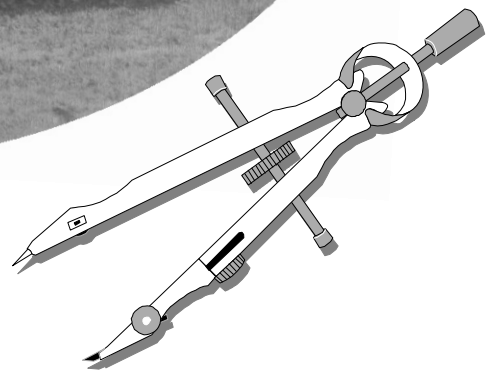
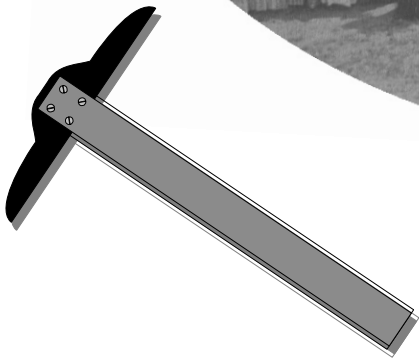


Parish Evaluation & Planning Workbook



Diocese of Fargo

2008

Parish Evaluation & Planning Workbook

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1. Parish Planning Prayer

(To be prayed before each parish meeting.)

Heavenly Father, you are always present to the people you have called to be your own. From the call of Abraham and Moses, through the life of Christ and the teaching of the apostles, even to the present time, you are with us.

We acknowledge that every good gift comes from you. You give us life and salvation, and you bestow your sacraments upon us through your Church. We thank you for the faith we have received and for the life you have brought to our state and our towns. In particular, we thank you for the gift of the way of life we enjoy in the Diocese of Fargo.

As we embark on the task of parish evaluation and planning, we seek your assistance. Help us to acknowledge and give thanks for the blessings of each community. Help us to plan our future with confidence, knowing that to do so helps to continue growth in the Kingdom of God. Help us to grieve the loss of past gifts as we face our changing way of life. Grant that as we work to plan for the future, your Holy Spirit may preserve the unity of the spirit through the bond of peace.

We ask this for ourselves at (*name of local gathering/parish*) and for all of our brothers and sisters in the Diocese of Fargo. We seek your assistance, as always, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

“Prayer is bound up with human history, for it is the relationship with God in historical events.”
Catechism of the Catholic Church, 2568.

2. The Goal

The goal of the parish evaluation and planning process is to evaluate, plan and arrange the parishes in the Diocese of Fargo for the good of all the faithful, laity and clergy.

3. Workbook Scope and Purpose

This workbook is intended as a tool for assisting each parish and deanery in its evaluation and planning process. It contains helpful background information for understanding the current state of the Diocese and some of the changes which have taken place over time. It also contains definitions for terms used in the process, the timeline for completion of the evaluation, and resources for parishes and pastors to use.

It is important to acknowledge that no tool or common reporting form can adequately describe every parish situation. There are simply too many individual lives, histories and circumstances for this to be possible. At the same time, it is important for parishes and deaneries to have a common framework for reporting and recommending changes.

Objective data is a necessary part of the process. That is why an examination of the specific numbers of baptisms, weddings and funerals over time is more helpful than a general sense that “we are growing” or “we are decreasing.” Pastors may calculate seating capacity in various ways, so measuring pew space in feet provides a common understanding, etc. Researching and calculating the objective data will not only assist in common planning criteria, but should also assist each parish in adequately understanding itself. While some of this data has been provided in the past on various diocesan forms (e.g. *status animarum*), a research and summary project such as this will provide each pastor and parish with a factually grounded appreciation of the parish situation.

Of course, many factors may affect this objective data, and it is important to take note of them as well. Perhaps a major employer moved in or out of the parish or a religious community has moved in, markedly affecting the numbers. Making note of this can assist with understanding the current state of a parish community.

As we all know, there is much more to a parish than objective numbers. Such intangibles as the experience of worship, the wealth or lack of religious educators and the particular experiences of the faithful in each parish are invaluable parts of parish evaluation and planning. For this reason, a series of questions has been proposed to assist in our discussions.

It is hoped that this tool will assist in providing both a common reporting framework and a springboard for individualized examination of parish life.

4. Parish Evaluation & Planning Process

Each pastor with his parish council chooses how to best organize this evaluation and planning process for the parish. The following considerations are vital components of any plan chosen:

1. Explain the process to all parishioners
 - a. Activities should include:
 - i. pulpit announcements
 - ii. letters from the pastor (see pg. 27-30)
 - iii. bulletin announcements
 - b. Activities may include:
 - i. large or small group informational meetings
 - ii. slide presentations
2. Collect information from parishioners and gather statistical data.
 - a. Activities may include:
 - i. questionnaires to all adult parishioners (see pg. 13-15)
 - ii. parish large and/or small group meetings
 - iii. home visits for those not able to complete written questionnaires or attend meetings
3. Review information collected (see pg. 16-25)
4. Prepare required reports (11a and 11b, pg 35-39)
5. Determine recommendations for the parish
6. Share recommendations with the parish
7. Share recommendations on the deanery level
8. Present recommendations to the Dean
9. Share Deanery recommendations with parishioners
10. Plan implementation of any changes

5. How Does My Parish Get Started?

1. Pick a scenario/plan of action for your parish
2. Determine the timeline of each step. (Keep deanery meetings in mind.)
3. Determine what resources you will need for each step
 - a. forms, people, meeting spaces
4. Determine who is responsible for each step
 - a. planning, implementation, summarizing information, reporting to parish

6. Time Line

Parish Evaluation and Planning Stage

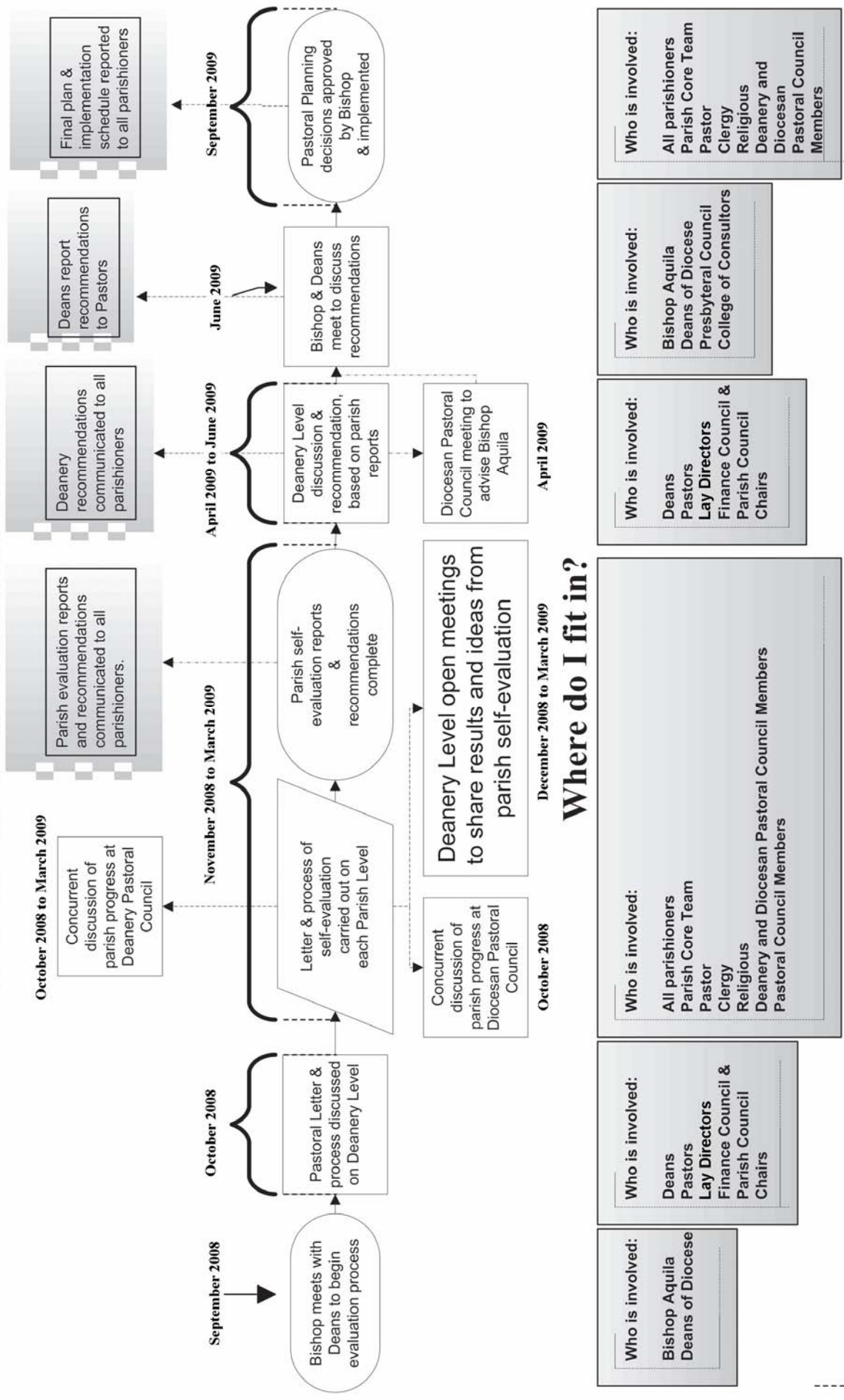
ID	Task Name	Q3 08		Q4 08			Q1 09			Q2 09			Q3 09			
		Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	
1	Bishop & Deans Meet	◆														
2	Deanery Level Meetings	██████████														
3	Parish Level Self-Evaluation	██														
4	Deanery Pastoral/ Diocesan Pastoral Council Meetings	██														
5	Deanery Level Open Meetings	██														
6	Deanery Level Pastors	██														
7	Bishop & Deans Meet	◆														
8	Implementation Plans Drawn	██														

Each of the tasks diagramed above is more fully explained in the text of *Communities of the Christian Faithful: A Pastoral Letter on Parish Life in the Diocese of Fargo*. Please refer to paragraph 28 of that document for complete details.

Plan Implementation Stage

Once the evaluation and planning stage is complete, the Bishop, after consultation with his advisory bodies, will make the decision regarding the final plan. The plan will be implemented over a five-year period.

7. Parish Life Evaluation Process Flowchart

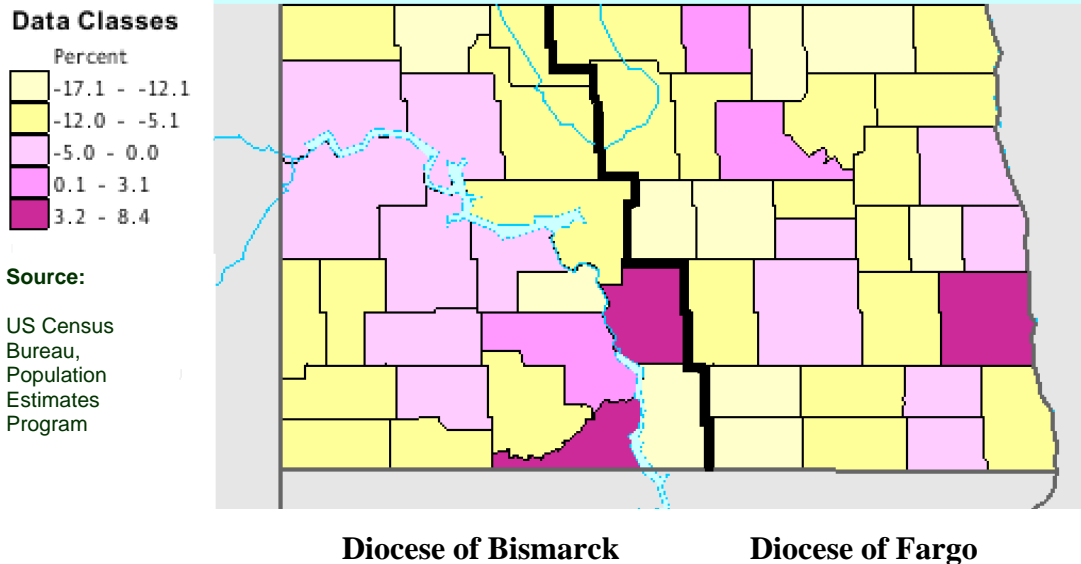


Where do I fit in?

Individual parishioners provide input both on the local parish level and through participation in Open Deaneary Level meetings. This input begins with participation in the parish self-evaluation and continues through presentations of deaneary level plans at the open meetings and feedback to the pastor and core team members when parish and deaneary recommendations are presented to the parish.

8. Background Information

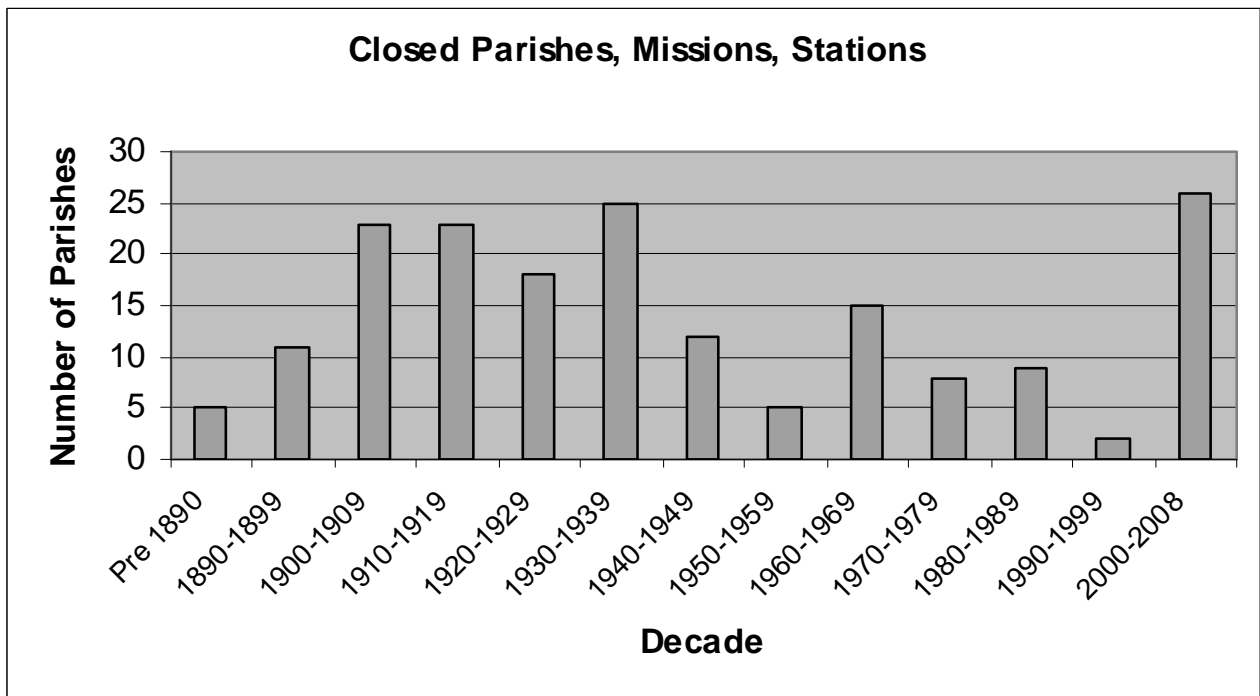
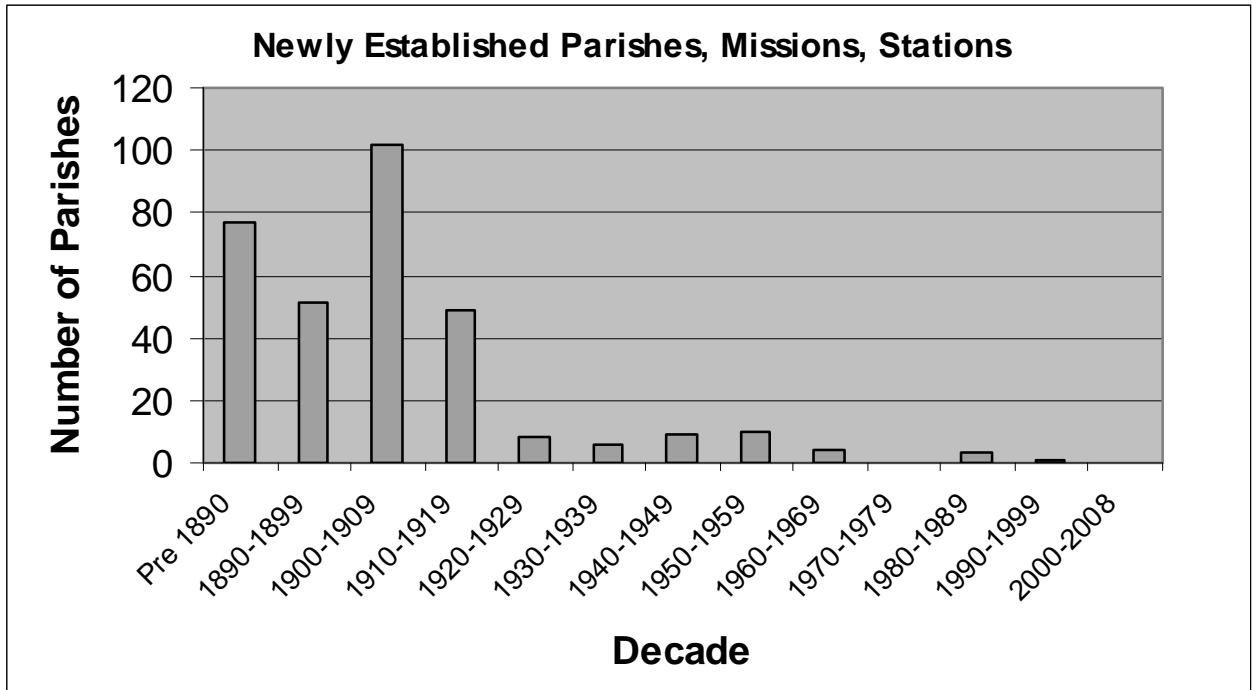
Estimated Population Change in North Dakota, April 1, 2000 – July 1, 2006



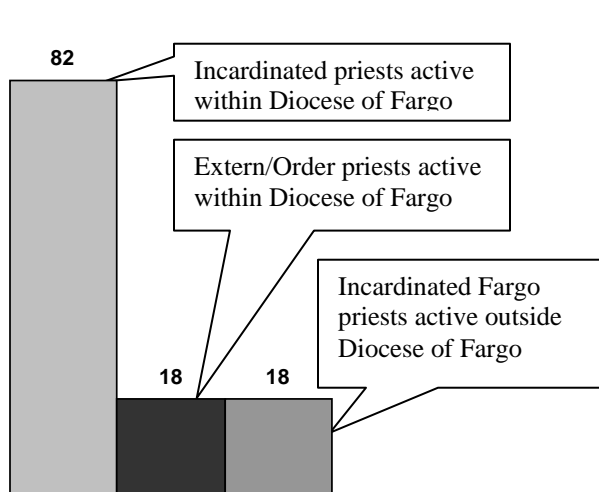
Parish History and Summary

- There are currently 133 parishes in the Diocese of Fargo.
- Various names have been used for our faith communities. These include parish, mission, and station. According to Canon Law, all of our communities are technically parishes, even though they may be served from another parish and are commonly referred to as missions. In the early years of the diocese, the term “mission” and “station” were often used to describe a Catholic Church or Catholic worship community with no priest in residence.
- Change is not a new experience for the Diocese. From 1871, when we were founded, until now, 198 parishes, missions, or stations have been closed. Of the 186 closed entities with recorded closing dates, 56 (30%) had been open for more than 50 years.

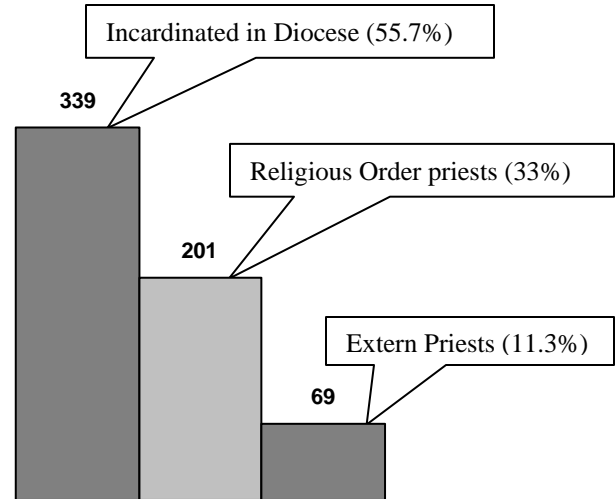
Parish Statistics



Priest Statistics



2007 Priests affiliated with or serving in the Diocese of Fargo

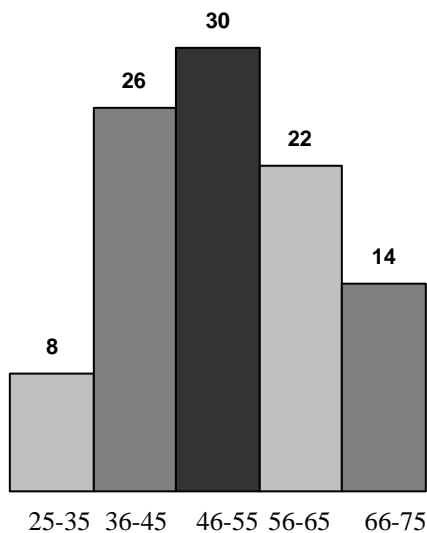


Priests serving in Fargo from 1960 to 2008 (609 total)

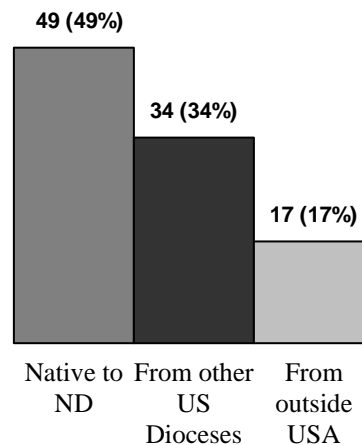
A priest may be classified as either incardinated into the Diocese or as an extern priest. An incardinated priest has a canonical relationship to the Diocese of Fargo and is primarily under the authority of the Bishop of Fargo. An extern priest may be incardinated into another diocese or a member of a religious order who is assisting within the Fargo Diocese.

There are 100 priests, incardinated or extern, actively ministering within the Diocese of Fargo at this time. These 100 priests serve 85,570 Catholics (856 Catholics per priest).

Age breakdown for Active Priests



Total Active Priests working in the Diocese of Fargo (100)



9. Terminology

Clustering – The grouping of two or more individual parishes in a stable, mutual arrangement under the direction of one or more priests. Any of our current groupings of “parish” and its “missions” would be considered a cluster. A cluster is the collaboration and sharing among several parishes of pastoral leadership, staff, resources and/or programs.

Consolidation – A plan whereby members of an individual parish or parishes join different parishes, and the former parish or parishes are closed.

Core Team – The group of individuals in each parish who facilitates, moderates, and directs each parish’s self-evaluation. While the exact membership is the decision of the pastor, the core team *will include all clergy and Lay Directors in the parish* at minimum. Other suitable members include: Parish/Pastoral Council members, Finance Council members, Deanery Pastoral Council members, Parish staff members, and other parishioners as deemed appropriate by Pastor.

Dean – A priest appointed by the Diocesan Bishop who oversees one of the eight regions, or deaneries, of the Diocese. Among other duties defined by Canon Law, the Dean is to promote and coordinate common pastoral action (Code of Canon Law, 555, §1,1^o).

Mission – A mission is not defined by Church law, though the law speaks of a “quasi-parish” as one which has not been erected as a parish (Code of Canon Law, 516). Most of what we call “missions” are, in fact, true parishes according to Church law.

Parish – A parish is “a definite community of the Christian faithful established on a stable basis within a particular Church” (Code of Canon Law, 515). Almost all of the communities in the Diocese of Fargo, whether they are referred to as “parish” or “mission” are actually canonical parishes. Each parish has definite boundaries. They are separately incorporated, and have their own individual existence. Unless a community is known to have *not* been erected as a parish, it should be referred to as a parish during the evaluation and planning process.

Parish member – According to Canon Law, this includes “all the Christian faithful within a certain territory.” Parish membership can never be limited to just those registered or contributing to the parish (Code of Canon Law, 518).

Station – Also not defined by Church law, a station was probably less significant than even a mission. A venerable priest of the Diocese indicated that stations were places where circuit riding priests stopped to celebrate the sacraments.

Lay Directors – The two lay officers of each parish corporation in the Diocese. Along with the Bishop, Pastor, and Vicar General, they make up the corporate board of each corporation. Lay Directors are ex officio based on the parish finance council membership.

Viable – The simple ability to be self-sustaining on a given level. For example, a parish may be economically viable because of generous parishioners or a foundation, but not viable in terms of religious education, median age, population, etc.

Vitalized – An institution that is truly life-giving to its members and the larger world in which it lives. A parish may be economically and physically viable, but may need work to become both viable and vitalized.

10. Supporting Materials

While preparing for the uniform parish evaluation reports, each parish is free to choose the tools for evaluation that it feels best suit their parish. The following are provided as samples for you to use or adapt to your particular parish. They may be taken as is or modified, depending on the circumstances. Some questions may not apply to every parish. The categories and questions are not all-encompassing, they do not fit every parish, and they do not outline an ideal arrangement for any parish.

The sample forms include:

- Parish Evaluation and Planning Questionnaire
 - May be filled out by Lay Directors, parish council members, finance council members, staff, parish members, etc.
- Family Participation Worksheet
 - May be sent to every registered member in your parish.
- Criteria for Parish Vitality
 - May be filled out by staff, Lay Directors, parish council members, parish members, etc.
- Sample Letters to Parishioners
- Considerations for Parish Meetings
- Remembrance
- Welcoming New Members

Parish Evaluation and Planning Questionnaire

(Attach additional sheets as needed for your comments)

Please Return to Parish By _____

Name (optional) _____ Age (optional) _____

How long you have been a member of this parish? _____

Do you currently live in the parish? _____

Number of adults in household? _____

Number of children in household? _____

Sacramental Life

What parish liturgy(ies) have been most prayerful for you?

Describe your experience (strengths and/or weaknesses) of parish sacramental preparation programs (*e.g. pre-baptism classes, reception of Reconciliation, Confirmation and Eucharist, and Marriage preparation*).

How well do your Sunday liturgies engage the “full, active and conscious” participation of all parishioners?

Do you see your life and work as a spiritual offering to God through your participation in liturgy?

Beyond the reception of the sacraments, describe your participation in the liturgical life of the parish (*e.g. – serving as a liturgy committee member, extraordinary minister of Holy Communion, lector, musician, usher or choir member, taking Communion to the sick/homebound, teaching sacramental preparation, serving as a marriage or baptism sponsoring couple*).

For what prayers or devotional services is your parish particularly noted?

Faith Formation

What has been the best faith education experience in your life?

Describe your experience (strengths and/or weaknesses) of parish Religious Education programs or Catholic schools.

What has been your greatest source of growing in the faith and coming to know your religion?

How have parents assumed their roles as the first teachers of the faith? Does your parish enable parents to assume their proper roles and responsibilities?

Does your parish have an adequate number of catechists?

Community (City, town, rural neighborhood)

Describe the community your parish serves. How vital and viable is the community as a whole?

How does your parish contribute to the life of the community?

In light of the teaching on the common good, is there a better way to use the resources at the disposal of your parish to serve the needs of the community? Of a larger area?

How does your parish carry out its mission to spread the Catholic Faith by Evangelization?

What will your parish look like in five years? Ten years?

Service

What kinds of service activities are regularly incorporated into the life of your parish?

In which church-sponsored service activities have you participated? In what other kinds of service work are you involved?

Discuss how your attitude as a parish may be one of stewardship and service or one of scarcity and survival.

Family Participation Worksheet

Following is an anonymous worksheet that I would like you and your family to complete as part of the evaluation process that Bishop Aquila has asked every parish in the Diocese of Fargo to carry out. Thank you for being part of this process and for taking the time to complete this survey. I invite you to join in the parish meetings at which this data will be reviewed.

Participation at Sunday Eucharist: Every Sunday and Holy Day Occasionally Never

How often do you participate in Sunday Mass at your home parish? How often at neighboring parishes?

	Always 100%	Most 65-90%	Half 50%	Seldom 10-35%	Never 0%
Local home church	•	•	•	•	•
A church within 25 miles	•	•	•	•	•
Other nearby churches (25-30 miles)	•	•	•	•	•
Other churches	•	•	•	•	•

If you have school aged children (K-12) . . .

	Elementary (grades K-5)	Middle School (grades 6-8)	High School (grades 9-12)
Number of children			
Do your children attend Catholic schools?	• Yes • No	• Yes • No	• Yes • No
Do your children attend religious education classes?	• Yes • No	• Yes • No	• Yes • No
Do children attend other youth programs (youth group, summer camp, etc.)?	• Yes • No • N/A	• Yes • No • N/A	• Yes • No • N/A
Do children attend diocesan youth rallies or programs?	N/A = <i>not available</i>	• Yes • No	• Yes • No

Do you participate in parish activities? In activities at neighboring parishes or in programs hosted by the Diocese of Fargo (E.P.S., Northland Conference, Marian-Eucharistic Congress, etc.)?

	Local Home Parish	Other Parishes Within Cluster	Neighboring Parishes	Diocesan Programs
Adult Education (catechesis, bible study, marriage enrichment, etc.)	• Yes • No • N/A	• Yes • No • N/A	• Yes • No • N/A	• Yes • No • N/A
Fall Dinner or Supper	• Yes • No • N/A	• Yes • No • N/A	• Yes • No • N/A	N/A = <i>not available</i>
Reconciliation Service(Advent, Lent, etc.)	• Yes • No • N/A	• Yes • No • N/A	• Yes • No • N/A	N/A = <i>not available</i>

Parish Vitality Review

Criteria for Parish Vitality:

Spiritual Growth and Liturgy

The parish is a worshipping community which expresses and develops its relationship with God through liturgical celebrations.

Education

The parish provides a continuing and comprehensive program of catechesis directed toward the formation of both the hearts and minds of its members in the following areas: adult, family, young adults, adolescents and children, persons with disabilities, early childhood catechesis and Catholic Schools.

Charity/Social Justice

The parish responds to the social concerns of the local community and the needs of the broader world.

Parish Community Life

The parish has a strong sense of itself as a community of faith called by God, united in Christ, and led by the Holy Spirit.

Finance and Administration

The parish sustains its mission and ongoing development through a commitment to good stewardship.

Leadership

The parish identifies and empowers leaders who organize, challenge and promote the vitality of the faith community.

Evangelization

The parish evangelizes all of her members (active, somewhat active, and inactive) to know Christ and to grow in faith and holiness. The parish gives faithful witness to Christ and His Church to members of other churches and to all people in her territory.

Parish Vitality Questionnaire:

Liturgy

Is the Liturgy, particularly the Eucharist, the central focus of the faith community, and is it celebrated according to the rituals of the Church?

Y N N/A There are enough ministers for each of our Masses (lectors, Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion, servers, musicians, ushers, greeters, etc) to avoid excessive duplication of roles.

Y N N/A Our liturgical music reflects the seasons.

Y N N/A We have weekday Mass.

When there is no weekday Mass we have:

___ Communion service with the Liturgy of the Word

___ Liturgy of the Hours ___ Other (describe)

___ Nothing scheduled

Y N N/A The Mass schedule is re-evaluated based on attendance numbers and availability of priests.

Y N N/A Instruction is provided in preparation for the Sacrament of Baptism.

Y N N/A Instruction is provided for children, their parents and/or other adults in preparation for the Sacrament of Confirmation.

Y N N/A Instruction is provided for children, their parents and/or other adults in preparation for the Sacrament of Eucharist.

Y N N/A The Sacrament of Reconciliation is encouraged.

Y N N/A Appropriate times are made available for the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

Y N N/A We have _____ (#) communal penance services during the year.

Y N N/A We offer Marriage preparation programs for engaged couples.
Programs include:

Y N N/A ___ A sponsor program with married couples in our parish

___ Pre-Cana opportunities

___ Engaged Encounters

Y N N/A The Anointing of the Sick is regularly celebrated communally and, when requested, is available individually.

- Y N N/A Cultural and ethnic traditions within our community are respected and when possible, incorporated within their celebrations: If so, how?
- Y N N/A The spiritual needs of the sick, homebound and persons with disabilities are addressed.
- Y N N/A We provide Holy Eucharist distribution for those in our community health care facilities.
- Y N N/A Hospitality permeates all aspects of our parish life.
- Y N N/A Opportunities for Scripture study/prayers are offered regularly.
- Y N N/A Programs for spiritual formation (missions, retreats, etc.) are provided for the community on a parish and/or inter-parish basis.
- Y N N/A Various forms of devotional prayer are offered throughout the year (parish rosary, Benediction, novenas, stations of the cross, etc.)
- Y N N/A A Director of Liturgy and Music is part of our parish staff and has appropriate education, ability and experience.
- This person serves the parish:
- Full time Part of another paid parish position
- Part time Paid salary/stipend
- Volunteer
- Y N N/A We have an art/environment committee.
- Y N N/A Provisions are made to welcome persons with special needs.
- Wheelchair accessibility
- Greeters for those with special needs
- Listening devices Other (please describe):
- Large print missalettes
- Y N N/A Our parish has a Liturgy Committee that meets regularly to do seasonal planning, prepare the liturgy and assess liturgical needs.
- Y N N/A The Liturgy committee receives ongoing formation and provides formation for the liturgical ministers and the assembly.
- Y N N/A An environment appropriate to the liturgical season is provided in the worship space.
- Y N N/A We need to renovate our worship space.

Education

Does the parish provide a continuing and comprehensive program of catechesis directed toward the formation of both the hearts and minds of its members in the following areas: adult, family, young adults, adolescents, children, persons with disabilities, early childhood catechesis and Catholic Schools?

Y N N/A We have a religious education program for our children.

Number of children participating this year? _____

Number of teachers this year? _____

Y N N/A Adequate funds, resources, staff and space are provided to implement the religious education program.

Y N N/A Our religious education program integrates educational programs for: adults, families, young adults, adolescents, school-aged children, pre-school children, persons with disabilities and Catholic schools.

Y N N/A We have a team (or staff) for the initiation of adults (RCIA).

Number who make their profession of faith each year? _____

Y N N/A Parent participation is an important component of our religious education program.

Y N N/A The parish encourages and prays for vocations to the priesthood, diaconate and religious life.

Y N N/A Our parish has a Catholic school or is a joint sponsor of a Catholic school.

Grades offered: _____(K-12)

Number of parish children currently attending that school? _____

Are the salaries paid to teachers just? _____

Y N N/A We have a coordinator/director to oversee Religious education and formation.

___ Full time

___ Paid salary/stipend

___ Part time

___ Volunteer

___ Part of another paid position ___ Shared with another parish

Charity/Social Justice

Does the parish respond to the social concerns of the local community and the needs of the broader world?

Y N N/A We have outreach programs for unemployed and the underemployed.

Y N N/A Homilies challenge people in the teaching and living of justice and peace.

Y N N/A The parish serves as a resource center providing ways to respond to members who experience emotional and physical abuse, depression, marital separation and divorce, substance abuse, grief and loss and other personal problems.

Y N N/A The parish sponsors or participates in action groups such as legislative phone trees to make faith part of our citizenship.

Y N N/A The parish renders support and/or assistance to local charities (food pantries, homeless shelters, crisis centers...). If so, how?

Y N N/A The parish supports charitable projects outside the community (Operation Rice Bowl, Right To Life, Campaign for Human Development...). If so, how?

Y N N/A We have an active Social Concerns committee.

Y N N/A Our catechetical programs integrate social concerns and teaching.

Y N N/A The parish provides adult enrichment/educational programs to raise awareness of such issues as: homelessness, discrimination regarding race or disabilities, immigration, right to life and rural issues.

Parish Community Life

Does the parish have a strong sense of itself as a community of faith called by God, united in Christ, and led by the Holy Spirit?

Y N N/A Our parish encourages new members to join our parish.

Y N N/A New members are welcomed and provided with information about parish activities.

Y N N/A Parish members are kept well informed of parish activities and news.

Communication tools include:

Parish bulletin calling tree
 newsletters parish website
 parish meeting minutes other

Y N N/A Participants in parish activities or liturgies are welcomed by greeters or hospitality ministers.

Y N N/A Our parish seeks out and utilizes the talents of parishioners.

Y N N/A We have a Youth Director with the education and ability to work with youth.

Full time Paid salary/stipend
 Part time Volunteer
 Part of another paid position

Y N N/A Youth and young adults are actively sought out and included in all aspects of parish life. Examples?

Y N N/A The newly confirmed are welcomed into the parish. Examples?

Y N N/A Special youth Masses are offered in our parish.

Y N N/A The parish offers programs that support strong and happy marriages, family life and good Christian parenting.

Y N N/A We offer programs for single persons.
 those never married those divorced or widowed
 single parents

Y N N/A We have ongoing programs which minister to the sick, dying, and bereaved.

Y N N/A We have ongoing programs which minister to the homebound.

- Y N N/A We have a parish nurse, or we share one with another parish.
- Y N N/A The parish conducts and participates in local ecumenical services.

Evangelization

As you reflect on your experience of parish life, what comes to mind as you address the following questions?

- Y N N/A Our parish reaches out to members who are Catholic, yet do not come to Church.
- Y N N/A Our parish is aware of and welcoming to members of the community who do not belong to any church.
- Y N N/A Concern over both inactive members and non-Catholics is a part of the spirit of our parish.
- Y N N/A Our parish actively reaches out to members of other Christian denominations, showing itself to be a place where the Gospel is lived joyfully.
- Y N N/A Our parish is visible to such members of the community as a place that is open to and concerned for them.
- Y N N/A Our parish reaches out to members of the community who belong to non-Christian religions.
- Y N N/A Our parish is enticing to others and a community where its parishioners visibly strive to live the Gospel.
- Y N N/A Our parish, in its liturgies and its community activities, is seen as a welcoming place to members of other Christian denominations and non-Christians.

**For more information on evangelizing your community, request the diocesan document for creating a pastoral plan for Catholic evangelization. Please call the Office of Education and Formation at 701-356-7900.

Finance and Administration

Does the parish sustain its mission and ongoing development through a commitment to good stewardship?

- Y N N/A Records are well maintained and kept current.
- Y N N/A This faith community promotes a stewardship of time, talents and treasure.
- Y N N/A An active Finance Council plans for long-term needs and development, reviews budgets, and assists the pastor with the oversight of the financial concerns of the parish.
- Y N N/A Parishioners are well informed about parish finances.
- Y N N/A The Finance Council cooperates with other parish committees to provide for their fiscal needs.
- Y N N/A The parish pays just wages for its employees.
- Y N N/A Our parish shares its facilities with other community groups.
- Y N N/A Our financial resources are adequate to meet our operational needs.
- Y N N/A We have studied the financial needs of our cemetery(ies) to ensure proper care can be provided without reliance on the parish operating budget.
- Y N N/A We have a long-range plan for maintenance of parish facilities.
Maintenance needs:
- Y N N/A We have a long-range plan for capital improvements.
Capital improvements planned:
- Y N N/A We have a long-range plan to ensure financial stability for the future and to anticipate challenges.
- Y N N/A We have a parish endowment fund.

Leadership

Does the parish identify and support leaders who organize, challenge and promote the vitality of the faith community?

- Y N N/A Parish leadership takes an active role in the Deanery Council meetings.
- Y N N/A The parish is served by an effective parish/pastoral council.
- Y N N/A The parish/pastoral council provides leadership and direction to parish committees and promotes collaboration among those committees.
- Y N N/A We have a parish board of education that meets regularly.
- Y N N/A We have a long-range plan which encompasses all areas of parish life.
- Y N N/A Formation programs and training are provided for those participating in parish leadership.
- Y N N/A Parish staff works together.
- Y N N/A Parish administrators have appropriate and adequate education, ability and experience to promote the vitality of the parish community.
- Y N N/A We have a parish business manager.

___ Full time

___ Part time

___ Part of another staff position

___ Paid salary/stipend

___ Volunteer

Statistical Information for Evangelization in the Diocese of Fargo 2000
30 counties which make up the Diocese of Fargo

County	Pop 1980	Pop 1990	Pop 2000	Pop Est 2007	# of Catholics		# of Catholics		# of Catholics 2000 (%)	# of Other Religions 2000 (%)	# of Unchurched 2000 (%)
					1980 (%)	1990 (%)	1990 (%)	2000 (%)			
Barnes	13,960	12,545	11,775	10,783	3,131 (22%)	2,624 (21%)	2,728 (23%)	6,366 (54%)	2,681 (23%)		
Benson	7,944	7,198	6,964	6,971	3,219 (41%)	4,785 (66%)	5,513 (79%)	2,468 (33%)	* (-13%)		
Bothreau	9,239	8,011	7,149	6,409	997 (11%)	912 (11%)	1,018 (14%)	4,834 (68%)	1,297 (18%)		
Cass	88,246	102,874	123,138	137,382	19,045 (22%)	21,488 (21%)	17,829 (14%)	52,068 (42%)	53,241 (43%)		
Cavalier	7,636	6,064	4,831	3,911	2,927 (38%)	2,389 (39%)	1,862 (39%)	2,141 (44%)	828 (17%)		
Dickey	7,207	6,107	5,757	5,356	1,232 (17%)	930 (15%)	864 (15%)	3,802 (68%)	1,091 (19%)		
Eddy	3,554	2,951	2,757	2,430	775 (22%)	570 (19%)	676 (25%)	1,399 (50%)	682 (23%)		
Foster	4,611	3,983	3,759	3,490	1,011 (22%)	959 (24%)	1,032 (27%)	2,633 (70%)	94 (3%)		
Grand	66,100	70,683	66,109	66,983	14,554 (22%)	14,650 (21%)	16,575 (25%)	23,697 (36%)	25,837 (40%)		
Forks	3,714	3,303	2,754	2,397	416 (11%)	415 (13%)	381 (14%)	1,673 (60%)	700 (23%)		
Griggs	3,833	3,332	2,753	2,349	504 (13%)	480 (14%)	511 (19%)	1,696 (62%)	546 (20%)		
Kidder	6,473	5,383	4,701	4,110	1,722 (27%)	1,387 (28%)	1,242 (28%)	3,383 (72%)	76 (2%)		
LaMoure	3,493	2,847	2,308	1,956	1,368 (39%)	1,125 (40%)	1,016 (44%)	1,186 (51%)	106 (3%)		
Logan	7,858	6,528	5,987	5,224	2,336 (30%)	2,034 (31%)	1,171 (20%)	3,839 (64%)	977 (18%)		
McHenry	4,800	4,021	3,390	2,752	438 (9%)	528 (13%)	672 (20%)	3,084 (91%)	* (-11%)		
McIntosh	5,233	4,410	3,715	3,217	973 (19%)	836 (19%)	† 600 (16%)	2,865 (77%)	377 (9%)		
Nelson	10,399	9,238	8,585	7,531	2,100 (20%)	2,124 (23%)	1,956 (23%)	5,269 (61%)	1,360 (16%)		
Pembina	6,166	5,052	4,675	4,103	2,844 (46%)	2,017 (40%)	2,113 (45%)	1,878 (40%)	666 (14%)		
Pierce	13,048	12,681	12,066	11,189	4,198 (32%)	4,675 (37%)	3,178 (26%)	5,815 (48%)	3,073 (23%)		
Ramsey	6,698	5,921	5,890	5,682	1,103 (16%)	1,181 (20%)	1,246 (21%)	4,106 (70%)	538 (9%)		
Ransom	19,207	18,148	17,998	16,498	6,975 (36%)	6,451 (36%)	4,571 (25%)	9,133 (51%)	4,294 (24%)		
Richland	12,177	12,772	13,674	13,665	12,020 (99%)	14,850 (116%)	11,889 (87%)	2,425 (18%)	* (-3%)		
Rolette	5,512	4,549	4,366	4,110	1,011 (18%)	972 (21%)	1,064 (24%)	3,044 (70%)	258 (6%)		
Sargent	2,819	2,148	1,710	1,320	NA	96 (4%)	36 (2%)	1,183 (69%)	491 (29%)		
Shepherd	3,106	2,420	2,258	1,840	294 (9%)	286 (12%)	294 (13%)	2,035 (90%)	* (-3%)		
Steele	24,154	22,241	21,908	20,480	4,067 (17%)	4,311 (19%)	3,993 (18%)	11,282 (51%)	6,633 (30%)		
Stutsman	4,052	3,627	2,876	2,292	1,022 (25%)	861 (24%)	592 (21%)	1,954 (68%)	330 (11%)		
Towner	9,642	8,752	8,477	8,069	806 (8%)	748 (9%)	914 (11%)	6,403 (76%)	1,160 (14%)		
Trall	15,371	13,840	12,389	11,011	3,530 (23%)	5,503 (40%)	5,293 (43%)	6,237 (50%)	859 (7%)		
Walsh	6,979	5,864	5,102	4,269	1,983 (28%)	1,656 (28%)	1,586 (31%)	2,834 (53%)	682 (13%)		

*Negative numbers are attributed to the membership being greater than the population. Reasons for this discrepancy are given as such: U.S. Census undercount, church membership overcount, or county of residence differing from county of membership.

†Nelson county number of Catholics for 2000 is based on an estimate due to unreported data

Note: For a detailed bar graph and information on specific denomination (name, number) by county, contact the Office of Education and Formation (701) 356-7900.

Sample Letters to Parishioners

Each pastor needs to write a personalized letter to his parishioners.

Sample Letter #1

For a very small parish

Sample Letter #2

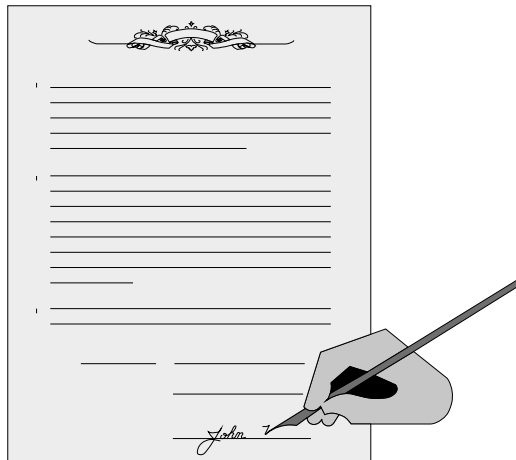
For a stable, medium parish

Sample Letter #3

For a stable, large parish

Sample Letter #4

For a growing, large parish



Sample Letter #1, for a very small parish
(Be sure your own numbers and data are correct.)

Dear Parishioners of (*Name of Parish*),

You may remember that on (*Date*) I spoke to you at Mass about our new 5 year evaluation process. In 2003, Bishop Aquila wrote *Communities of the Christian Faithful: A Pastoral Letter on Parish Life*, which deals with the difficult reality of changing demographics within our diocese. The purpose of this evaluation process is to determine the best way to provide long-term sacramental service and pastoral care to the people of the Fargo Diocese. It is likely that through this process some of the smaller parishes will need to be closed.

It is important to understand that no decisions have been made yet about clustering or consolidation. The evaluation process we will embark on as a parish will help clarify, for us and for the Diocese, the pastoral needs of our community and other parishes. However, (*Name of Parish*), is one of the parishes in the diocese with under 30 families, so it will be looked at closely as a possible parish to be consolidated.

Because of the above facts, it is important that we as a parish participate fully in the evaluation process. Copies of the Bishop's letter are available in the back of the Church. I would beg that everyone try their best to begin this process by understanding the need for it and approaching it with an open mind. The three main steps where we will need the participation of parishioners are the following:

1. As the **first step** in the process, I would ask everyone to work together with me in compiling all of the relevant information about (*Name of Parish*). We will have a parish meeting to put this information together and I would love to see all of you there. At that time I can also answer any questions you might have about the process. All of the other parishes in the diocese will be filling out the same information forms so that, in the end, fair and equitable decisions can be made based off of accurate data.

2. The **second step** that will need parishioner input is that of the deanery-level meetings. At these meetings, the dean for the twenty parishes in our area will host a meeting where representatives from all of the parishes in the area will be present. One of the main purposes of this meeting is to provide for "bigger picture" input, such as which parishes should be linked together, etc. The bishop realizes that he doesn't know the rural areas in the same way that we do and so he is trusting us and asking for our input on which parishes should remain open, which ones should be linked with others because of roads, school co-op links, ethnic connections, etc. This step also requires us to look beyond our own parish boundaries and see the needs of other parishes who are struggling with the same questions we are.

3. The **third step** that we will need parishioner help with is implementation. After the Bishop and his advisors have compiled all of the information and made decisions, we need to be big enough to accept and implement whatever has been decided. This might mean different parish clustering arrangements or even parish consolidation, but whatever the decision, we need to be supportive members of our wider Catholic family.

In the end, I believe the process the Bishop has outlined is very wise and balanced. He trusts us to be mature and prudent in providing him with advice on how to provide pastoral care to his people. Nearly every diocese in the upper Midwest has had to do the same because of rural out-migration and we have to acknowledge that the time has come for us as well. I look forward to meeting with you on this important matter and trust that through our work the ultimate goal of "the care of souls" will be advanced.

Sincerely in Christ,

Sample Letter #2, for a stable, medium parish

(Be sure your own numbers and data are correct.)

Dear Parishioners of (*Name of Parish*),

In 2003, Bishop Samuel Aquila issued *Communities of the Christian Faithful: A Pastoral Letter on Parish Life*. In it, he outlined a process for parish self-evaluation and pastoral planning for the entire Diocese of Fargo every 5 years; a process in which every parish in the diocese needs to participate.

Copies of the Bishop's letter are available in the back of the Church. It outlines and explains the need for this evaluation and planning. I encourage each of you to read what our Bishop has to say.

Our parish(es) are quite active, and the population has been relatively stable over the years. I think we can all be proud of the quality of our religious education programs and liturgies. Since this is the case, what does the evaluation process mean for us?

I believe we have an opportunity to examine how we go about teaching the faith and worshipping God, even though our programming is already strong. One primary reason for this is the need for developing our religious education program through all twelve grades. In addition, while strong, our programs are not perfect. This evaluation process gives us a chance to discuss options or new ideas and to build on current strengths.

Beyond our boundaries, some of the surrounding parishes are facing the painful issue of consolidation. If that is the case, our parish family will grow, and we need to discuss our preparation and welcome for these new members.

For these reasons, it is important that we use the opportunity that this evaluation process provides for new vitality in our parish. I ask each of you to participate throughout the coming year. Here are some of the ways that we will go through the evaluation process:

1. A public meeting will be held to discuss the evaluation process and the pastoral letter.
2. A parish questionnaire will survey parishioner experiences of the parish.
3. A second public meeting will summarize the questionnaire and our parish's statistical information. At this time, all are encouraged to discuss ideas about our programs, liturgies, boundaries, etc. We will also discuss recommendations for our parish which will be brought forward to the deanery and the diocese.
4. The final parish report and recommendations will be shared at the weekend Masses.

The entire diocese is participating in this year of evaluation, and a part of the process is meeting on the deanery level. When these dates are set, I will inform you, and I encourage you to attend. The deanery meeting will help each of our parishes to understand the plans and struggles of the parishes which surround us. It should help us to evaluate and plan for our future in conjunction with surrounding parishes.

Once again, I encourage you to participate in our parish evaluation. As we begin this process, let us seek God's guidance and give Him thanks for all the ways He has blessed us.

Sincerely in Christ,

Sample Letter #3, for a stable, large parish
(Be sure your own numbers and data are correct.)

Dear Parishioners of (*Name of parish*),

In July of 2003 Bishop Samuel Aquila issued a pastoral letter entitled *Communities of the Christian Faithful: A Pastoral Letter on Parish Life*. In that letter he outlined a process for parish self-evaluation and pastoral planning for the entire Diocese of Fargo. Each parish in the diocese needs to participate in this process every 5 years. The hope of this diocesan-wide pastoral planning process is to ensure the vitality of all parish faith communities.

Copies of the Bishop's letter are available in the back of the Church. This contains an outline of the entire process and an explanation of the need for this process. What I am asking of you is your participation in this planning process here at (*Name of parish*).

Every parish faces a set of unique challenges and I believe this process will both affirm our many gifts as a parish as well as suggest ways we can more effectively proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ. While other areas of our diocese may be experiencing a decline in population, we have maintained a steady registration of over 1000 parish households for the past ten years. I believe the diocesan pastoral planning process presents us with an opportunity to affirm our past accomplishments, evaluate our current programs, and envision new opportunities for the vitality of (*Name of parish*) parish community.

In addition, the possibility of consolidation in some of the more rural areas of the diocese could mean we might be welcoming even more people into our family of faith. We will want to be prepared to do so with ready and open arms.

Your assistance in this pastoral planning process is vital for its success. Here are some ways in which you can participate most fully:

- Read, or re-read, the pastoral letter to better understand the process and questions involved;
- Fill out the parish evaluation and planning questionnaire which will be discussed and provided at the Masses next weekend;
- Join together with Pastoral Council and other parish organizations in their discussions of the questions involved;
- Attend one of the series of parish-wide meetings to discuss our programs and ideas for future parish growth;
- Participate in the deanery level meeting to be held at _____. This wider meeting of the Fargo-West Fargo area will discuss, among other things, the distribution of priests in light of the many ministerial demands of today's Church;
- Pray for our parish and our entire diocese that we will be open to God's guidance in this process;
- Speak to me or any member of the parish staff to provide your ideas and impressions of life in our parish.

If you have any questions about the coming year, please feel free to contact me and I will do what I can to assist you. We have been given many gifts here at (*Name of parish*) and I believe this pastoral planning process will assist us to use them even more fully. Thank you in advance for your help.

Sincerely in Christ,

Sample Letter #4, for a growing, large parish
(Be sure your own numbers and data are correct.)

Dear Parishioners of (*Name of parish*),

In 2003, Bishop Samuel Aquila issued a pastoral letter *Communities of the Christian Faithful: A Pastoral Letter on Parish Life*. In it, he outlined a process for parish self-evaluation and pastoral planning for the entire Diocese of Fargo; a process which happens every 5 years in which every parish in the diocese needs to participate.

Copies of the Bishop's letter are available in the back of the Church. It outlines and explains the need for this evaluation and planning. I urge you to become involved in this process so that we, as a parish and as part of the Diocese of Fargo, may be proactive in meeting our needs and those of the diocese as we respond to the changes which have occurred over the past several decades.

We face some unique challenges in our parish. While other areas of the diocese have experienced a decline in population, we have been growing for the past seven years. I believe that by evaluating our current programs and talking about what ways we can more fully proclaim the Gospel, all will benefit.

In addition, the possibility of consolidation in some of the more rural areas of the diocese could mean we might be welcoming even more people into our family of faith. We will want to be prepared to do so with ready and open arms.

Please prayerfully consider some of the following ways you might personally be able to contribute to this vital process;

- Read, or re-read, the pastoral letter to better understand the process and the questions involved.
- Fill out the Parish Evaluation and Planning questionnaire which will be discussed and provided at next weekend's Masses.
- Join together with your parish organization, Bible study, prayer group, etc. to discuss the questions provided.
- Attend one of the series of parish-wide meetings to discuss our programs and ideas for future growth.
- Participate in the deanery level meeting to be held here in Fargo in the future, at which time the distribution of priests and the ministry of hospital chaplains for our city, among other things, will be discussed.
- Pray for our parish and for the entire Diocese, that we will be open to God's guidance in this process.
- Speak to me or any member of the parish staff to provide your ideas and impressions of life in our parish.

We have been given many gifts in our parish, and I believe this evaluation will assist us to use them even more fully. If you have any questions about the coming year, please feel free to contact me. Thank you in advance for your help.

Sincerely in Christ,

Considerations For Parish Meetings

- Keep all meetings spiritually focused. Start and end each meeting with prayer. (A Parish Planning Prayer is included in this workbook.)
- Make sure that all can hear the discussion or view any visual aids.
- Provide visual data – i.e. Changes in population of the parish, parishes within a 25-mile radius, median age, etc.
- It is helpful to have a recorder or secretary. This helps lend importance to all comments shared, not just those shared most eloquently or most strongly.
- A parish meeting will run more smoothly with a moderator present. Moderators have the authority to assure that participants follow behavior expectations during the discussion. It may be helpful that the moderator not be the parish priest.
- Review the rules, meeting agenda and behavioral expectations of all participants before any discussion begins. Examples of rules may include:
 - Every person gets a chance to be heard.
 - Every person has a right to state their opinion.
 - No one may verbally attack, ridicule or criticize another person.
 - Limit comments, three to five minutes depending on the number present, so that all those attending have a chance to be heard.
- Considerations for group moderators:
 - Don't take comments personally. Economic hardships, job uncertainty, family stress and personal crisis affect many people. A person's response to the parish discussions may be affected by losses and challenges they are already experiencing.
 - You do not have to respond to personal attacks or extreme emotions.
 - Many parishioners may have a large emotional and personal investment in things as they are (church buildings, traditions, their role in the parish, their employment in the parish, life-long friendships, spiritual/emotional support systems). Any discussion that includes the possibility of change can be very threatening.
- Food is useful for promoting a sense of community or setting people at ease. Parishes might consider hosting a potluck buffet before planning and discussion sessions, or providing refreshments for meeting participants.

Remembrance

Our parish history is precious, and should be preserved if consolidation occurs. Creating a form of remembrance also helps to acknowledge the genuine grief faced in consolidation or change. Possible remembrance options include:

- Designate a place of honor in the church for statues or significant artifacts from the consolidated parish
- Incorporate sacred items or architectural pieces from the consolidated parish
- Design and prominently display plaques remembering the establishment of a consolidated parish
- Create a booklet remembering the founders or containing the names of the members at the time of consolidation
- Create a photo or artifact display case for the consolidated parish
- Collect parish memories and history from parish elders in audio tape, video tape or written format
- Plan a closing Mass which includes a pilgrimage, procession or caravan to the church that encompasses the new parish family
- Host a coming together picnic, potluck supper or celebration
- Plan an inaugural Mass for the new parish family

Welcoming New Members

Entering a new parish community can be a difficult transition for new members to your parish family. Possible options for welcoming new members include:

- Organize greeting committees to make phone calls or home visits to new parishioners
- List new members in pulpit announcements, bulletins, or parish mailings
- Design a parish information booklet for new parishioners which includes the names of key staff, procedures, annual celebrations and ways in which they may get involved in parish programs and activities
- Recruit current parishioners to “adopt” a new family to introduce them to other parishioners, answer their questions and provide a familiar face for them at Mass and parish functions
- Offer a parish potluck dinner at which new families are paired up with current parishioners
- Get names of those who served in various volunteer capacities at the consolidated parish and try to incorporate them into similar volunteer positions
- Work to incorporate specific traditions, celebrations, practices, or programs from the consolidated parish into the new parish community – even if it means changing the way things have been done

11. Required Parish Reports

The parishes within our diocese are as unique as the individuals within each parish. Although open-ended questions and discussion are important to the evaluation process, there is also a need for a concrete method to help maintain consistency across the diocese.

The following two reports (**Parish Statistical Report** and **Parish Vitality Report**) are to be completed by each parish during this process. If there are particular circumstances in your parish which are not explicitly covered by these questions, please feel free to add explanatory notes as additional information.

Procedural Notes:

- Most of the statistical information is best gathered *before* any parish group meetings. This way, the data can be used in the course of the discussion.
- Proper determination of a “parishioner” or “household”
 - A parish, according to Canon Law, includes “all the Christian faithful within a certain territory” (Code of Canon Law, 518). Parish membership can never be limited to just those registered or those contributing to the parish.
 - However, registration is the best means most parishes will have to obtain parishioner numbers. For this reason, the number of registered parishioners and households is the first parish population statistic.
 - A “household” includes all the persons who occupy a housing unit.
 - For the sake of pastoral planning in rural areas, physical location of the household should be taken into account. (e.g., a family living in St. Hubert’s boundaries but claiming membership in a mission parish ten miles away should be noted as living in St. Hubert’s parish, but not in the mission parish.)
 - To obtain the most accurate picture, the following data are requested: registered households, registered parishioners (which includes all family members) and an estimate of parishioners physically residing within parish boundaries
 - Not all parishes will have well known boundaries. Try to give the most accurate picture without counting parishioners in two parishes at once.
 - In multiple parish towns, registration will have to take precedence over address location for planning purposes.

11a. Parish Statistical Report

Parish Name & City _____

Sacramental Data – Gathered from parish registers by decades (e.g. 1950-1959, etc.)

Sacrament/Rite	1950's	1960's	1970's	1980's	1990's	2000-Sept. 1, 2008
Baptism						
Marriage						
Funeral						
Confirmation (if avail.)						
First Eucharist (if avail.)						

Current Parish Population (*See procedural notes on preceding page.*)

Number of registered households: _____ Registered parishioners: _____

Number of registered households within the parish boundaries: _____

Estimated number of parishioners (registered or not) within parish boundaries: _____

October Mass counts for: 2004: _____ 2005: _____ 2006: _____ 2007: _____ 2008: _____

Median age of parishioners: _____

Population of surrounding town/city: _____

Current Religious Education

Number of grades in which formal parish religious education classes are currently offered: _____

Total students enrolled (Parish R.E./attending Catholic Schools): _____/ _____

R.E. Students in K-5: _____ Students 6-8th Grade: _____ High School: _____

Catholic School Students in K-5: _____ 6-8th Grade: _____ High School: _____

Number of Catechists: _____ Number of other youth volunteers/workers: _____

With which, if any, other parishes is religious education combined? _____

Students in other youth/education activities other than formal religious education: _____

Public or Catholic schools that parishioners attend (not religious ed.): _____

Current Liturgical Participation

Number of regularly scheduled/serving in the following roles: (Regular is a judgment call based on schedules. Once or twice per year is not regular.)

Lectors: _____ Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion: _____ Ushers: _____
Accompanists: _____ Choir members: _____ Cantors (song leaders): _____
Altar Servers: _____ Number of Masses per weekend (in parish, not cluster): _____
Sunday Masses with Music (per year): _____

Current Sacramental Outreach (Monthly total)

Eucharistic visits to homebound by priest/deacon/religious/lay: ___/___/___/___
Individual visits to hospital or nursing home by priest/deacon/religious/lay: ___/___/___/___
Hospitals or nursing homes within parish boundaries: _____

Current Physical Plant

Church: Year Built: _____ Linear feet of pew space: _____
Indoor plumbing (Y/N): _____ Handicap accessible (Y/N): _____ Air conditioning (Y/N): _____
Average Yearly Utility bills (heat, water, elec., etc.): _____ Yearly Insurance bill: _____
Major Renovations/Updates (description/year): _____

Renovations/repairs needed: _____
Condition of Church: _____

Parish Center: Year Built: _____ Major Renovations/Updates (description/year): _____

Condition of Parish Center: _____

Rectory: Year Built: _____ Major Renovations/Updates (description/year): _____

Condition of Rectory: _____

Other Physical Plant not specified above: _____

Parish Staffing (Names/Positions)

Priests _____

Deacons _____

Religious: _____

Lay: _____

Finance

(Please use annual figures from most recent fiscal or calendar year.)

Annual offertory collection: _____

The priest receives full salary? (Y/N)

The priest receives benefits according to current compensation policy. (Y/N)

Average annual gift per registered household: _____

God's Gift Goal/Achievement: _____

Parish Savings: _____

Other sources of income (e.g. leases, rents, estates): _____

Other significant parish collections: _____

Are there any foundations, endowments or trusts from which the parish derives income? If so, please list and explain separately.

Proximity

Distance to next closest parish: _____

If consolidation necessary, longest distance for anyone attending next closest Mass: _____

Number of parishes located within a 25-mile radius: _____

School Systems

Name of nearest school district: _____

K-12 enrollment: _____

Distance from the Parish to the school: _____

11b. Parish Vitality Report

Liturgy

Our parish strengths:

Our parish limitations:

Education

Our parish strengths:

Our parish limitations:

Charity

Our parish strengths:

Our parish limitations:

Parish Community Life

Our parish strengths:

Our parish limitations:

Finance and Administration

Our parish strengths:

Our parish limitations:

Leadership

Our parish strengths:

Our parish limitations:

Evangelization

Our parish strengths:

Our parish limitations:

Ecumenism

Our parish strengths:

Our parish limitations:

Specific Recommendations

Depending on the parish evaluation and the surrounding conditions, this could include clustering options, consolidation options, renewed focus in certain areas of parish life, etc. If several options are given, be sure to specify the most desirable. These options will be discussed on a deanery and diocesan level.

In our parish, we believe a good plan for providing for the best future would include:

Notes