

# Diocesan Plan for Parishes 2003-2008

## implementation of 23 Area Faith Communities near completion

by Mark Kemmerer  
Coordinator of Diocesan Staff

Since the summer of 2003, groups of parishes within the Diocese of New Ulm have been developing and implementing plans to become Area Faith Communities.

An Area Faith Community model is comprised of two or more parishes, small parishes or oratories and 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. Within the community, there is an Area Pastoral Council and committees which meet to examine the pastoral needs of the area and to recommend responses to those needs. The Area Faith Communities provide for the long-term pastoral care of the faithful within an area and yet are flexible enough to adapt to the projected demographic changes of growth or decline. This model also serves to maintain the Catholic traditions of individual parishes and communities.

These efforts are all part of the *Plan for Parishes, 2003-2008* which organized the diocese into twenty-three Area Faith Communities. Thus far, ten Area Faith Communities are in place and five others are implementing their plans. The Committee on Parishes, a diocesan planning group, projects that the remaining eight Area Faith Communities will complete their plans by November of 2006.

Two parishes, the Church of St. Anthony in Watkins and the Church of the Holy Rosary in North Mankato, are part of collaborative relationships with parishes from neighboring dioceses.

The diocesan map (page 7) shows the progress that has been made on the implementation of the *Plan for Parishes* and the introduction of the Area Faith Community model.

The *Plan for Parishes* also established the new classification of oratory. Oratory comes from

the Latin word, orare, which means "to pray." The oratory is a chapel, a place of prayer and occasional sacramental celebration. There is no longer a regular Sunday Mass and former members must join a new parish. An oratory ministry team meets with the pastor of a nearby designated parish to plan other ministerial activity at the oratory. The *Plan* has designated ten (10) parishes as "proposed future oratories" however, parishes can petition the Bishop to "close" rather than remain an oratory.



**WHAT'S AN AREA FAITH COMMUNITY (AFC) MODEL?... Two or more parishes or oratories and entrusted to the care of one pastor with a pastoral staff or to pastoral leaders who work together to carry out the ministries in the area.**

**WHAT'S AN ORATORY?...a chapel, a place of prayer and occasional sacramental celebration. There is no longer a regular Sunday Mass.**

The diocesan map also indicates the transition of the ten "proposed future oratories" into oratories. One of the ten, the Church of St. Anthony in Regal (Region 5, north of Spicer), petitioned Bishop Nienstedt to close and was suppressed on July 29, 2005.

### Three Oratories in place – three more parishes to begin transition process soon

Currently there are three Oratories in place. They are: the Oratory of St. Thomas in Jessenland; the Oratory of the Visitation in Danvers; and, the Oratory of St. Joseph in Clements. Three parishes will begin the transition process this year or next: the Church of St. Paul in Walnut Grove; the Church of Sts. Cyril and Methodius in Taunton; and, the Church of St. Thomas in Sanborn. Three remaining parishes are scheduled to begin the process in the years 2007-2008: the Church of St. Mathias in Wanda; the Church of

St. James in Nassau; and, the Church of the Sacred Heart in Franklin.

Another aspect of the *Plan for Parishes* is the allocation of priests and pastoral administrators for each area. With the ordination of three new

priests in the past two years, there are currently 43 priests in active ministry. The *Plan* projects for 38 priests in 2008. That number is based on the projected retirements of priests who become eligible to retire in 2007 and 2008. The actual number of priests who will retire in the next

two years is still unknown.

### Five Priorities

The *Plan for Parishes* included five priorities. All the priorities are also nearing completion or will continue to be at the center of diocesan focus. They are:

- Implement the *Plan for Parishes*
- Introduce an annual Diocesan Ministries Appeal
- Increase efforts and focus for the recruitment of priestly and religious vocations
- Establish programs of formation for permanent deacons and lay ministers
- Begin an evangelization process

The early drafts of the *Plan for Parishes* also included Hispanic Ministry and Catholic schools. Because both of these areas of ministry required such specific consultations, Bishop Nienstedt appointed two special Ad Hoc Committees to prepare future plans for each ministry. The Hispanic Ministry plan has been approved and a copy of the plan can be

obtained through the Diocesan Office of Hispanic Ministry (507) 359-2966; or on the New Ulm Diocesan Web Site, [www.dnu.org](http://www.dnu.org). The future plan for Catholic Schools will soon be ready to enter into a consultation phase.

As the *Plan for Parishes, 2003-2008* nears completion, the Committee on Parishes has begun to discuss a diocesan-wide evaluation of the present *Plan* and a listening process which will lead to a new *Plan for 2008 – 2013*. For further information about the *Plan* contact the Diocesan Pastoral Center, 1400 6th Street North, New Ulm, MN 56073; (507) 359-2966.

## Bishop Nienstedt approves AFC and Oratory plans



**NEW AREA FAITH  
COMMUNITY PLANS**

### Region 3

Church of St. Peter, Canby; Church of St. Eloi, Ghent; Church of St. Leo, St. Leo; Church of St. Edward, Minnetonka; and Church of Sts. Cyril and Methodius, Taunton.

### WORD

- Share religious education teacher training and resources
- Develop a post-confirmation program
- Publicize and create joint adult formation opportunities
- Form an Area Faith Community youth ministry program
- Establish an Area RCIA process

### WORSHIP

- Establish a "pulpit" exchange
- Provide special Area prayer experiences
- Coordinate Eucharistic adoration in the Area

### SERVICE

- Create an Area social concerns committee
- Develop ministry for the elderly and homebound
- Develop seasonal Area projects for underprivileged and needy
- Develop various new outreach ministries

### STEWARDSHIP

- Develop an Area pastoral council
- Share parish information
- Combine purchasing power and personnel wherever possible

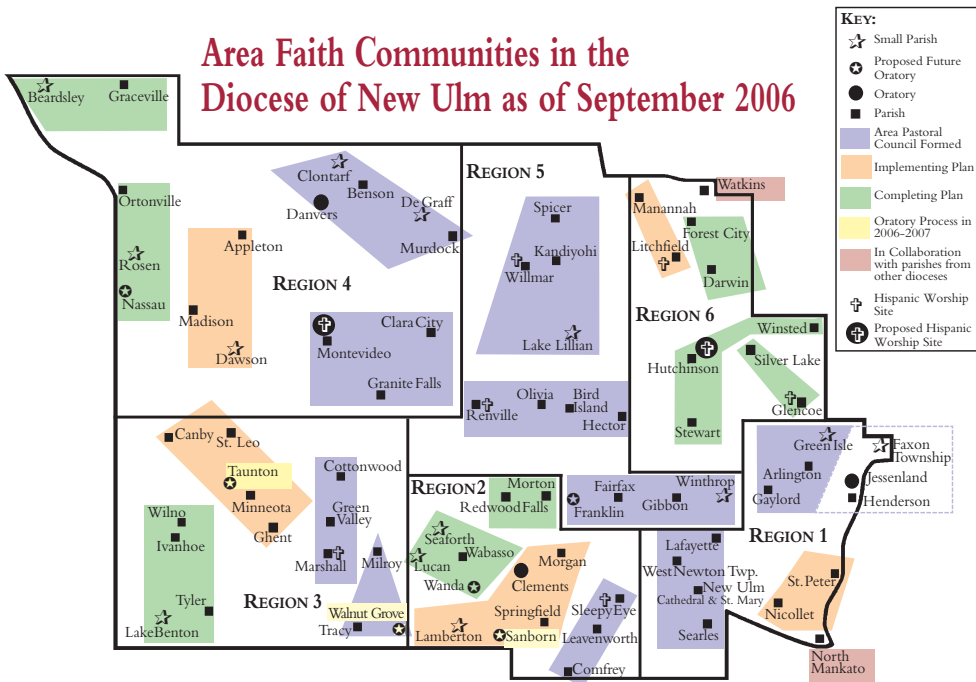
## To Date . . . .

◆ Ten Area Faith Communities have already established an Area Pastoral Council. The model is considered "in place" when the Area Pastoral Council meets for the first time.

◆ Five Area Faith Communities are implementing their plans and still working to establish their Area Pastoral Councils.

◆ Eight Area Faith Communities have not yet submitted their plans for recommendation by the Committee and approval by Bishop Nienstedt but are expected to by November. Of that number, five have only to finalize and submit their plans. The initial steps in the planning process have all been completed.

# Area Faith Communities in the Diocese of New Ulm as of September 2006



This diocesan map shows the progress that has been made on the implementation of the *Plan for Parishes 2003-2008* and the introduction of the Area Faith Community (AFC) model. An AFC is considered "in place" when the Area Pastoral Council meets for the first time.

## Region 6:

Church of St. Mary, Arlington; Church of St. Michael, Gaylord; and Church of St. Brendan, Green Isle

### WORD

- Coordinate religious education programs
- Share in-services and resources for religious education catechists
- Coordinate confirmation and baccalaureate celebrations
- Offer joint adult faith formation opportunities
- Collaborate and share opportunities for youth ministry

### WORSHIP

- Establish an Area worship committee
- Promote Area participation in special area celebrations and seasonal liturgies
- Encourage youth as liturgical ministers and children's chorus members
- Train, refresh and recruit liturgical ministers
- Provide resources for family prayer in the home

### SERVICE

- Establish an Area social concerns committee
- Explore needs and create options for outreach to the homebound, ill, elderly and Hispanic community
- Explore joint service projects

### STEWARDSHIP

- Establish an Area stewardship committee

- Combine purchasing power of Area whenever possible
- Publish an annual Area calendar
- Implement a common compensation plan for Area employees



## SECOND TWO-YEAR AREA FAITH COMMUNITY PLAN

### Region 2:

Church of St. Paul, Comfrey; Church of Japanese Martyrs, Leavenworth; and Church of St. Mary, Sleepy Eye

### WORD

- Establish an Area RCIA program
- Offer joint adult faith formation opportunities
- Collaborate to empower youth activities
- Coordination of religious education programs, confirmation preparation and retreats

### WORSHIP

- Share talent and musical resources
- Share liturgical minister training
- Initiate, expand and enhance opportunities for ecumenical prayer
- Expand the sharing of sacramental celebrations and eucharistic adoration
- Share special liturgies and parish events to build area community and include Hispanic members

### SERVICE

- Develop three annual social events to build Area community
- Train volunteers for outreach ministry
- Develop three joint service projects
- Welcome and invite the local Hispanic community into the regular worship community

### STEWARDSHIP

- Schedule and monitor planning meetings to prepare for yearly events
- Combine, review and evaluate proposed purchases to identify shared savings
- Create a weekly area bulletin insert



## NEW ORATORY PLANS

### Region 2:

Oratory of the Church of St. Joseph, Clements

### WORD

- Offer scripture sharing on the Sunday readings after weekly Mass
- Organize an ecumenical service for Clements during Church Unity Week

### WORSHIP

- Provide opportunities for private and communal prayer
- Schedule weekday Masses and an annual anniversary Mass

### SERVICE

- Continue mission sewing projects and establish several food and school supply drives
- Organize a community gathering for Clements

### STEWARDSHIP

- Conduct several fund-raisers for the operation of the oratory

### Region 4:

Oratory of the Church of the Visitation, Danvers

### WORD

- Offer Bible study during Advent and Lent

### WORSHIP

- Serve as a place for private and communal prayer
- Schedule weekday Mass and special eucharistic celebrations

### SERVICE

- Visit the sick and elderly in the Area
- Schedule a bi-annual "creation clean-up"

### STEWARDSHIP

- Join fall festival with Church of St. Francis in Benson
- Conduct an Advent Festival of Lights and supper
- Continue the St. Patrick's Day celebration