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# Rooted in Christ – Pastoral Plan

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**Diocese of Grand Rapids  
Pastoral Plan**

*April 3rd, 2025*

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## I. GRAND RAPIDS NORTH DEANERY

### Summary of Proposed Recommendations for Grand Rapids North Deanery Parishes

1. The parish of Mary Queen of Apostles in Sand Lake will merge with St. John Paul II in Cedar Springs. Mary Queen of Apostles will close, and the parish facilities will be sold.
  - a. St. John Paul II Parish should welcome parishioners from Mary Queen of Apostles Parish to register at the parish. The increase in membership will benefit Mass attendance and other ministries.
  - b. The parish should develop a strategy for additional membership growth. At its 2024 size, the parish is not much larger than parishes which are being merged and closed in other parts of the Diocese.
  - c. The parish should continue to study its need for future ministry space and its current use of the facilities. For example, the old church building may better serve the parish at the present time as a hall rather than using the current hall which is surrounded by offices and meeting areas.
2. Upon the retirement of the pastor, the parish of Holy Family in Sparta will merge with either Holy Trinity Parish in Comstock Park or St. John Paul II Parish in Cedar Springs. Further dialogue will determine the preferred merger partners. Holy Family will remain an active worship site and continue to serve as a location for Hispanic ministry.
  - a. Future staffing and ministry needs of the communities should be studied. The merger should create opportunities for financial efficiencies and resources which can benefit both sites' ability to offer a fuller range of ministries.
  - b. The parishes should study, in conjunction with the Hispanic Ministry Office, the state of Hispanic ministry and the future needs in the Sparta area. Approximately 75 people attend the once-a-month Mass at Holy Family Church.
  - c. Holy Trinity Parish should study its space needs. There are a limited number of rooms available for meetings with adults and the location of the rectory in the rectory basement is not desirable.
  - d. The support for, promotion of, and recruitment of students for Holy Trinity School is lauded and can be expanded with the merger.
3. Upon the retirement of the administrator, the parish of Ss. Peter and Paul in Grand Rapids will merge with the Basilica of St. Adalbert in Grand Rapids. Ss. Peter and Paul will close, and the parish facilities will be sold.
  - a. Parishioners should continue their support for and participation in the life of the parish.
  - b. Upon the announcement of the administrator's retirement, the parish should plan for the transition with the pastor and other leaders from the Basilica of St. Adalbert, with the understanding that parishioners may join any parish they so choose.
4. The parishes of Blessed Sacrament and St. Alphonsus in Grand Rapids will continue to be served by one priest. The priest is the pastor of St. Alphonsus and the administrator of Blessed Sacrament. Upon the completion of the terms for the pastors at St. Isidore and St. Jude, the parish of St. Isidore in Grand Rapids will cluster with St. Alphonsus in Grand Rapids and Blessed Sacrament Parish in Grand Rapids will cluster with St. Jude in Grand Rapids.
  - a. The support for, promotion of, and recruitment for, All Saints Academy by all four parishes is lauded and should be enhanced by the clustering of the parishes.

- b. Since the parishes have collaborated so successfully on All Saints Academy, they should also study staffing, ministries, and resources to determine if there are additional opportunities for collaboration.
- c. A study should be conducted regarding the use of facilities in the cluster. For instance, the study may find that some facilities are seldom used, or other facilities could be repurposed.
5. The parish of St. Mary in Grand Rapids will continue to cluster with the Basilica of St. Adalbert in Grand Rapids. A bilingual pastor will be appointed to serve the parish.
  - a. The parish should study the facilities at St. Mary's and determine their best uses for ministry.
  - b. The parish should study the potential for growth in the Spanish-speaking community and develop a plan for the ministry at St. Mary's.
  - c. The parish's support of San Juan Diego Academy is commended, and the parish is encouraged to sustain its commitment to the school.
6. The following parishes will remain stand-alone parishes:
  - a. Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Belmont
    - The parish already collaborates with the food pantry in Kent County and should explore collaboration with area parishes on some ministries, particularly adult faith formation.
    - The parish should be lauded for their efforts which have led to the recognition of Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary School as a Blue-Ribbon School and encouraged to continue their efforts.
  - b. Holy Spirit, Grand Rapids
    - The parish should continue its renewal efforts using "Rebuilt."
    - Holy Spirit should explore the potential for collaboration with neighboring parishes on various ministries, particularly ministry to young adults.
    - The parish should be lauded for their support and commitment to Holy Spirit School and encouraged to continue those efforts.
  - c. Our Lady of Consolation, Rockford
    - As the area continues to grow, the parish should develop a comprehensive plan to include staffing, ministries, finances, and facilities that will be needed in the future.
    - With projected population growth, the parish should increase its efforts to reach out to Catholics in the area and to welcome and engage them in the life of the community.
    - The parish should be lauded for the support for, promotion of, and recruitment of Our Lady of Consolation School and encouraged to continue their efforts.
  - d. Sacred Heart of Jesus, Grand Rapids
    - The parish should be lauded for its commitment to Catholic education and encouraged to continue these efforts.
    - As the school enrollment is nearing capacity, a study should be conducted in conjunction with the Diocesan Office of Schools, regarding possible options for demolition, construction, and the need for additional land.
  - e. St. Alphonsus, Grand Rapids

- The parish will remain stand-alone until the completion of the terms for the pastors at St. Isidore and St. Jude.
- f. St. Anthony of Padua, Grand Rapids
  - The parish should be commended for its commitment to St. Anthony of Padua School and encouraged to continue its support.
  - A study should be conducted, in conjunction with the Diocesan Office of Catholic Schools, regarding the feasibility of adding an early childhood center at the parish.
- g. St. John Paul II, Cedar Springs
  - The parish will remain stand-alone.
- h. St. Jude, Grand Rapids
  - St. Jude and the other parishes that support All Saints Academy should consider additional ways to collaborate on staff, ministries and resources.
  - The parish should be commended for its support of All Saints Academy and encouraged to continue that commitment, including efforts to expand an endowment that can provide third-source funding for Catholic schools.
- 7. All parishes in the North Deanery should consider collaborating with other parishes on existing or new ministries. Such collaboration can share costs and usually results in greater participation and ministry effectiveness. Collaboration is recommended for two to three parishes. Parishes with the same civic identity should consider the advantages of working together on certain ministries.

### **Impact of the Recommendations for Grand Rapids North Deanery Parishes**

- a. The number of priests allocated to the deanery can be reduced by four.
- b. Smaller parish memberships have been combined so that all parishes in the deanery are of comparable size.
- c. The number of buildings has been reduced.
- d. Collaborating parishes will be able to steward their resources better by focusing on shared ministries.

## II. GRAND RAPIDS SOUTH DEANERY

### Summary of Proposed Recommendations for Grand Rapids South Deanery Parishes

1. Upon the retirement of the current pastor, Our Lady of Sorrows will merge with the Shrine of St. Francis Xavier/Our Lady of Guadalupe and the use or disposition of the parish facilities will be determined. The ongoing use of St. Dominic Church as a worship site and the facilities for ministry purposes should be evaluated.
  - a. The parish should study the ministry needs and use of current and future facilities in order to determine how they can best serve the community in the future and develop a facilities plan. The cost of operating all the existing facilities will likely be a financial burden for the parish.
  - b. The parish should determine a future Mass schedule that will accommodate both English-speaking and Spanish-speaking members. Currently, some of the Sunday Masses are celebrated with a small number of attendees.
  - c. The parish's support of San Juan Diego Academy is commended, and the parish is encouraged to sustain its commitment to the school.
2. The parish of St. Stephen in Grand Rapids will merge with St. Thomas the Apostle in Grand Rapids. The buildings will continue to be used for religious purposes until the facilities are sold.
  - a. The parish should be commended for its commitment to St. Thomas the Apostle School and is encouraged to continue its strong support.
  - b. The parish should develop a strategy to welcome parishioners from St. Stephen Parish to St. Thomas the Apostle Parish. Parishioners will be free to register wherever they wish. Potentially there are over 200 households registered at St. Stephen, with nearly 100 attending the Sunday Mass.
3. The parish of St. Joseph the Worker in Wyoming will identify and purchase a new parish site which will allow for a larger worship space, room for ministry growth, and ample parking. The current site will continue to be used for parish purposes until the facilities are sold.
4. St. John Vianney Parish, Wyoming should conduct a study of the current facilities regarding current uses and future needs. At present, the parish lacks adequate meeting and storage space. A report with recommendations should be compiled and submitted to the councils for action.
  - a. The parish should be commended for its support and commitment to St. John Vianney School.
5. The following parishes will remain stand-alone parishes.
  - a. Cathedral of St. Andrew, Grand Rapids
    - The Cathedral should be commended for the way it has been able to serve several cultural groups and build respect and understanding for one another's cultures. The parish should consider ways that their experience may be shared with other parishes in the Diocese, beginning with those in their own deanery.
    - The Cathedral should study ways to address the long-term need for adequate ministry, meeting and social space. The parish has developed creative short-term solutions by using space at the Catholic Information Center and at Catholic Central High School.
  - b. Holy Family, Caledonia

- Considering the population growth projections and the racial/ethnic trends for the area, Holy Family should study the feasibility of establishing an early childhood center, Catholic School, and Hispanic Ministry. The study should be conducted in conjunction with the Office for Schools and the Office for Hispanic Ministry.
  - Holy Family should be commended for its collaboration on youth ministry and is encouraged to explore other areas of ministry for collaboration
- c. Holy Name, Wyoming
- The parish should continue to study its need for additional ministry space and develop a plan. In the interim, Holy Name may consider developing some ministries in collaboration with other parishes.
  - The parish should be commended for its commitment to San Juan Diego Academy and is encouraged to continue its support.
  - The parish participation in the Crossroads collaboration is commendable and the parish should explore collaboration on additional ministries.
- d. Holy Redeemer, Jenison
- Holy Redeemer should study the potential to build a stronger youth ministry for high school-age students and develop a plan of action. While the number of elementary religious education students has remained stable, the high school enrollment has fluctuated and is low in relation to the elementary numbers.
  - The parish should be commended for its ecumenical efforts and is encouraged to consider collaborating with neighboring parishes on some ministries.
- e. Immaculate Heart of Mary, Grand Rapids
- Immaculate Heart of Mary should be lauded for its commitment to Immaculate Heart of Mary School and is encouraged to continue its support.
  - The parish should study ways to increase participation in youth ministry and develop a strategy. Between elementary religious education, IHM School enrollments, and students attending Catholic High Schools, the number of participants appears to be much lower than expected. Participation in a parish high school youth ministry program is the third highest indicator of participation in the Catholic faith as an adult. The top two are: attendance at a Catholic university or college and attendance at a Catholic high school.
- f. Our Lady of La Vang, Wyoming
- Our Lady of La Vang should reach out to other parishes in the area that have Vietnamese members to invite them to participate in the holiday/holy day events and cultural education at the parish.
  - The parish should study religious education enrollments and develop a plan of action. Both elementary and high school enrollments have decreased as well as the number of Confirmations.
- g. St. Mary Magdalen, Kentwood
- St. Mary Magdalen should explore opportunities to collaborate with Our Lady of La Vang Parish regarding ministry to the Vietnamese community.
  - The parish should study facility needs, for example, a larger hall, meeting and ministry space, and develop a plan.



- h. St. Paul the Apostle, Grand Rapids
  - St. Paul the Apostle should continue to draw from “Divine Renovation” to unify and energize the parish.
  - The parish should study the reasons for low participation in youth ministry given the size of the school and religious education program enrollments and develop a plan of action. Participation in a parish youth ministry program is the third highest indicator of adult participation in the Catholic faith. The other two are: attendance at a Catholic university or college and attendance at a Catholic high school.
  - St. Paul should be commended for its dedication to St. Paul the Apostle School and encouraged to continue its strong support. Enrollment has increased by 60% over the past five years.
- i. St. Pius X, Grandville
  - St. Pius X should be recognized for the longevity of the Crossroads collaboration and encouraged to explore new ministry possibilities for collaboration, such as young adult ministry.
  - The parish should study the need to increase participation in youth ministry and develop a strategy. 50% of all Catholics who do not continue to practice the faith do so between the ages of 0 and 18.
- j. St. Robert of Newminster, Ada
  - St. Robert of Newminster should continue to use the insights from “Amazing Parish” to guide their parish leadership and shape parish ministries.
  - The parish should be commended for its newly established early childhood program and Catholic school and encouraged to continue their support.
  - With newly added facilities, the parish should explore opportunities to initiate or expand ministries and consider the potential to collaborate with neighboring parishes.
- k. St. Sebastian, Byron Center
  - St. Sebastian should be commended for its history of participation in the Crossroads collaboration and encouraged to explore additional areas for collaboration.
  - With the amount of population growth projected in the area, the parish should continue its study of the potential for early childhood programs and the possibility of a Catholic school.
- 6. All the parishes in the South Deanery should consider collaborating with other parishes on existing and or new ministries. Such collaboration can share costs and usually results in greater participation and ministry effectiveness. Collaboration is recommended for two to three parishes. Parishes with the same civic identity should consider the advantages of working together on certain ministries.

### Impact of the Recommendations for Grand Rapids South Deanery Parishes

- a. The deanery priest allocation can be reduced by one priest.
- b. Smaller parish memberships have been combined so that all parishes in the deanery are of comparable size.
- c. The number of parish facilities within the deanery can be reduced and those parishes needing additional ministry space have been addressed.
- d. Collaborating parishes will be able to steward their resources better by focusing on shared ministries.



### III. EAST DEANERY

#### Summary of Proposed Recommendations for East Deanery Parishes

1. The parish of St. John the Baptist in Hubbardston will continue to cluster with St. Mary in Carson City. Upon the retirement of the Pastoral Director, St. Mary and St. John the Baptist will cluster with St. Joseph in Pewamo, and the pastor of St. Joseph in Pewamo will serve as pastor for all three parishes.
  - a. St. John the Baptist and St. Mary have a history of working together and currently have a joint pastoral council. They should review their collaboration to seek even greater integration and improved ministry and should consider merging in the future.
  - b. St. Joseph parish is to be commended for its commitment to St. Joseph School and should continue its efforts to strengthen the school and increase enrollment.
  - c. Parishioners should continue their support for and participation in the life of the parish.
2. The parishes of St. Charles in Greenville and St. Joseph-St. Mary (with worship sites at St. Joseph in Belding and St. Mary in Miriam) will continue as a cluster, with the parishes sharing a pastor.
  - a. St. Charles parish is to be commended for its commitment to St. Charles School and should continue its efforts to strengthen the school and increase enrollment.
  - b. The parishes should continue to grow their efforts to serve those in need in their communities. The “Walking with Moms in Need” ministry at St. Charles shows particular promise.
  - c. The parishes should work to expand adult faith formation offerings, perhaps collaborating with other parishes to offer programs on a regional basis.
  - d. St. Joseph parish should engage in a study process to investigate additional opportunities to serve the community and to determine best uses of its facilities. While the parish membership is small, the facilities are in good condition and could be used for many purposes.
3. The parishes of St. Anthony in Saranac and St. Mary in Lowell will continue as a cluster, with the parishes sharing a pastor.
  - a. The parishes should develop an evangelization plan to focus efforts and develop strategies for both communities.
  - b. St. Mary should continue to use the insights from “Amazing Parish” to guide their parish leadership and shape parish ministries.
4. The parishes of Ss. Peter and Paul in Ionia and St. Edward in Lake Odessa will continue as a cluster, with the parishes sharing a pastor.
  - a. Ss. Peter and Paul Parish is to be commended for its commitment to Ss. Peter and Paul School continuing its efforts to strengthen the school and increase enrollment. The school is currently operating at about 66% of capacity, and should engage in a study to identify the best paths to strengthen the school and parish financially.
  - b. The pastor and finance council of Ss. Peter and Paul should engage in consultation with the diocesan finance department to ensure the parish is utilizing best practices in the areas of budgeting, accounting, and financial planning.
  - c. Ss. Peter and Paul Parish should revise its Mass schedule and reduce the number of Masses offered each weekend by one.

- d. Both parishes should work to expand adult faith formation offerings, perhaps collaborating with other parishes to offer programs on a regional basis.
5. The following parishes will remain stand-alone parishes:
  - a. St. Patrick, Parnell
    - St. Patrick Parish is to be commended for its commitment to St. Patrick School and should continue its support of the school.
    - St. Patrick Parish should continue the implementation of a family faith formation program with efforts to grow participation and parent buy-in.
  - b. St. Patrick, Portland
    - St. Patrick Parish is to be commended for its commitment to St. Patrick School and should continue its support of the school.
    - St. Patrick Church and School should continue its separate strategic planning process to determine goals and priorities for the future.

### **Impact of the Proposed Recommendations for East Deanery Parish**

- a. The deanery priest allocation will be unchanged.

## IV. WEST DEANERY

### Summary of Proposed Recommendations for West Deanery Parishes

1. The parish of St. Michael the Archangel in Muskegon will continue to cluster with the parish of St. Francis De Sales in Norton Shores.
2. The parish of St. Thomas the Apostle in Muskegon will merge with the parish of St. Mary of the Immaculate Conception in Muskegon. The facilities will continue to be used until the site is sold.
  - a. St. Mary, along with the other parishes in the Muskegon area, should continue to monitor population growth to the North and East of the City of Muskegon. There have been conversations about whether a need exists for a parish on the eastern side of Muskegon. Given that parishes in that general area have struggled and been merged, the full support of the other parishes in Muskegon will be necessary to justify the relocation of a parish or the establishment of a new parish in that area in the future.
  - b. St. Mary should be commended for its support of Muskegon Catholic Central and is encouraged to continue its commitment to Catholic education.
  - c. The parish should develop a strategy for welcoming the parishioners from St. Thomas Parish who will be merged into St. Mary and to engage them in the life of the community.
  - d. The parish should prepare parishioners for a transition to a new parish and develop a strategy to ensure that they are able to register at a different parish.
  - e. St. Thomas the Apostle, in conjunction with St. Mary of the Immaculate Conception, should plan liturgical and social celebrations to highlight the history of the parish, comfort those who will feel a sense of loss, and transition people into their new communities.
3. The parishes of St. Catherine in Ravenna, St. Francis Xavier in Conklin, and St. Joseph in Wright will merge and become a new parish. The name of the churches will remain the same and a name will be selected for the new parish.
  - a. The parishes should study their organization and facilities usage so that their resources are being stewarded as effectively as possible and implement a new plan. The parishes have a history of working together and already have one staff and share building usage. The most apparent changes will be moving from multiple finance and pastoral councils to one finance council and one pastoral council.
  - b. The parishes should be commended for their commitment to Divine Providence Academy and are encouraged to continue their support.
4. The parishes of St. Michael in Coopersville and St. Mary in Marne will merge and become a new parish. The names of the churches will remain the same and a name will be selected for the new parish.
  - a. The parishes should study their organization and building usage and implement a plan for how the new parish will function in the future. The parishes have a history of collaboration.
  - b. A strategy should be developed for reaching out to and welcoming new residents to the area and inviting them to become members of the parish.
5. A new parish site will be selected in the area between Zeeland and Hudsonville on land to be purchased.

6. A new parish will be established between Robinson and West Olive on land already owned by the Diocese.
7. The following parishes will remain stand-alone parishes:
  - a. Our Lady of the Lake, Holland
    - Our Lady of the Lake should study the decreases in enrollments for elementary and high school religious education and develop a plan of action to reverse the trends. 50% of the Catholics who stop practicing the faith do so between the ages of 0 and 18.
    - The parish should be commended for its commitment to Corpus Christi School and are encouraged to continue their support.
    - Because of the large number of healthcare facilities for the elderly in the area, the parish should study ways to expand its pastoral care to these facilities as well as its ministry to seniors and develop action plans.
    - With the successful collaboration on Corpus Christi School, the parish should explore additional ministry opportunities with St. Francis De Sales Parish in Holland which can collaboratively serve the entire Holland area.
  - b. Prince of Peace, North Muskegon
    - Prince of Peace should be commended for its support of Muskegon Catholic Central as well as its use of Catechesis of the Good Shepherd on all three levels and encouraged to continue those commitments.
    - The parish should regularly study the ongoing use of St. Mary of the Woods church relative to the Mass attendance and operational expenses and present a report to the councils.
  - c. St. Francis De Sales, Holland
    - St. Francis de Sales should explore additional ways to collaborate with Our Lady of the Lake Parish in Holland, particularly on ministries that impact the entire Holland area. Because of the cultural and economic differences between the parishes, which can be a barrier to collaboration, the parishes may need assistance to bridge any gaps that may exist between the parishes.
    - The parish should be commended for its support of Corpus Christi School and encouraged to continue the commitment.
  - d. St. Francis De Sales, Norton Shores
    - St. Francis de Sales should study, in conjunction with the appropriate diocesan office, a potential updating of the sanctuary of the church and submit a report to the councils. The large number of steep steps leading to the altar and the inaccessibility to the handicapped should be considered. Any updating will need to account for the aesthetics of the architecture and the time-period of the design.
    - The parish should be commended for its commitment to Muskegon Catholic School and encouraged to continue its support.
    - The parish should consider collaboration with St. Mary of the Immaculate Conception in Muskegon and Prince of Peace in North Muskegon on those ministries which may impact the Muskegon area, in a similar way to their collaboration on Muskegon Catholic School.
  - e. St. Luke University, Allendale
    - St. Luke University should study the current facilities and future needs, considering its finances and debt, and develop a master facilities and debt reduction plan. The parish has admirably used

its space for multiple purposes but needs more space to grow both as a parish and campus ministry site. To address the immediate needs, the parish may consider less expensive structures which can provide more new space but at a lower price. Any such structure can also fit into a master plan for facilities and debt reduction.

- The parish should be commended for its collaboration on youth ministry with St. Patrick-St. Andrew in Grand Haven and St. Mary in Spring Lake and consider other ways the parishes may collaborate in the future.
- f. St. Mary, Spring Lake
- St. Mary should be commended for its commitment to St. Mary School and encouraged to continue its support.
  - The parish should continue its collaboration efforts with St. Patrick – St. Andrew in Grand Haven and explore new ministry areas. Both parishes need to strengthen their youth ministries and there may be other areas where collaborative efforts could benefit the parishes.
- g. St. Mary of the Immaculate Conception, Muskegon
- h. St. Patrick-St. Anthony, Grand Haven
- St. Patrick – St. Anthony should evaluate the status of St. Anthony Chapel and compile a report for the councils and the Diocese. The report should include financial information on the cost of maintaining and operating the chapel, potential alternative locations for the food pantry storage, options for the future use(s) of the chapel, and changing the name of the parish to St. Patrick.
  - The parish is commended for its support of St. Mary School and encouraged to continue its commitment.
  - The parish should continue to use “Divine Renovation” as a guide for parish renewal and vision for the future.
  - The parish should continue its successful collaboration efforts with St. Mary Parish in Spring Lake and consider other ministries for possible collaboration. The collaborative effort also includes St. Luke University Parish, which participates in youth ministry efforts.
8. All the parishes in the West Deanery should consider collaborating with other parishes on existing and/or new ministries. Such collaboration can share costs and usually results in greater participation and ministry effectiveness. Collaboration is recommended for two to three parishes. Parishes with the same civic identity should consider the advantages of working together on certain ministries.

## Impact of the Recommendations for West Deanery Parishes

- a. In the immediate future, the deanery priest allocation can be reduced by one priest.
- b. With the eventual establishment of two new parishes and depending on their growth, at least one additional priest will be needed in the deanery, if the parishes are clustered. In the long term, two additional priests will be needed.
- c. Smaller parish memberships have been combined so that all parishes in the deanery are of comparable size.
- d. The number of parish facilities in the deanery can be reduced.
- e. Collaborating parishes will be able to steward their resources by focusing on shared ministries.

## V. NORTHEAST DEANERY

### Summary of Proposed Recommendations for Northeast Deanery Parishes

1. The parish of St. Bernadette-St. Margaret Mary Alacoque in Stanton will cluster with the parish of Christ the King-St. Francis de Sales (with worship sites at Christ the King in Howard City and St. Francis de Sales in Lakeview), and the parishes will be served by one pastor.
  - a. The parishes should study future staffing and ministry needs of the communities and should review ways to strengthen their collaboration, with consideration of a possible merger in the future.
  - b. The parishes should develop an evangelization plan to focus efforts and develop strategies for all three communities.
  - c. Continue efforts to collaborate with the rest of the deanery (for example, continue to invite the rest of the deanery to the women's retreat offered at this parish).
2. The parishes of St. Philip Neri in Reed City, Sacred Heart in Evart, and St. Agnes in Marion will continue as a cluster, with the parishes sharing a pastor.
  - a. St. Philip Neri parish should establish a pastoral council and a finance council. Both councils should engage in training about effective councils and their role in supporting a healthy parish.
  - b. The pastor and finance council of St. Philip Neri should engage in regular consultation with the diocesan finance department to ensure the parish is utilizing best practices in the areas of budgeting, accounting, and financial planning.
  - c. The three parishes should work to expand faith formation offerings for adults, young adults, and youth, perhaps collaborating with other parishes in the deanery to offer programs on a regional basis.
3. St. Michael in Remus will remain a stand-alone parish.
  - a. St. Michael parish is to be commended for its commitment to St. Michael School and should continue its efforts to strengthen the school and increase enrollment.
  - b. St. Michael parish should work to expand faith formation offerings for adults, young adults, and youth, perhaps collaborating with other parishes in the deanery to offer programs on a regional basis.
4. St. Mary-St. Paul in Big Rapids will remain a stand-alone parish with two worship sites.
  - a. St. Mary-St. Paul Parish is to be commended for its commitment to St. Mary School and should continue its efforts to strengthen the school and increase enrollment. Evaluate facility needs (both in terms of function and appearance) and establish a prioritized list of projects to be completed as funds are available.
  - b. St. Mary-St. Paul is to be commended for its vibrant ministry to college students and young adults. The parish should consider possible ways that this thriving ministry can be leveraged to support ministry to youth and young adults in other parishes in the deanery.

### Impact of the Recommendations for Northeast Deanery Parishes

- a. In the immediate future, the deanery priest allocation will be unchanged.

## VI. NORTHWEST DEANERY

### Summary of Proposed Recommendations for Northwest Deanery Parishes

1. The parishes of St. Joseph in White Cloud and St. Bartholomew in Newaygo will continue as a cluster, with the parishes sharing a pastor.
  - a. St. Bartholomew and St. Joseph, together with the other parishes of Newaygo County, should be commended for their collaborative approach to youth ministry.
  - b. St. Bartholomew and St. Joseph have a history of working together. They should review their collaboration to see if there are areas for even greater integration or improved ministry, with consideration of a possible merger in the future.
  - c. St. Bartholomew and St. Joseph, together with the other Newaygo county parishes, should continue to support Bishop Baraga Academy.
  - d. St. Bartholomew parish should establish a Hispanic Ministry leadership team and work to improve the integration of Spanish speakers and English speakers within one parish community.
2. The parishes of St. Michael in Brunswick (with a worship site at Christ the King in Hesperia) and All Saints in Fremont will continue as a cluster, with the parishes sharing a pastor.
  - a. St. Michael/Christ the King and All Saints have a history of working together. They should review their collaboration to see if there are areas for even greater integration or improved ministry, with consideration of a possible merger in the future.
  - b. St. Michael/Christ the King and All Saints, together with the other parishes of Newaygo County, should be commended for their collaborative approach to youth ministry.
  - c. All Saints parish, together with the other Newaygo county parishes, should continue efforts to strengthen and grow Bishop Baraga Academy.
3. The parish of Our Lady of the Assumption in Rothbury, along with St. John the Baptist in Claybanks, will merge with the parish of St. James in Montague. The churches at Our Lady of the Assumption and St. John the Baptist will continue to be used as worship sites and a plan will be developed for the ongoing use or disposition of other facilities.
  - a. The councils from the three parishes should establish a regular dialogue about the merger and how to prepare parishioners for a transition to a new parish structure.
  - b. The three parishes should review their collaboration to see if there are areas for more efficient integration or improved ministry. The most apparent change will be establishing a single pastoral council and a single finance council.
  - c. The work of the planning committee at St. James should be expanded and incorporate the facilities, ministries, and communities of Our Lady of the Assumption and St. John the Baptist.
4. When there is a change in priestly assignments, the parishes of St. Gregory in Hart and St. Joseph-St. Vincent (with worship sites at St. Joseph in Weare and St. Vincent in Pentwater) will form a cluster, with the parishes sharing a pastor.
  - a. The parish of St. Gregory in Hart will close the worship site at Our Lady of Fatima in Shelby, and the facilities will be sold.



- b. St. Gregory parish, in conjunction with the community of Our Lady of Fatima in Shelby, should plan liturgical and social celebrations to highlight the history of the church of Our Lady of Fatima, comfort those who will feel a sense of loss, and transition people into their new communities.
  - c. Leadership at St. Gregory and St. Joseph-St. Vincent should meet to discuss ways that collaboration can strengthen all three communities and improve ministries.
  - d. St. Joseph-St. Vincent parish should work to expand adult faith formation offerings, perhaps collaborating with other parishes to offer programs on a regional basis.
  - e. St. Joseph-St. Vincent parish should investigate reasons why Mass attendance at St. Joseph has dropped below Mass attendance at St. Vincent, and whether there are steps that can be taken to strengthen Mass attendance.
5. The parishes of St. Bernard in Irons, St. Ann-St. Ignatius (with worship sites at St. Ann in Baldwin and St. Ignatius in Luther), and St. John Cantius in Free Soil will form a cluster, sharing a pastor.
- a. The parishes should work to expand adult faith formation offerings, collaborating to offer programs on a regional basis.
  - b. The parishes should continue to grow their efforts to serve those in need in their communities.
  - c. St. Ignatius is small but has been stable. The vitality of St. Ignatius should continue to be monitored and assessed, and creative options for sustaining St. Ignatius should be considered.
6. The parish of St. Mary-St. Jerome in Custer will merge with St. Simon in Ludington. St. Mary in Custer will continue to be used as a worship site.
- a. St. Simon parish should be commended for its youth ministry work and the youth rallies it sponsors to which the entire deanery is invited.
  - b. St. Simon parish is to be commended for its commitment to Ludington Area Catholic School (LAC) and should continue its efforts to strengthen the school and increase enrollment.
  - c. Leadership from the two parishes should establish a regular dialogue about the merger and how to prepare parishioners for a transition to a new parish structure.
  - d. St. Simon parish should re-establish a pastoral council, which should engage in training about effective councils and their role in supporting a healthy parish. After the merger, the pastoral council should intentionally integrate council members from both communities.

## **Impact of the Recommendations for Northwest Deanery Parishes**

- a. Upon full implementation, the deanery priest allocation will be reduced by two.