

Diocese of Des Moines Strategic Vision and Plan

Mission Statement:

Sowing God's Spirit

In the wake of his Resurrection, Jesus rouses us to become *witnesses of true love* who are moved as the Spirit wills to bear God's presence, healing compassion, and peace to a broken world. Sparked by the joy of the Gospel kindled in our own hearts, love turns fear to holy boldness as we listen and speak anointed words to persons who have grown lukewarm in their capacity to trust, and who find it hard to believe they are beautiful and beloved in God's sight. We bless and build up each other. We overcome forces of division by the Spirit's power to become one in Christ. Living by faith is the greatest adventure imaginable, for with God all things are possible. *Sowing God's Spirit* is our mission and a labor that never grows old, for we are fed by the daily bread of grace that God multiplies among us.

Vision Statement:

Cultivating Connections in Christ

As we Sow God's Spirit in the world, we lean into our vision of *cultivating connections in Christ*. The seeds of love that we sow yield fruit as we discover Jesus. We are grafted by grace in relationships with Jesus and with one another, like a vine and branches. We form intimate bonds with Christ through the personal and collective experiences of (1) encounter, (2) friendship and (3) communion. Cultivating these connections in Christ is central to our vision as a people after God's own heart.

Encounter. Those who cross paths with Jesus in the Bible - such as the shepherds and Magi at Bethlehem, Simeon and Anna, the woman at the well, Zacchaeus, the apostles, the bleeding woman who touches Jesus' garment, the centurion at Calvary, the disciples on the road to Emmaus - foreshadow how our lives are forever changed when we *encounter* the Son of the heavenly Father. His gaze and his touch convey the truth that God cares about us. He does not condemn but calls us to follow him to the fullness of life.

Once we open the door of our hearts to a personal connection with Christ, it changes the way we encounter people and are able to accompany them along the path of life. Poverty of spirit becomes an attractive, beatific feature rather than a disease against which we fortify ourselves. Like the Good Samaritan, we recognize someone bruised and victimized by a lack of love, and offer generous service as any true neighbor does. The Spirit transforms our senses and hearts to view others as bearers of God's image, worthy of dignity and respect amid the sorrows and joys, trials and tragedies, and celebrations that life affords all of us.

Friendship. Jesus desires genuine friends who are ready to lay down their lives for one another just as he does for us. Christian love finds joy in doing the right thing, heedless of the cost. In his own experience, Jesus witnessed a school of marital friendship in the Nazareth home of Mary and Joseph. He experienced fraternal friendship with Martha, Mary and Lazarus, and he was known to be especially close to the apostles Peter, James, and John as they drew close to him and were converted before proclaiming the Gospel and performing miracles in his name.

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Jesus is not simply the loving “giver” who pours out his body and blood, his very life for others. He shows us God’s humility in not being afraid to share his “need” for us. God’s truest friends, including saints such as St. Teresa of Calcutta, know that he still thirsts for souls to whom we are called to show love, to reveal that whatever we do for the hungry, naked, imprisoned, the vulnerable and least among us, we do for him. And in the process, these connections sown and sealed in the Spirit endure forever.

Communion. We live in a time saturated by “networks” and social connections produced by technology. How many of us are still searching for a place to belong, to feel that we are unconditionally loved and accepted as we are? We do not need to digitally alter our image or our story. Jesus wants to incorporate our story into his story, which is more incredible than anything we could have imagined. God is revealed to be for all eternity a Trinity of persons perfect in love and relationship, united in being God and yet not a closed, gated community to which we cannot gain access. The Father sends his Son in the fullness of time so that we can participate in the *communion* of love who is God, thanks to Jesus becoming God-with-us, both human and divine in the wonder of the Incarnation. Jesus greatly desires to eat and drink with us as he did with disciples and the multitudes drawn around him. He then fulfills his desire to BECOME food and drink for us in the mysterious, miraculous gift of the Eucharist.

His sacramental presence in material stuff such as water, oil, bread and wine, and in persons who become the dwelling place of his Spirit, is the foundation of the community of persons called out of themselves to become sisters and brothers in Jesus’ name. This community has its own name: the Church. In forming the Church, Jesus never imposes himself on others but proposes the way, truth, and life by which we realize our own hearts’ desire. So, too, disciples of Jesus go out to echo the heavenly Father’s invitation to a wedding feast where all are welcome, especially the poor and those relegated to the “peripheries” of our society. In poetic language, we identify Jesus as the Bridegroom who is joined to his bride, the Church, expressing the connections formed by Jesus’ Risen Spirit, the loving friendships whose destination is heaven. There Mary shines radiantly among the multitude in God’s presence who sing his praises with all the angels in the communion of saints.

Strategic Plan:

Strategic Priority #1: Cultivating Connections in Christ by Serving and Leading the Parishes of the Diocese

Strategy 1.1. Create a Culture of Care/ Welcoming

- Form, develop and train a Commission on Welcoming as part of the Diocesan Pastoral Council (DPC) (3-4 months)
- Involve this Commission in developing a list of best practices/ resources for welcoming, to be included in a centralized diocesan toolkit for parishes (6 months)
- Provide leadership training and support for 3-4 parishes to model some of these best practices and are willing to share their experiences with other parishes around the Diocese (12 months)

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Strategy 1.2. Invite People into an Encounter with Jesus Christ

- Form, develop and train a Commission on Missionary Discipleship as part of the Diocesan Pastoral Council (DPC) (3-4 months)
- Involve this Commission in developing a list of best practices/ resources for missionary discipleship, to be included in a centralized diocesan toolkit for parishes (6 months)
- Provide leadership training and support for 3-4 parishes to model some of these best practices and are willing to share their experiences with other parishes around the Diocese (12 months)

Strategy 1.3. Accompany our Youth into Discipleship with Jesus Christ

- Form, develop and train a Diocesan Youth Council (DYC) (3-4 months)
- Involve the DYC in developing a list of best practices/ resources for youth ministry, to be included in a centralized diocesan toolkit for parishes (6 months)
- Provide leadership training and support for 3-4 parishes to model some of these best practices and are willing to share their experiences with other parishes around the Diocese (12 months)

Strategy 1.4. Engage our Young Adults into Full Participation

- Form, develop and train a Diocesan Young Adult Council (DYAC) (3-4 months)
- Involve the DYAC in preparing a list of best practices/ resources for ministering to young families/ young adult singles, to be included in a centralized diocesan toolkit for parishes (6 months)
- Provide leadership training and support for 3-4 parishes to model some of these best practices and are willing to share their experiences with other parishes around the Diocese (12 months)

Strategy 1.5. Prepare Disciples for the Domestic Church

- Form, develop and train a Commission on Adult Faith Formation as part of the Diocesan Pastoral Council (DPC) (3-4 months)
- Involve this Commission in developing a list of best practices/ resources for adult faith formation, to be included in a centralized diocesan toolkit for parishes (6 months)
- Provide leadership training and support for 3-4 parishes to model some of these best practices and are willing to share their experiences with other parishes around the Diocese (12 months)

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**Strategic Priority #2: Cultivating Connections in Christ by Communicating our Message
more Boldly and Clearly**

Strategy 2.1. Saturate Various Forms of Media with the Catholic Message

- Hire a point person to widen the diocesan footprint on social media, to create radio partnerships and create more video content (6 months)
- Direct people toward resources developed by Catholic “celebrities” (6 months)

Strategy 2.2. Convey the Beauty of Catholic Teaching

- Collaborate with Catholic Charities to hire a point person to teach and advocate on the social teachings of the Church
 - Set up meetings with key media and opinion leaders
- Provide a list of talking points to address complex, polarizing issues
 - Explain the “why” behind what we teach
 - Prepare priests to address topics of interest

Strategy 2.3 Share this Strategic Vision with the People of the Diocese

- Present this Strategic Vision at various diocesan-wide meetings
- Hold regional parish meetings around the Diocese to present this Strategic Vision
 - Invite pastors, parish council, finance council and other parish leaders
 - Ask them to select one or two of the strategic priorities to get started
 - Gather the model parishes to meet on a quarterly basis to review progress
 - Communicate success stories
 - Invite parishioners to give witness talks

**Strategic Priority #3: Cultivating Connections in Christ by Transforming the Structure
and Culture of the Pastoral Center**

Strategy 3.1. Align the Structure of the Pastoral Center to this Strategic Vision

- Conduct a strategic review of the structure of the Center (3-4 months)
 - Hold conversations with all members of the Leadership Team
 - Ask them to hold one-on-one meetings with all their staff
 - Re-structure some positions/ reporting assignments at the Center
 - Create some new positions at the Center
 - Revise some job descriptions
 - Determine what to stop doing
- Assign a diocesan staff person to coordinate each of the ministries involved with Strategies 1.1 through 1.5 (3-4 months)
- Develop a Diocesan Pastoral Council (DPC) to coordinate the implementation, updates and accountability for this Strategic Vision (2-3 months)

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Strategy 3.2. Enhance the Culture of Servant Leadership/ Build Trusting Relationships

- Schedule monthly staff meetings/ staff retreats to discuss, discern and reflect upon the culture of the Pastoral Center (4 months)
- Assign each parish a liaison from the diocesan staff. Articulate the liaisons role, which will include at least one annual parish visits (4 months)
- Pilot 2-3 of the best practices identified in this Strategic Vision (see Strategies 1.1 through 1.5 below) at the Pastoral Center (9 months)

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