



Christians Encounter Christ

July 30, 2024

Communication Update for CEC Community:

CEC Strategic Plan

WHAT IS NEXT?

Together as a community we are moving forward with a refreshed pilot program that includes five strategic planning pillars, goals and actions steps. There will be ongoing feedback to the community between July 2024 and July 2025. After 2 years of planning, we are ready to advance forward on a journey of hope, trust and grace.



FALL 2024 & 2025 Weekends Strategic Plan Initiatives Update:

**Support from the Omaha Archdiocese, Fr. Damian Zuerlein –
Spiritual Director of CEC Omaha and members of
Omaha/Norfolk Area Leadership Councils (OALC & NALC)**

Omaha CEC has had meetings and conversations with Norfolk CEC and the Omaha Archdiocese. All are aware of and in support of the implementation of our CEC strategic plan. Fr. Damain has given his blessing, approval and support to move forward with the CEC strategic plan initiatives including hosting the fall 2024 CEC weekend at St. Wenceslaus without OALC voting continuously on ideas. We will pilot the ideas, action steps from the plan and reassess accordingly.



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“It seems that this is a moment when we really are asked to take stock of what’s very important and essential to our life together, but also we are being called to move in some new directions.”

Archbishop George J. Lucas



The Numbers – Why CEC is more important than ever. Statistics Source: Archdiocese of Omaha

A robust and meaningful CEC Strategic plan will align with:

- Changes in the Archdiocese of Omaha
- Shortage of priests
- Lay people’s desire to step up
- Need for evangelization
- Hunger for a stronger faith life

Journey of Faith initiative - A Pastoral Planning Process to Prepare Us for the Future

78% of Catholics do not attend mass.

Declining priest population

- 24% decline in parish priests over next 10 years

Current priest stats today:

- 104 priests serve the 139 parishes
- 2032: 84 priests will serve the 139 parishes
- 2040: 80 priests will serve the 139 parishes

Dramatic shift in population – both rural and urban areas

- Population of rural parish areas is at or below 1890 levels
- Urban areas are growing as rural areas are shrinking



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Review of CEC By Laws:

Currently an OALC committee has been asked to review and keep in mind the CEC bylaws, while discussing what might need to be updated.

After we have launched these pilot programs and initiatives of the CEC Strategic plan, it is our hope to assess the results and go in one time to revise/update the CEC bylaws by May 2025. If we need more time, we can decide in May 2025 to extend the time before making final revisions to bylaws. We will consult with Norfolk at the end of fall 2024 and end of spring 2025 to update them of our progress, before any changes are made to the bylaws.

This will be a ‘pilot’ program year of changes to improve and update the CEC experience. Omaha (OALC) will set up a meeting this year with Norfolk (NALC) for our annual ACC (Archdiocesan Coordinating Council) meeting to further update them of the strategic plan.

Environment/CEC Experience Pillars:

We will pilot a fall 2024 weekend at a new location - St. Wenceslaus Catholic Church (Cain Hall) - keeping in mind the key initiatives of the Strategic plan.

This will not be a parish only CEC weekend and will not replace the St. Wenceslaus Welcome weekends. We will clearly define that CEC is another conversion engine retreat experience to evangelize and bring others into a deeper relationship with Christ and others in their faith journey.

Grouping, Avanti’s and building ongoing community will be key. We will create a small planning committee to revise the weekend schedule and logistics for this fall 2024 weekend. If needed, according to Fr. Damian, we can combine a talk or two to give time for transportation and allow for more reflection time. The Environment pillar task force will continue to look for other places and discern the plan for spring 2025.



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CEC Experience/Outreach- Communications/Discipleship Pillars:

The focus for the fall pilot 2024 weekend will be innovative and allow the actions steps of the Experience/Discipleship pillar to guide us with the help of Outreach/Communications.

The CEC Experience task force leader and Leadership team will revise the guidelines for the back table and team so we can move new leaders up sooner who are qualified.

Note: For the fall pilot 2024 weekend, we will have coordinators who are fully qualified, part of the strategic team, aware of the strategic plan and will collaborate with the strategic team pillar task force. OALC has approved trained spiritual directors (female and male) to sit at back table and serve as spiritual directors on the weekend due to the priest shortage. (see stats above).

We will continue to prioritize efforts to seek and invite priests to serve as Spiritual Directors, as well as, have priests highly present on the weekends, host priest talks, masses, adoration, and reconciliation.

Advancement and Development Pillar:

This pillar team will equip leaders and create a leadership training path including forums/workshops and discussions. For example: past back table coordinators will share strengths and weaknesses of the weekend to future coordinators where they collaborate upon ideas for improvement.

This pillar task force will focus on spring 2025 leadership training to include the executive functioning skills of leading teams and weekends. This advancement/development to lead CEC weekends will include future training and workshops.

This team will help us align the strategic plan to the mission statement, create networking with the Omaha Archdiocese, parishes and clergy.



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APPENDIX

CEC Strategic Plan Task Force Implementation Team



1. **Kent Riesberg**, Development/Advancement Pillar Leader
2. **Randy Veik**, CEC Experience Pillar Leader, OALC Leadership Team
3. **Nathan Buchholz**, Environment Pillar Leader
4. **Cora Thelen**, Outreach Pillar Leader, OALC Leadership Team
5. **Lynn Schultz**, Discipleship Pillar Leader
6. **Carol Hoover**, Prayer Team Coordinator for Strategic Plan, OALC Leadership Team
7. Suzie Lewandowski, OALC Leadership Team
8. Pat Gredys, OALC Leadership Team
9. Ray Beck, OALC Leadership Team
10. Julie Bloomingdale, OALC Leadership Team
11. John Lewandowski
12. Chris Nelson
13. Patrick Mejstrik
14. Teresa Mejstrik
15. John Martin, OALC Leadership Team
16. Helen Andrews, OALC Leadership Team
17. Theresa Des Rosiers, OALC Leadership Team
18. Chuck Adams
19. Susan Adams

Ann Gredys - Strategic Plan Implementation Coordinator (volunteer)

Olivier Coutant - St. Wenceslaus, Director of Liturgy & Communications assisting Cora