mary Cathedral as well as Pastor of St. Mary (Grayling), St. Thomas Aquinas and Holy Redeemer. The other priest should be assigned as a Parochial Vicar for the cluster. The Pastor must be experienced, able to work collaboratively and able to introduce and motivate parishioners to special ministries. The area seems to be an ideal training ground for a newer priest, although perhaps not as a first assignment, because of the Catholic school, two hospitals, jail and prison ministry, military base, etc.

In the longer term, if necessary, weekend Masses at the smaller parishes of Holy Redeemer or St. Thomas Aquinas may need to be discontinued, but the parishes should be maintained as long as a sustainable faith community exists in each location.

**Recommendation #2:** The cluster of St. Mary (Mio) and St. Francis (Lewiston) should be expanded to include Jesus the Good Shepherd (Atlanta) and St. Augustine (Hillman). One Pastor should be assigned to this cluster.

No weekend Masses should be held at Jesus the Good Shepherd but the parish should be maintained as long as a sustainable faith community exists in Atlanta.

There appear to be significant seasonal population shifts in Mio and Lewiston which may require additional priestly ministry be made available for the summer months.

**Recommendation #3:** It is recommended that St. Luke (Bellaire) be a stand-alone parish at this time with one Pastor assigned. It is suitable for an older priest nearing retirement.

**MANISTEE REGION: 10 PARISHES**

St. Ann (Cadillac), St. Theresa (Manton), St. Stephen (Lake City), St. Edward (Harrietta), St. Raphael (Copemish), St. Joseph (Onkama), St. Ann (Frankfort), St. Mary of Mt. Carmel (Manistee), St. Joseph (Manistee), Guardian Angels (Manistee).

**Recommendation #1:** The parishes of St. Joseph, St. Mary and Guardian Angels (Manistee) should continue their efforts to work collaboratively as the Catholic Community of Manistee with the goal of formally merging into one parish for the city of Manistee within three years (by 2012). One Pastor and one Parochial Vicar should be assigned to Manistee.

The Bishop/Diocese should provide support and assistance to help the leadership and parishioners continue efforts to maximize resources and exercise appropriate stewardship to address financial concerns, strengthen collaborative ministry programs, aid in transition and ensure quality Catholic school education continues in this region.

**Recommendation #2:** St. Joseph (Onkama) and St. Raphael (Copemish) should continue with one shared Pastor. With a Hispanic population in the Onkama area, particularly in the summer months, the community might be best served if the Pastor assigned to these parishes were bilingual (English and Spanish).

**Recommendation #3:** St. Ann (Frankfort) should continue as a stand-alone parish with one Pastor assigned.

**Recommendation #4:** The existing cluster of St. Ann (Cadillac), St. Edward (Harrietta), St. Stephen (Lake City) and St. Theresa (Manton) should continue with one Pastor and one Parochial Vicar.

**Additional Note:** If it becomes necessary due to an increased shortage of priests, St. Joseph (Onkama) should be clustered with Manistee and served by the existing Pastor and Parochial Vicar in Manistee. St. Anne (Frankfort) and St. Raphael (Copemish) could be clustered and served by one Pastor, but additional seasonal assistance may be needed for the summer months. St. Ann (Cadillac), St. Stephen (Lake City), St. Edward (Harrietta) and St. Theresa (Manton) could be served by one Pastor. No weekend Masses would be celebrated at either St. Edward (Harrietta) or St. Theresa (Manton), but the parishes could be maintained as long as a sustainable faith community exists in each location.

**OSCODA REGION: 8 PARISHES**

Holy Family (East Tawas), Sacred Heart (Oscoda), St. James (Whittemore), St. Pius X (Hale), St. Anne (Harrisville), St. Raphael (Mikado), St. Catherine (Ossineke), St. Gabriel (Black River)

**Recommendation #1:** The existing cluster of St. Anne (Harrisville) and St. Raphael (Mikado) should be expanded to include St. Catherine (Ossineke) and St. Gabriel (Black River). One priest should be assigned as Pastor to this cluster.

St. Anne church in Harrisville is very large and can easily accommodate many of the parishioners in the area. One weekend Mass should be offered at St. Catherine. As long as it is possible, one weekend Mass should be offered at St. Raphael.

No weekend Masses should be held at St. Gabriel but the parish should be maintained as long as a sustainable faith community exists.

The Task Force recognizes the importance of the outreach ministry of the parishioners in Mikado to the community and recommends it be continued, and perhaps even expanded, as part of the ministry of the cluster.

**Recommendation #2:** The parishes of St. Pius X (Hale), St. James (Whittemore), Sacred Heart (Oscoda) and Holy Family (East Tawas) should become one cluster. One Pastor and one Parochial Vicar should be assigned. The Pastor assigned should be a strong, experienced Pastor (not a priest's first pastorate) with a commitment to Catholic School education.

No weekend Masses should be celebrated at St. James (Whittemore), but the parish should be maintained as long as a sustainable faith community exists.

**Recommendation #3:** All parishes in the cluster should be encouraged to work collaboratively to ensure the continuation of quality Catholic School education in the region.



**PETOSKEY REGION: 11 PARISHES**

Holy Childhood (Harbor Springs), St. Francis Xavier (Petoskey), St. Francis Solanus (Bay Shore), St. Mary of the Assumption (Charlevoix), St. Matthew (Boyne City), St. Augustine (Boyne Falls), St. Joseph (East Jordan), St. John Nepomucene (Praga), Holy Cross (Beaver Island), Holy Cross (Cross Village), St. Nicholas (Larks Lake)

**Recommendation #1:** Holy Childhood (Harbor Springs), Holy Cross (Cross Village) and St. Nicholas (Larks Lake) should be clustered with one Pastor assigned. Mass attendance and schedules should be carefully reviewed at Holy Childhood in order to provide for one weekend Mass at Holy Cross.

No weekend Masses should be held at St. Nicholas but the parish should be maintained as long as a sustainable faith community exists.

**Recommendation #2:** St. Francis Solanus (Bay Shore) and St. John Nepomucene (Praga) should be closed (formally suppressed) with the process completed no later than September 1, 2009. A transition team should be assigned to assist the parishioners with the transition.

**Recommendation #3:** St. Francis Xavier (Petoskey) should be a stand-alone parish with one priest assigned as Pastor. The Pastor should be committed to Catholic school education and able to motivate parishioners to serve in ministries to the parish and wider community. It was also noted that there are several ordained deacons in the area who can serve and assist laity in ministering in the Catholic school, hospital, jail and college.

**Recommendation #4:** Currently a retired priest provides sacramental ministry to the Augustine Center in Conway. This arrangement should continue as long as this is needed and there is a retired priest willing to serve in this capacity. Depending upon the individual, this priest may also be able to assist with other ministry in the Petoskey area.

**Recommendation #5:** St. Matthew (Boyne City), St. Augustine (Boyne Falls) and St. Joseph (East Jordan) should be clustered with one Pastor and a qualified Pastoral Associate assigned.

**Recommendation #6:** St. Mary (Charlevoix) and Holy Cross (Beaver Island) should be clustered with one Pastor assigned. It may be necessary to have additional summer help for these parishes which could be provided by a retired or extern priest. There is clearly a geographic challenge for parishioners of Holy Cross and stronger efforts should be made by both diocesan and parish leadership, as well as parishioners, to encourage and enhance participation in formation programs, events and ministries of the wider church to help avoid isolation.

**Recommendation #7:** All parishes in the area should be encouraged to work collaboratively to ensure the continuation of quality Catholic school education in the region.

**PRUDENVILLE REGION: 8 PARISHES**

St. Hubert (Higgins Lake), St. James (Houghton Lake), Our Lady of the Lake (Prudenville), St. Joseph (West Branch), Holy Family (Klacking Creek), St. Helen (St. Helen), St. Michael (Roscommon), St. Stephen (Skidway Lake)

**Recommendation #1:** The parishes of St. Michael (Roscommon), Our Lady of the Lake (Prudenville), St. Hubert (Higgins Lake), St. James (Houghton Lake), and St. Helen (St. Helen) should return to being a cluster. One priest should be named Pastor of all of the parishes of the cluster with one Parochial Vicar assigned. During the transition process, a Pastoral Administrator should be maintained at St. Helen. The leadership has to be compatible and able to work collaboratively.

The Bishop/Diocese should provide support and assistance to help the parishes collaborate to develop a plan to maximize resources and exercise appropriate stewardship to address financial concerns and staffing, strengthen collaborative ministry programs, aid in transition and ensure quality Catholic school education continues in this area.

**Recommendation #2:** The parishes of St. Joseph (West Branch), Holy Family (Klacking Creek) and St. Stephen (Skidway Lake) should be clustered with one Pastor.

All parishes in the cluster should be encouraged to work collaboratively to ensure the continuation of quality Catholic school education in this area.

**TRAVERSE CITY REGION: 18 PARISHES**

Christ the King (Acme), Holy Rosary (Cedar), Sacred Heart (Elk Rapids), St. Phillip Neri (Empire), St. Aloysius (Fife Lake), St. Mary of the Woods (Kalkaska), St. Anthony of Padua (Mancelona), St. Rita-St. Joseph (Maple City), St. Gertrude (Northport), St. Michael the Archangel (Suttons Bay), Blessed Kateri Tekakwitha (Peshawbestown), St. Wenceslaus (Gills Pier), St. Mary (Hannah), St. Mary (Lake Leelanau), St. Joseph (Mapleton), Immaculate Conception (Traverse City), St. Francis of Assisi (Traverse City), St. Patrick (Traverse City)

**Recommendation #1:** St. Anthony (Mancelona), St. Mary of the Woods (Kalkaska) and St. Aloysius (Fife Lake) should be clustered with one Pastor assigned. Parishes should work collaboratively to share resources, programming and ministries.

The Task Force recognizes the importance of the outreach ministry of the parishioners in Mancelona to the community and recommends it be continued, and perhaps even expanded, as part of the ministry of the cluster.

**Recommendation #2:** Christ the King (Acme) and Sacred Heart (Elk Rapids) should be clustered with one Pastor assigned. Parishes should work collaboratively to share resources, programming and ministries.

**Recommendation #3:** St. Phillip (Empire), St. Rita-St. Joseph (Maple City), and Holy Rosary (Cedar) should be clustered with one Pastor assigned.

No weekend Masses should be celebrated at St. Rita-St. Joseph, but the parish should be maintained as long as a sustainable faith community exists.

The Task Force understands there was an earlier change that impacted St. Rita-St. Joseph which did not officially close the parish but instead instructed parishioners to register in neighboring parishes. This directive left the parish without a means to receive consistent income in order to maintain itself as a faith community. This situation has resulted in confusion as to the status of St. Rita-St. Joseph parish. To address these concerns and to help provide clarity as to whether a sustainable faith community exists, the Task Force recommends that parishioners of St. Rita-St. Joseph be allowed to resume registration as parishioners of St. Rita-St. Joseph even though no weekend Masses will be celebrated there. A financial arrangement should be established (similar to those that already exist in several other areas of the diocese) through which a percentage of income for St. Rita-St. Joseph should be contributed to the expenses of providing the priest, staff and ministries of the cluster. St. Rita-St. Joseph should retain the balance of the income to care for buildings and needs of the parish. Parishioners are expected to actively participate in the worship and ministries of the cluster as well as support the diocesan and universal Church through the Catholic Services Appeal (CSA). Like other parishes without any weekend Masses, the parish should be evaluated in 18 months using the criteria provided in this report to determine if a sustainable faith community exists.

**Recommendation #4:** Immaculate Conception, St. Francis, St. Patrick (Traverse City), St. Joseph (Mapleton) and St. Mary (Hannah) should be clustered with one Pastor and three Parochial Vicars assigned to the five parishes. The Task Force believes that more collaboration must take place in cities with multiple parishes. Each of these parishes has particular gifts and certain programs which have been well developed; therefore the ministry and faith life of each Catholic could be strengthened by the parishes working together. The Task Force believes this recommendation will provide for increased sharing of staff, programs and ministries in order to best minister to the area. The Task Force also believes implementing this recommendation will help to promote efficiency and exercise best stewardship of the human and other resources of the area. Additionally, the Traverse City area is uniquely poised in the diocese with several ordained deacons and a significant number of qualified laity who can be utilized to coordinate and motivate parishioners to a variety of ministries in the area.

One of the priests serving in the cluster should also be appointed chaplain to Grand Traverse Area Catholic Schools and Northwestern Michigan College.

It is also recommended that the priests serving Traverse City live together or gather at least several times each week for prayer and meals in order to develop and maintain mutual support and cooperation.

**Recommendation #5:** St. Mary Hannah School and Grand Traverse Area Catholic Schools, with assistance from the Diocesan Superintendent of Catholic Schools, should explore opportunities for cooperation and collaboration which might benefit and revitalize Catholic School education in the Hannah area.

**Recommendation #6:** If appropriate funding is available, St. Joseph (Mapleton) should be allowed to proceed with building plans so that one weekend Mass will be sufficient to accommodate parishioners while also providing additional formation and outreach ministry facilities for the cluster. This construction project should be undertaken under the direction of the Pastor of the Traverse City cluster.

**Recommendation #7:** St. Michael (Suttons Bay), St. Mary (Lake Leelanau), Blessed Kateri Tekakwitha (Peshawbestown), St. Wenceslaus (Gills Pier), and St. Gertrude (Northport) should be clustered with one Pastor assigned. The Pastor should be a strong, experienced priest with a commitment to Catholic school education and an ability to foster collaborative efforts among the existing parishes.

No weekend Masses should be held at St. Gertrude, but the parish should be maintained as long as a sustainable faith community exists.

Weekend Masses should be continued at Blessed Kateri and St. Wenceslaus for only as long as the religious order priest currently serving is able to provide them. When he is no longer able or available to provide them, weekend Masses at Blessed Kateri and St. Wenceslaus should be

discontinued, but the parishes maintained as long as a sustainable faith community exists at each location.

When the time comes that no Masses are celebrated at Blessed Kateri and it is established that a sustainable faith community no longer exists, a consultation with the local Native Americans should be undertaken to determine if they have an interest in purchasing and/or maintaining Blessed Kateri. The church might also be maintained as a chapel where occasional special Native American Masses or funerals might be held.

It is recommended that additional clergy receive instruction in the Native American customs and liturgy so this ministry can continue in the Diocese, particularly on the Leelanau Peninsula in one of the other churches.

Parishes without weekend Masses should be given the opportunity to remain open as long as a sustainable faith community exists under the criteria previously discussed.

**Recommendation #8:** A significant difficulty in the Leelanau Peninsula is that currently the churches are quite small, thus requiring more Masses and priests to serve the sacramental needs. A feasibility study of seating capacity and needs should be conducted to determine if a new, larger parish facility should be erected in order to better serve the Catholic population and to allow one Pastor to serve the northern half of Leelanau County. In the event a new church and parish facilities are built, St. Mary of the Assumption in Lake Leelanau should remain as part of the school campus within the new parish.

It is acknowledged that it is unlikely one Pastor will be able to provide Masses at Lake Leelanau and Suttons Bay until a larger building is erected; thus, an additional priest(s) will be required in the meantime.



## Appendix 1

### **GLOSSARY OF TERMS**

*These definitions are provided to help provide common language and understanding of terms. They are not meant to be construed as full and complete descriptions of all terms and topics, but rather for a general understanding of terms often used in discussion.*

#### **Structure**

**Diocese:**

A particular church; a fully organized ecclesiastical jurisdiction or territory under the pastoral direction of a bishop as local Ordinary.

**Parish:**

A certain community of the Christian faithful stably constituted in a diocese, whose pastoral care is entrusted to a pastor under the authority of the diocesan bishop. Most parishes are formed on a geographic basis, but they may be formed along national or ethnic lines.

**Vicariate:**

Parishes of a diocese are gathered into regional areas known as “deaneries” or “vicariates” in order to promote joint pastoral action and the best possible distribution of ministry, and to provide for the pastoral care of the priests serving in each area of the diocese. Currently the Diocese of Gaylord has eight vicariates.

**Faith Community:**

A commonly used term referring to a group of the faithful who gather for worship, faith formation, service, outreach and fellowship. It may be a parish or a group of parishes working together and sharing resources.

#### **Personnel**

**The Laity:**

The lay faithful are those baptized faithful of the Catholic Church not called by God to ordained ministry within the Church. The laity, being immersed in the world, are called in a special way to bring Christ to the world.

Pope Pius XII said:

*"Lay believers are the front line of Church life; for them the Church is the animating principle of human society. Therefore, they in particular ought to have an ever-clearer consciousness not only of belonging to the Church, but of being the Church, that is to say, the community of the faithful on earth under the leadership of the Pope, the common Head, and of the bishops in communion with him. These are the Church..."*

**Priest:**

A man who has been ordained to the order of the presbyterate. All Pastors and Parochial Vicars are priests.

**Bishop:**

The chief priest of a diocese, often referred to as the Ordinary. A bishop, by divine institution, carries on the work of the apostles. By reason of Episcopal consecration, he shares in the triple apostolic function of teacher of doctrine, priest of sacred worship, and minister of church government. Bishops are responsible for the pastoral care of their dioceses.

**Vicar General:**

The highest official of a diocese after the bishop. He is a priest who has been appointed by the bishop and may exercise authority in the name of the bishop.

**Vicar (Vicar Forane):**

The title of a priest appointed by the bishop to aid him in administering the parishes in a certain region or vicariate. The function of a vicar involves promotion, coordination, and supervision of the common pastoral ministry within the vicariate. He is the “representative of the bishop” in a region of the diocese and is to be a special channel of communication between the region and the bishop.

**Presbyteral Council:**

The Presbyteral Council (also known as the priests’ council) is the principal consultative body mandated by the Code of Canon Law to advise the diocesan bishop in matters of pastoral governance. It consists of the bishop and selected priests serving the diocese.

**College of Consultors:**

Mandated by Canon Law, the College of Consultors is selected from the members of the Presbyteral Council for a term of five years. A diocesan bishop must consult with the College of Consultors before making decisions upon especially important or extraordinary acts of administration (i.e. closing or merging parishes, selling property beyond a specified amount, and other specific issues.) The Consultors also elect a diocesan administrator when a see is vacant and have other specific functions.

**Pastor:**

A priest who is the proper pastor of the parish entrusted to him, exercising the pastoral care of the community committed to him under the authority of the diocesan bishop. For that same community he carries out the functions of teaching, sanctifying and governing, along with the cooperation of other presbyters or deacons and the assistance of the lay members of the Christian faithful, according to the norm of law. He is responsible for administering the sacraments, instructing the congregation in the doctrine of the Church, safeguarding the temporal goods (physical and monetary resources) of the parish, and other services to the people of the parish.



**Parochial Vicar:**

A priest who is assigned to a parish (or parishes) to assist the Pastor with his parochial duties. (In the Diocese of Gaylord, these priests have previously been titled Associate Pastors.)

**Sacramental Minister:**

A priest who typically does not reside in a parish that is being administered by a parish life coordinator (pastoral administrator) or lay administrator, but attends to sacramental needs of the parishioners. Sacramental Ministers are required to celebrate Mass.

**Deacon:**

The deacon is the first order of grade in ordained ministry. Any man who is to be ordained to the priesthood must first be ordained as a transitional deacon. Deacons serve in the ministry of liturgy, of the word, and of charity. The permanent diaconate is for men, married or unmarried, who do not plan to become ordained priests.

**Parish Life Coordinator (Pastoral Administrator):**

A trained professional minister who is appointed by the bishop and entrusted with the pastoral and administrative duties of a parish within a specific locale. A parish life coordinator cannot celebrate Mass. A priest is also assigned to serve the parish as a Sacramental Minister.

**Lay Administrator:**

In this diocese, in rare circumstances, Bishop Cooney has appointed an active member of a small parish to care for the day to day administrative concerns of the parish. A priest is also assigned to serve the parish as a Sacramental Minister and to care for any pastoral needs.

**Pastoral Associate:**

A professionally trained minister who serves as a chief assistant to the pastor in the coordination of a wide range of parish activities and programs in a parish, or provides leadership to a specialized ministry. Ministries may include liturgy and sacramental preparation, pastoral care of the sick and bereavement ministry, spiritual formation, administrative assistance or other ministries at the direction of the Pastor.

**Pastoral Minister:**

A trained minister who is responsible for a more narrow scope of pastoral duties under the direction of the Pastor, pastoral associate or other pastoral staff member. Typically this individual is responsible for specific pastoral duties such as visitation to the sick or parish outreach.

**Business Manager:**

A trained individual who is responsible for a full range of parish administrative functions, dependent upon education and experience. At this level, parish administrative responsibility may be fully delegated by the Pastor typically in the areas of finance, facilities, purchasing, stewardship, communications and personnel. When an individual has less education/ experience or for smaller parishes, the Pastor has often retained some of these responsibilities. The business manager may supervise support staff and/or professional staff positions.

**Bookkeeper:**

This trained individual is responsible for providing bookkeeping services to the parish and/or school. Maintains financial bookkeeping system including accounts payable, receivable, payroll and cash receipts. Balances accounts, ledgers and reconciles bank statements. Prepares financial statements.

**Secretary:**

Primarily secretarial in nature; may supervise volunteers or part time help. Provides knowledgeable assistance and/or referral to callers and visitors including utilizing church, social service or community resources and provides helpful information. Responsibilities may also include preparation of parish bulletin, reservation of parish facilities, scheduling of events, supervision of petty cash, inventories and office supplies, etc.

### Miscellaneous

**Cluster:**

Grouping of two or more parishes served by one or more priests. The parishes retain separate identities but collaborate in the sharing of ministries and resources. In the Diocese of Gaylord, some parishes joined in this way have adopted a collective identity such as Boyne Valley Catholic Community or the Catholic Community of Manistee to reflect their collaboration. However, there has been no canonical change in the status of the parishes and they retain their official names and identities.

**Closure:**

A formal and canonical declaration by the bishop, after a specific process and consultation with the College of Consultors, in which a parish ceases to exist. The term for closing a parish in Canon Law is "suppression" and for creating a new parish is "erection."

**Merge:**

Two or more parishes are joined into a single new or consolidated parish. This would follow appropriate consultation by the bishop with the College of Consultors and a specific process to suppress the former parishes and erect a new parish with a single identity. A merged parish may have one or more worship sites or churches which may retain their original names.

**Canon Law:**

A body of general laws governing the Catholic Church.

## **FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**

*A number of questions were repeatedly raised during Parish Town Hall meetings. The answers below are provided for general information but are not intended to be a complete or exhaustive discussion of any particular subject. The Task Force supports and encourages ongoing dialog.*

- 1) **How was the Task Force chosen?** Bishop Patrick Cooney enlisted Rev. Francis Murphy, in his role as Vicar General, to contact parish leadership and encourage them to share names of individuals who had appropriate skills, experience, knowledge and history of the diocese to serve on a committee to plan for the long term future of the Diocese of Gaylord. One of the most important caveats was that these individuals must have a vision for the common good of the entire diocese, not solely their own parish or region. These individuals were then interviewed to determine their willingness and ability to serve. The particular parish they belonged to or what organizational ties they held were not primary factors in their selection. The overriding concern was that these individuals would work on behalf of the entire diocese. Interestingly, it was discovered at the first meeting there were six priests, six women (one of which is a religious sister) and six lay men serving on the Task Force. Partway through the process, one man had to step down from the Task Force due to illness. A facilitator, recording secretary and spokesperson also served the Task Force. At times, others were invited by the Task Force to attend a meeting to share specific knowledge or answer questions. Fr. Murphy served as the chair of the Task Force.
- 2) **Will churches close with this process?** Bishop Cooney directed that closing parishes was to be considered as a last resort and that a local Catholic presence be maintained to the greatest extent possible in communities throughout the diocese. The Task Force worked very hard to find the best ways to minister to the needs of the people in the Diocese of Gaylord with the resources we have available. Ultimately, every parish has been affected in some way and the Task Force has recommended five parishes be formally suppressed. It is important to note that over the course of history churches have been established, reconfigured and closed in communities -- including in our own diocese -- according to the needs of the time. That fact will surely remain true in the future as well.
- 3) **Will we have to share a Pastor?** At the time the Task Force began its work, forty-nine of the diocese's eighty-one parishes already shared a Pastor. In the new configurations, the vast majority of parishes will share a Pastor. In some cases, a Parochial Vicar may be assigned as well. In all cases, well-trained laity to serve in pastoral and administrative roles will be critical to provide effective ministry and evangelization to northern Lower Michigan.
- 4) **Will our Mass schedule change?** It is indeed possible that Mass times in a particular area will change. This will likely require some personal sacrifice and flexibility on the part of parishioners so that their brothers and sisters in faith in neighboring communities may

have regular access to the Eucharist. We must remember that we are called to “love our neighbors as ourselves” and be willing to give of ourselves to meet the needs of others.

- 5) **Why hasn't the diocese done something before this?** The diocese has been adjusting to our needs all along as evidenced by the large number of parishes already sharing a Pastor, the use of Parish Life Coordinators and parishes already sharing programs and resources. Many years ago, under a previous bishop, the diocese also undertook a study looking to the long term future, but a plan was never implemented. The Task Force did review the report from that time. The Task Force is hopeful the comprehensive process which was undertaken and its resulting recommendations will serve us well in the years to come. At the same time, the Church is always changing and so the Task Force also recommended that a long range planning committee be appointed every five years to review the progress and initiate new recommendations based on future circumstances and projections.
- 6) **Why is the permanent diaconate program suspended?** Nine permanent deacons have been ordained for the Diocese of Gaylord since Bishop Cooney established the Deacon Formation Program here in 2002. Sr. Arlene Bennett, who had coordinated the program since its inception, retired in July of 2008. Bishop Cooney turned 75 this past March which is the retirement age for bishops. He has submitted the required retirement letter to Rome, but it is unknown how quickly a new bishop might be appointed. Since each bishop determines how deacons will be utilized in their diocese, and even whether or not there will be a deacon formation program in their diocese, Bishop Cooney decided that it would be an injustice to begin a new group not knowing whether they would ever be able to be ordained. There have been situations in other dioceses where men were near completion of their formation process for the diaconate when a new bishop came and placed a hold on the program without ordaining those men. Bishop Cooney did not want that to happen here. However, men interested in the permanent diaconate can still take classes through the Center for Catholic Studies which will help them in their personal development and put them further ahead should the new bishop decide to continue the deacon formation program. Deacon Paul Fifer has been appointed to succeed Sr. Bennett to oversee the ministry and continuing formation of deacons.
- 7) **Why can't permanent deacons do more?** Deacons in the Diocese of Gaylord have faculties (permission) to perform many ministries in the Church, including assisting at Mass, presiding at Liturgy of the Hours, devotional services, scripture services and vigils. They may preach at appropriate services, but may not preach the homily at the Eucharistic Liturgy. They also serve in hospitals, prison ministry, provide marriage preparation, assist the poor, teach and provide other ministry. Bishop Cooney's vision for the role of deacons is that of service to the church and many of the deacons in our area are faithfully serving in these roles. While the ministries of deacons are extremely important, it must be understood that deacons are not priests and cannot be substituted for priests.
- 8) **Will the laity have more responsibility?** It is hoped lay people will embrace their baptismal call to serve utilizing their unique gifts and skills. The Task Force encourages formation

and training for lay leadership and urges more people to step forward to help in all of our parishes. As part of the Church, parishioners have both rights and responsibilities.

- 9) **When parishes share a pastor or leadership, do they mingle the finances?** As noted previously, there are a number of parishes currently sharing a pastor or collaborating on programming. In most cases, these parishes remain as individual parishes with their own finances. To date in our diocese, generally the parishes involved have determined what percentage of expenses each will pay for support of their pastoral leadership and for various services. While there appears to be no single process, it is possible a more standardized system will be implemented in the future.
- 10) **Will we have to share our programs/ministries with another parish?** Each parish has experience, expertise, resources and ministry to share. The Task Force hopes parishes will want to share their unique sets of talents and gifts with the wider church.
- 11) **How were schools involved in this process? Are you going to close our school?** Like parishes, schools were asked to complete a thorough self-evaluation. The Task Force highly values Catholic education and encourages all parishes to work collaboratively, provide support and strive to maintain access to strong Catholic school education in northern Lower Michigan. However, given the facts and circumstances facing our schools and the recent addition of a full-time Superintendent of Catholic Schools, the Task Force refrained from making recommendations for each Catholic School. A recommendation has been made that a committee with particular expertise in education be appointed to plan for the future of Catholic school education throughout the Diocese of Gaylord.
- 12) **How have other dioceses dealt with this problem?** Many dioceses across the country have undertaken a variety of planning processes. In a number of areas, large numbers of parishes have been slated to be closed. Statistics indicate that half of the parishes in the United States now share a Pastor.
- 13) **What will happen when a new Bishop is appointed?** The goal of the Task Force was to complete this work with recommendations presented to Bishop Cooney before his retirement. That goal has been realized. Further, the realities facing our diocese are unlikely to change significantly in the foreseeable future. The Task Force believes a new bishop will recognize and appreciate the work and wide consultation process that has been undertaken in our diocese and that he will carefully consider this when making decisions for the future.
- 14) **Why can't we recruit more priests from foreign countries?** The diocese has policies in place to evaluate any priest who wishes to serve in our area and we do currently have a few foreign priests who requested to come here, but were not actively recruited. Their ministry has been gratefully received. At the same time, immigration laws are very complicated and it is not a simple process to receive a foreign priest into the country or to retain them once they are here. There are also cultural differences which can be difficult

for the parish as well as for the priest from outside this country. There may be language and accent difficulties. For our Church to be healthy and prepared for the future it is important that we each embrace our own responsibility to serve and to encourage other men and women in their discernment -- particularly to priesthood or religious life.

15) **Why is there a downward trend in the number of priests?** This is not unique to our diocese, but is true nationwide. While the Catholic population saw steady growth, the number of priests available for pastoral ministry did not keep pace. Studies and surveys have proffered a number of reasons for this, including:

- There were large numbers of priests who were ordained after WWII. Those men are now nearing retirement age without enough seminarians being formed to replace them.
- Religious communities – for both men and women -- are experiencing a similar decline.
- In an earlier time, the only way one could serve in the Church was to be ordained or consecrated to religious life. This is no longer true as individuals who desire to serve may fulfill that call in a wide variety of ways as a layperson.
- A lack of commitment has been identified as a factor in fewer men entering the seminary. Reports indicate this is not only true in the Catholic Church, but in other denominations as well.
- Our culture is a factor in the decrease of priestly vocations. Our society teaches that money and personal pleasure are to be highly valued and determine an individual's worth. A life of serving others, living simply, practicing obedience and celibacy run counter-cultural to this view.
- Family sizes are smaller and often parents do not encourage their children to pursue their vocation to priesthood or religious life.
- Family education and a lived practice of the faith; if families lack a sense of faith, or children are not taught the benefits and graces that come from caring for another, they do not learn how to sacrifice for the good of others. Additionally, if families are unable to recognize the blessing of a priestly vocation in their midst, this vocation may go unsupported.
- Failure to promote priestly vocations on the parish level.
- A perceived lack of dialogue between clergy and laity has been cited as being detrimental to promoting priestly vocations.
- Negative media attention or bad examples in the priesthood (such as poor preaching, lack of leadership, liturgical abuses, improper conduct).
- A lack of invitations to worthy candidates to consider a priestly or religious vocation by priests, leadership, teachers, families and parishioners.

16) **What is the Diocese doing to promote Vocations?** The diocese continues to undertake many efforts to promote a culture of vocations for all Catholics as well as to encourage individuals in discerning their call to priesthood or religious life. Some of those efforts include:

- The Bishop appoints a delegate for vocations to oversee efforts. At this point in time, the delegate is Fr. Donald Geyman. Fr. Geyman also currently serves as Pastor of Immaculate Conception Parish in Traverse City with an associate pastor to assist him. Fr. Don has a wonderful rapport with people, and particularly with youth, and has visited many schools, parishes, youth events, Knights of Columbus functions and DCCW gatherings in an effort to promote a culture of vocations within this diocese.
- Dr. John Olesnavage works under contract with the diocese to provide professional evaluation of potential seminarian candidates and provides support to those who are enrolled in seminary.
- There is a very active diocesan vocations advisory committee which meets regularly to focus on vocations efforts.
- The St. Andrew Task Force was developed to encourage young men as they grow in their Catholic faith and to help them discern how they will serve the Church in the future. (One of these young men has entered the seminary while others are continuing their discernment process.) A similar group is being developed for young women.
- A parish-based program was developed through the Vocations Committee, which incorporates many of the same concepts of the St. Andrew Task Force, and is available for parishes who would like to encourage their local young people in their faith journey and to help them in discerning their vocation.
- Retreats, community service experiences, seminary visits and other gatherings are held for those with a desire to grow in their faith and explore their personal vocation.
- The Vocations Committee, in cooperation with Knights of Columbus councils throughout the diocese, host an Altar Server Appreciation Day each summer. Typically, over 1,400 altar servers are invited to gather in recognition of their ministry to the Church and to further encourage young men and women in living lives of service to the Lord.
- Television advertising has been produced and broadcast to attract men to the priesthood. Newsletters, website information and a variety of stories also continue to be distributed relating to vocations.
- A few parishes have established their own vocations promotion committees.
- Special speakers from outside the diocese, as well as Fr. Geyman and current seminarians, make presentations at local parishes or other gatherings as requested.
- Monthly Holy Hours of Prayer are being held as well as a variety of other prayers offered regularly specifically for vocations.

Perhaps it would be helpful to ask ourselves: *“What am I doing to encourage vocations and how am I supporting those who are answering their call to serve the Lord? How am I living out my own vocation? Who have I invited to consider priesthood or religious life?”*

- 17) **Why doesn't the Bishop or the Diocese allow more married priests or women to be ordained?** This is not a decision which can be made at the local level or even on a national level. The Bishop or diocese does not have this authority. While a specific Pastoral Provision was established by Pope John Paul II in 1980 allowing for married men of certain faith traditions to enter full Communion with the Catholic Church, and to become ordained in the Catholic Church, this is a rather rare occurrence. The Pastoral Provision is directed by the Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith in Rome. It happens that one of our priests, Fr. William Lipscomb was ordained for the Diocese of Gaylord under this Pastoral Provision in 1997, and is currently serving in Traverse City. He is one of two in Michigan with about 100 men similarly ordained in the United States.

Women may not be ordained in the Roman Catholic Church. However, all members of the Catholic faithful are called to serve the Church and there are many, many extremely important areas of ministry in which the laity can serve. In fact, much of the work and mission of the Church can and should be carried out by the faithful. The primary ministry of the priest is to provide the Sacraments, along with preaching and teaching.

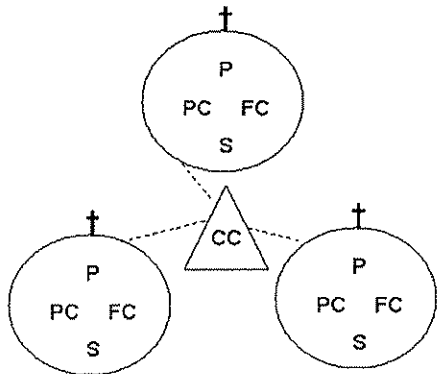


**MULTI-PARISH CLUSTER MODELS**

*Throughout the country dioceses are seeking ways to meet the sacramental, pastoral, spiritual and administrative needs of the faithful entrusted to their care. In 2004, Mark Mogilka, Director of Pastoral Services for the Diocese of Green Bay, Wisconsin outlined six basic multi-parish cluster models which have been considered and adapted for use in dioceses throughout the United States. The Task Force presents them here for informational purposes and to promote dialog at the parish and diocesan levels as to possible ways clusters in the Diocese of Gaylord might be staffed. The Task Force recognizes that it is unlikely one model will fit all circumstances. We concur with Mr. Mogilka’s statement that “determining which model will work in a given situation is dependent on such variables as, relative size of the parishes involved, distance between parishes, economic and spiritual vitality, parish histories and traditions, leadership skills, styles and presence of pastor(s), presence and support for Catholic schools, etc.”*

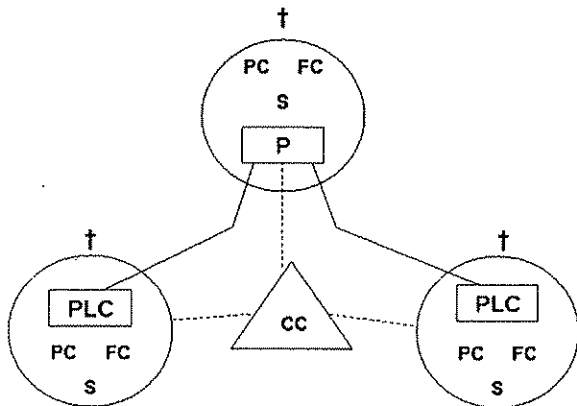
*The Task Force reiterates its recommendation that the diocese and parishes work together to determine an appropriate model for any particular area.*

**Model I – Separate Parishes - Coordinated**

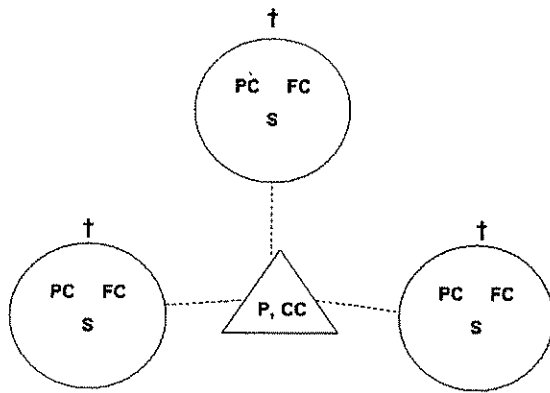


- Each parish has a Pastor (P), Pastoral Council (PC), Finance Council (FC) and Staff (S)
- Cooperation between parishes is facilitated through a Coordinating Council (CC)
- Programs, staff, resources, are shared and planning done through cooperation of pastors and representatives on the CC with the support of respective parish leadership i.e. PC, FC and S

**Model II – Separate Parishes – One Pastor & Parish Life Coordinators**

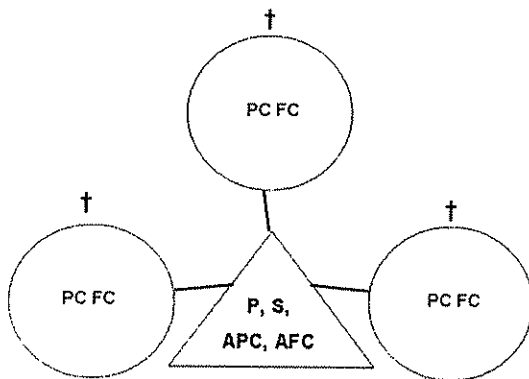


- There is one canonical P for all three parishes
- Each parish maintains separate lay leadership structures i.e. PC & FC & S
- The canonical P serves primarily in one parish, while Parish Life Coordinators (PLC) lead the other two parishes providing pastoral care in all areas except sacramental ministry (See Canon Law 517.2)
- Cooperation between parishes is facilitated through a Coordinating Council (CC)



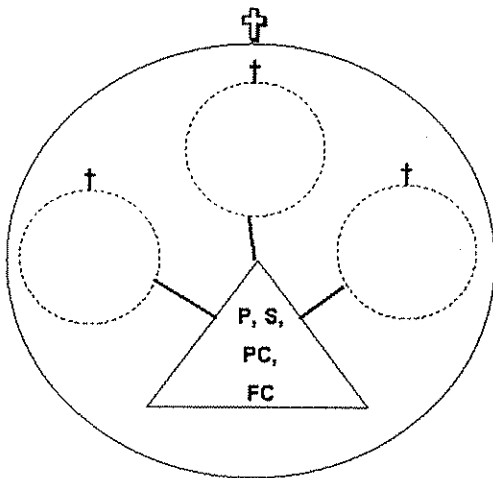
### Model III - Separate Parishes – One Pastor

- There is one pastor (P) who provides leadership, sacramental and pastoral care for all three parishes
- Each parish maintains separate leadership structures i.e. PC, FC and S
- A greater degree of cooperation between parishes is facilitated through the CC



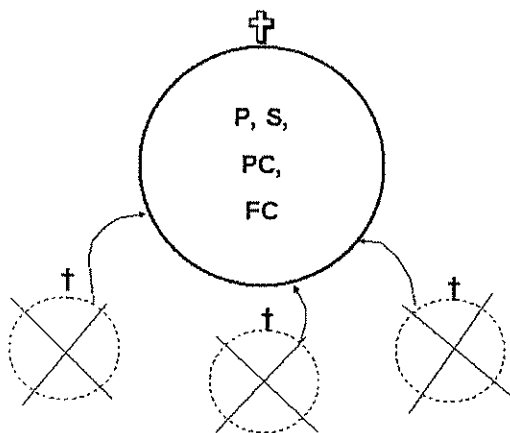
### Model IV – One Pastor – Centralized Team & Council

- One P who works with one S – who may work out of one location in service to all three parishes
- Individual parishes may have minimal support staff
- Area Pastoral Council (APC) is primary consultative body for P and has greater decision making influence over P than individual parish PC's and FC's
- APC works closely with an Area Finance Council (AFC) which has a budget and pays salaries of P, S, inter-parish programs and services
- A variation on this model has a team of priests serving several parishes "in solidum" (See Canon Law 517.1)



### Model V – Merged Parish

- All councils, committees, finances, sacramental records, are merged together to create a new canonical parish
- There is a new canonical parish name. However name of individual churches remain
- There is one P, S, PC, FC, who serve three worship sites or churches



### Model VI – Build & Close

- All three parishes are merged
- Together they build a new larger church
- Existing churches are closed and properties sold to provide funding for building new church
- New parish has one P, S and traditional leadership structure with PC and FC



