



First Things First:

OUR LADY OF GRACE'S PRIORITIES FOR THE SECOND YEAR OF SET ABLAZE

In an Apostolic Age, where Christianity is no longer the mainstream culture, our bishop chose not to manage decline, but initiate a path for flourishing. In May 2023, our diocese formed 25 pastorates. pastors and parochial vicars were announced and assigned on July 1, 2023. Pastors formed pastoral planning teams with 2 representatives per parish and 2 diocesan facilitators. Through town halls, ministry group discussions, and a pastorate-wide survey, we gathered rich feedback and built a data base. After a pastorate vote, we proudly became "Our Lady of Grace!" In May 2024, our 10-year pastoral plan was approved by the bishop and the pastoral planning team dissolved. The summer was spent reflecting upon the pastoral plan while forming our 8-person pastorate leadership team to assist the pastor in the daily management of the pastorate. Many thanks to our pastoral planning team, whose 9 months of dedicated, sacrificial service guided our 5 parishes and pastorate to this very exciting and graced point!

Our leadership team now meets weekly in Kimball. We attended a diocesan training session to develop its specific leadership positions, a First-Things-First meeting to finalize priorities, and a CliftonStrengths workshop to identify our strengths. We are now planning for a Working Geniuses workshop to enhance teamwork on shared tasks, as well as a retreat to keep God in the center of all this! The leadership team will strive to keep parishioners informed as we develop more positions, ministries and programs.

GOALS ALREADY ACCOMPLISHED IN YEAR ONE:

Our initial goals were set and met first, for they created a strong communication platform to keep people informed, while also attending to the frequently expressed desires and aspirations heard during the town halls, ministry meetings and survey. Now, we are beginning to act upon what we all heard!

- Improved and consolidated bulletin
- Automated and consolidated phone system
- Updated and consolidated website, Flocknote, MyParish app, Ministry Platform
- Renovated and expanded office, meeting spaces and upgraded office equipment
- Confessions and Masses at each parish despite required reductions in Sunday Masses
- Dedicated liturgical ministry schedulers for Sunday Masses
- Consolidated and collaborative religious education system
- Consolidated adult OCIA (Order of Christian Initiation of Adults) program
- Expanding Eucharistic Adoration to 3 parishes.
- Collaborative discussions with St. Joseph Indian School and their religious orders
- New pastorate name and branding: Our Lady of Grace
- Consolidated bookkeeping of 5 parish finances, and meeting of 5 finance councils
- Established leadership team (daily check-ins, weekly meetings, regular workshops)
- Hiring additional parish and pastorate staff to lead ministries desired by our people
- Systematized pastoral ministry to homebound
- Consolidated liturgical Mass books



YEAR TWO (JULY 1, 2024-JUNE 30, 2025):

While numerous goals were contained in the 52-page, 10-year pastoral plan, the diocese directed the leadership teams to focus on a limited number of pastorate goals per year. The goals below prayerfully flowed from our team's "First-Things-First" meeting. We invite you to open your hearts and minds to prayerfully review these goals, each of which relates to the four aspirational pillars/goals discussed at length and recorded during our town hall meetings, small ministry group gatherings, and survey.

Worship

1. Establish a liturgical ministry leader and team having members from each parish
2. Enhance technology/sound/audio-visual in worship areas, halls, entrances
3. Explore how to engage more families and youth into our Sunday liturgies

Discipleship & Evangelization

1. Establish new and engaging adult faith formation opportunities
2. Establish a youth ministry leader and team having members from each parish
3. Enhance the Catechetical learning experience of children and youth

Service

1. Raise awareness of homebound, expand a lay outreach and visitation program
2. Research faith-service opportunities which enhance lay volunteer participation
3. Promote and develop opportunities to foster vocation awareness and discernment

Community

1. Continue to communicate the identity of our 5 unique parishes in our 1 pastorate
2. Develop a welcoming community which fosters an atmosphere of hospitality
3. Regular scheduling of parish or pastorate-wide community-building events

Native American Ministry

1. Ongoing collaborative dialogue with religious orders serving Native Americans
2. Pastoral/service visits to St. Joseph Indian School, Lower Brule, Fort Thompson

Hispanic Ministry

1. Research ways to reach out and learn more of the needs and desires of the local Hispanic population and what they offer to the pastorate
2. Research forming a bi-lingual ministry team or the installation of developing bi-lingual communication technology

Thank you for your prayers, patience and support during this first year. As we move into year two, let us ask Our Lady of Grace to help us to follow in the footsteps of Jesus Christ, be empowered by the Holy Spirit, and trust in the Father's providential care as we strive to become, more and more, authentic and flourishing "Life-long, Catholic Missionary Disciples Through God's Love!"

Your Pastorate Leadership Team: Fr. Richard Fox, Fr. Randy Phillips, Deacon Mo Barrett, Deacon James Bregel, Jane Suelflow, JoEllen Stadler, Kyndra Hosek, and Mandy Konechne