


# Plan for Parishes 2003-2008 nears completion

last group of parishes to form Area Faith Communities

by Mark Kemmter  
Coordinator of Diocesan Staff



Since the early 1980's, the Diocese of New Ulm has worked diligently to identify adequate resources of personnel, finances, and physical structures to effectively carry out the mission of the church. Due to the challenges of a decrease in the number of active priests, the shifting of residential population as a result of the farm crisis and urban sprawl, and the aging of a large portion of those who make up our Sunday congregations, it has required us to envision a new Catholic way of life.

## Plan Priorities

The [Diocesan Plan for Parishes 2003-2008](#) proposed five priorities: 1) the implementation of the Area Faith Community model; 2) the preparation for a diocesan annual appeal; 3) an increase in vocation recruitment; 4) the establishment of formation programs for permanent deacons, lay ecclesial ministers and parish volunteer ministers; and 5) the introduction of an evangelization process.

The number one priority is the implementation of the Area Faith Community model. The Plan identifies an Area Faith Community as being comprised of two or more parishes, small parishes or oratories entrusted to the care of one pastor with a pastoral staff or pastoral leaders who work together to carry out the ministries in the area.

The diocesan map (pictured above) reveals that fourteen Area Faith Communities have already been formed over the past three years and the final eight will begin the process within the next six months. All 22 Area Faith Communities will complete their two-year implementation plans by the spring of 2008 when a new Plan for Parishes, addressing the years 2008-2013, will be formulated.

The 8 Area Faith Communities, comprised of 28 parishes, that will

begin the process in the latter half of 2005 includes:

**Region 1:** St. Mary, Arlington, St. Michael in Gaylord, and St. Brendan in Green Isle.

**Region 2:** St. Catherine in Redwood Falls and St. John in Morton.

Our Lady of Victory in Lucan, St. Mary in Seaforth, St. Anne in Wabasso, St. Mathias in Wanda.

**Region 3:** St. Peter in Canby, St. Eloi in Ghent, St. Edward in Minnetota, St. Leo in St. Leo, Ss. Cyril and Methodius in Taunton.

Ss. Peter and Paul in Ivanhoe, St. Genevieve in Lake Benton, St. Dionysius in Tyler, St. John Cantius in Wilno.

**Region 4:** St. Mary in Beardsley, Holy Rosary in Graceville, St. James in Nassau, St. John in Ortonville, St. Joseph in Roson.

**Region 6:** St. John in Darwin and St. Gertrude in Forest City.

St. Pius X in Glencoe, Holy Family in Silver Lake, and Holy Trinity in Winsted.

## Pilot Experiences

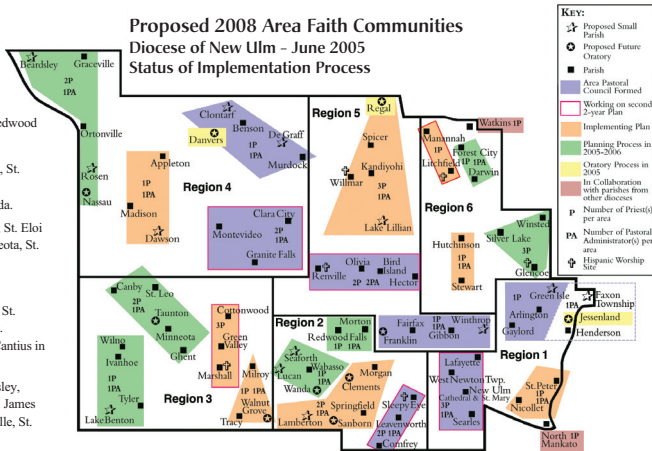
In the spring of 2003, one proposed Area Faith Community from each region began the implementation process as "pilot" experiences. These Area Faith Communities have now completed their original plans. They will now assess the introduction of the organizational structures for the Area Faith Community and begin work on a second two-year plan. The "pilot" Area Faith Communities are:

**Region 1:** St. Gregory the Great in Lafayette, Holy Trinity Cathedral in New Ulm, St. Mary in New Ulm, St. John in Searles, and St. George in West Newton Township.

**Region 2:** St. Paul in Comfrey, Japanese Martyrs in Leavenworth, and St. Mary in Sleepy Eye.

**Region 3:** St. Mary in Cottonwood, St. Clotilde in Green Valley, and Holy Redeemer in Marshall.

**Region 4:** St. Clara in Clara City,



St. Andrew in Granite Falls, and St. Joseph in Montevideo.

**Region 5:** St. Mary in Bird Island, St. John in Hector, St. Aloysius in Olivia, and Holy Redeemer in Renville.

**Region 6:** St. Philip in Litchfield and Our Lady in Manannah

## Future Oratories

Also in the Plan, ten parishes were classified as "proposed future oratories." An oratory serves as a "chapel." A Sunday Mass is no longer celebrated in the church building and former parishioners must join a new parish. The oratory can be used for prayer, a weekday Mass, and other educational, service and social activities. Three of the ten proposed oratories - Visitation in Danvers, St. Thomas in Jessenland, and St. Anthony in Regal - have initiated the oratory transition process. The process consists of a series of parish meetings, inventories, and planning meetings to prepare the parish or mission for oratory status. The parish or mission can petition the Bishop to close rather than remain open as an oratory.

## Remaining Four Priorities

Work on the other four diocesan priorities is also progressing.

◆ Preparation for a diocesan annual appeal has involved consultation with pastoral leaders and parish leadership. A random survey was recently mailed throughout the diocese to determine the level of support for an appeal and to identify the ministries and services that are most in need of funding. The results are expected to be available by mid-summer.

◆ Vocation recruitment was also a high priority. Over the past several years, nearly 150 young men have shown an interest in a vocation to the priesthood by attending one of the Operation Andrew dinners offered by the diocese. Four new seminarians have enrolled in the seminary because of these efforts. Recruitment efforts have resulted in five young men entering religious life. Diocesan-sponsored Operation Miryam dinners have attracted other potential candidates who are interested in the sisterhood.

◆ Another priority was the establishment of formation programs for permanent deacons, lay ecclesial

ministers, and volunteer parish ministers. In September of 2004, the 2-year FOUNDATIONS program for two members from every parish in the diocese began. The program offers college-level introductions to scripture and theology. In February of this year, Bishop Niensdet appointed an Ad Hoc Committee to develop a formal proposal for permanent diaconate and lay ecclesial ministry formation programs. The proposal will be presented to the Priests' Council and the Diocesan Pastoral Council by February of 2006.

◆ The final priority was the renewal of the faithful and parishes of the diocese through a process of evangelization. The Diocesan Pastoral Council and the Bishop's staff have been working on this priority for the past 1 1/2 years and are nearing some preliminary recommendations.

At the halfway point in the implementation process for the Plan for Parishes, it can be said that much progress has been made but that there are also "many miles yet to go."