Phase I (36 – 18 months out) Laying a foundation

I. Share what you know as soon as it is practical and in multiple ways.
   - A letter to parishioners
   - Bulletin insert
   - Preach – speak from pulpit
   - Meet with pastoral staff and key parish groups (Pastoral Council and Finance Council). Focus on: information, prayer, Archbishop Schnurr video, *Vibrant Church*, resources on Website.
   - Well organized town meetings.
   - Write a pastoral region prayer that is prayed often and speaks to the emerging new reality.
   - Develop a Communication Plan, e.g., person responsible for website, dedicated spot in bulletin.
   - Publish names of Pastoral Council members and other key committees.
   - Write up a Q & A (do a bulletin insert; put on website).
   - Set up interactive website, that is, place where parishioners can pose questions and concerns.

Message: (You can never communicate too much!)
   - The future will be different (not better or worse).
   - The need to plan; archdiocesan trends in clergy vocations, population shifts, etc.
   - Opportunity for the parish(es) to be a vibrant church in new ways.
   - Opportunity for greater role for lay leadership
   - Alert parishioners to information on Archdiocesan website (Cf. “Pastoral Region”)
   - Ask parishioners their preferred methods of communication from you (e.g., survey).

Note: Typical parish now made up of four to five generations.
   - Communicate by your presence at events and activities.

Note: A time of change and transition may require even more pastor sensitivity than usual.
   - *Always let people know where you’re headed and why!* (Never be afraid to say: “I don’t know.”)
   - Our restructuring will be a “mission centered” process grounded in prayerful discernment and trusting in the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

II. Formation & Education for Leadership
   - Encourage parish staff, pastoral council members, key parish leaders to participate in deanery and/or Archdiocesan and other formation/training events, e.g., on-line courses.
   - Provide information and Formation for Pastoral Council members to equip them with needed skills for their emerging role in Pastoral Region leadership.
   - Educate self and others. (Examples: dynamics of change and transition; conflict; patterns of grieving in the midst of difficult change; the role of uncertainty; optional operational models)

III. Pastoral Leadership – exercise strong servant leadership and presence
   - Establish your own ministerial priorities in consultation with the Pastoral Council.
   - Develop a ministerial self-care program (prayer, exercise, reading, healthy diet)
   - Form a leadership coalition (parish staff, pastoral council, other parish leaders) to assist you.
   - Revisit mission statement, assess parish needs, establish core values, set pastoral priorities.
   - Reinforce/establish collaborative efforts, social gatherings with other parishes in region.
   - Begin to think about the future of the pastoral region with regard to inter-parish cooperation.

Phase II (24 – 6 months out) Beginning the process of joining the cultures of the parishes in the region
I. Educate yourself, pastoral staff, pastoral council and other key leaders:
   • Pastoral Region planning values and parameters.
   • How to become a Vibrant Church
   • The use of a regional prayer to set the tone of meetings and focus tasks; pray the regional prayer or add a petition for the region regularly at weekend Masses.
   • Learn how to pay attention to the signs of resistance and grieving.
   • Note the levels of Cooperation and Collaboration and their meaning for this region.
   • Explore the information about different pastoral region models
   • Learn from the research about blended families
   • Highlight the individual charisms and cultures of the parishes in the region.
   • Discuss the implications for staffing in the future

II. Establish (with input from Pastoral Council) a representative “Coordinating Committee.” (Cf. Role definition on Archdiocesan “Pastoral Region” website). Consider a member of each Pastoral Council on the PRCC.
   • Provide ongoing information and Formation for Pastoral Council members as they support the Pastoral Region planning process.
   • Clarify the role of the PRCC in relation to the Pastoral Councils.
   • Send committee members to deanery formation programs.
   • Avail committee of success factors from the Archdiocese and beyond.
   • Identify integration issues.
   • Plan joint events and activities among the parishes of the pastoral region.
   • Lead away from “my/our” toward a “we” mentality.
   • Chart a basic course for the future of the pastoral region with regard to inter-parish cooperation – ministry, resources, pastoral staff. ((Assess the different parish cultures to address this question.)

III. Ongoing Communication
   • Preach strategically (that is, as things develop; as rumors are heard; as individuals or groups begin arguing over numbers, win/lose situations, etc. rather than how to be mission focused).
   • Make effective use of the parish website, bulletins, newsletters, a FAQ document.
   • Visit regularly and engage with the Archdiocesan website (Cf. Pastoral Region)
   • Teach, preach, lead discussions about the purpose of a parish, the mission of A Vibrant Church.

IV. Pastoral Leadership
   • Continue to be present in an understanding, patient and positive way at events and parish meetings.
   • Keep the Pastoral Council engaged, informed, equipped and involved in all steps in the planning.
   • Sponsor well organized parish “speak outs” or town meetings.
   • Keep parish staff apprised of planning developments; prepare for potential implications for staff alignment with the Pastoral Region Plan.
   • Work with finance council to clarify the budget process, assess the state of the parish finances.
   • Remember: don’t take things personally when people get angry, ask hard questions, impugn motives, complain, cry or threaten to leave.
   • Remember: place God and prayer at the center of all you do.
Phase III (12 – 0 months out) Building the Pastoral Region Plan

I. Develop the representative Pastoral Region Coordinating Committee. Things to consider:
   • Develop a covenant of mutual expectations, meeting and operational principles.
   • Study Archdiocesan resources
   • Study the cultures of each parish in the region and as much about each parish as possible.
   • Visit each others’ churches and facilities.
   • Review Pastoral Region Plans submitted in the past – if applicable.
   • Update the Parish Profiles – data about all aspects of the parishes.
   • Assess current efforts at cooperation and collaboration between parishes in the region; identify possible ways for future cooperation and collaboration.
   • Draw conclusions on how much cooperation and collaboration is desired and/or possible.
   • Mail questionnaires and/or surveys to parishioners for feedback as appropriate.
   • Set up a joint meeting and training, as needed, of key groups (PRCC, Pastoral and Finance Councils, parish staffs) to clarify roles and responsibilities and communication protocols best suited to this pastoral region.
   • Set up a dedicated portion of parish bulletins for regular pastoral region planning updates.
   • Develop a pastoral region planning prayer (if not done previously).
   • Hold parish meetings that are effectively organized and even facilitated (review findings in “situation audit”/solicit questions and concerns); establish ground rules; meetings are not open to “a vote.”

II. Develop a Pastoral Region Plan
   • Make use of Pastoral Region Planning Tool as a template for the Plan.
   • Conduct a financial audit, a buildings audit, a review of mass schedules and an assessment of current and future staffing needs.
   • Consult with Fr. Wenke for feasibility of plan before taking to pastoral councils for feedback.
   • Present Plan draft to pastoral councils for feedback and input on how and what to present to parish communities.
   • Present Plan draft to parish communities; solicit feedback.
   • Adjust plan as needed; present to Parish Pastoral Councils for ratification.
   • Send to the Dean and then to the Archbishop for approval.

III. Pastoral Leadership
   • Consider asking the Pastoral and Finance Councils to meet on the same evening each month.
   • Establish and make public a schedule (days and hours) of when you will be present at each parish.
   • During this transition time clarify the roles and responsibilities of each parish staff member, as well as deacons (if applicable).
   • Plan joint liturgical and/or social activities.
   • Keep balance between the energies and attention needed for the “pastoral” and “administrative” areas of responsibility.

IV. Ongoing Communications
   • Repeat steps described in Phase II.
Phase IV (12 – 0 months out) Implementing the Pastoral Region Plan

I. Guiding Principles for Implementation
   • Implement changes for 6 months or a year; evaluate, adjust as needed.
   • Restructuring does not happen with start-up date. Pastoral region pastor must give time/effort to understand and manage the different parish cultures.
   • Pastor lives at one parish, has offices at another parish.
   • Always be ready for surprises, both good and bad.
   • Remember that everyone has to lose something. The best compromises are the ones where everyone understands and accepts both gains and losses.

II. Pastoral Leadership
   • Set up a representative “transition team” whose main function is to monitor the implementation of the Plan and raise issues and/or make recommendations to the Pastoral Councils.
   • Establish goals and priorities for the year.
   • Communicate developments; celebrate successes.
   • Balance individual parish needs and needs of the Pastoral Region
   • Spend time getting to know the parish staffs and parishioners.
   • Address/work out administrative issues (Cf. P. Lesher Guide)
   • Set up regular schedule for staff meetings, especially if plan calls for Pastoral Administrator.
   • At the end of the first year, involve the Transition Committee and/or the Pastoral Councils in an assessment of how things are going. Some criteria for a successful pastoral region:

      a) There are visible signs of A Vibrant Church in the Pastoral Region.
      b) There is a sense of unity flowing from common goals and priorities that were set.
      c) There is a certain stability achieved through paying attention to transition dynamics and successfully negotiating those passages.
      d) See stewardship as a governing principle, that is, invite/involve as many people as possible to get involved in the mission.
      e) Monitor the growth or decline in membership and number of people involved in ministries, programs and organization groups.
      f) There is a good balance between the needs of the individual parishes and those of the region.
      g) The new reality of ministry is life-giving for the pastor and the pastoral staffs.
      h) There is a sense of hope and are all still praying and staying at the Table of the Lord?