

Report of the Catholic Parishes of St. Michael and St. Francis Xavier



To Bishop Richard Malone

And Members of the Presbyteral Council,
College of Consultors, and
Diocesan Finance Council

PROPOSAL FOR CANONICAL MERGER

May 13, 2008

Remembering the past with gratitude.

Living the present with enthusiasm.

Looking to the future with confidence.

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The Parishes of St. Michael and St. Francis Xavier

Request for a Canonical Merger

The Parish of St. Francis Xavier in Winthrop, with its mission community of St. Leo in Litchfield are part of Cluster 13 which also includes St. Michael Parish and Sacred Heart Parish in Hallowell. St. Michael Parish was established on July 1, 2007 with the canonical merger of St. Mary of the Assumption (Augusta), St. Augustine (Augusta), St. Andrew (Augusta), St. Joseph (Gardiner), and St. Denis (Whitefield). We are seeking, on behalf of the parishioners of St. Francis Xavier and St. Leo, approval from the Bishop of Portland to canonically merge St. Francis Xavier Parish along with its mission church of St. Leo into St. Michael Parish in July, 2008. Since the Cluster 13 Plan, approved by Bishop Malone on October 3, 2006, calls for the eventual merger of all eight Cluster 13 worship sites into one canonical parish, this would be the second step of a merger that will eventually also include Sacred Heart (Hallowell). A copy of the Cluster 13 Pastoral Plan is included in the Appendix of this report.

On August 1, 2007, Father Louis Phillips, administrator of St. Michael Parish, was appointed administrator of St. Francis Xavier Parish as well. The two parishes and seven worship sites are currently served by three parochial vicars: Father Ralph Boisvert, Father William Modlin, and Father Brian Blanchette. All four priests have an office at the Pastoral Center in Augusta. Since August 1, 2007, David Alexander, the St. Michael Parish Business Coordinator assumed fiscal supervision of St. Francis Xavier and St. Leo, and Gail Gould, St. Michael Parish Life Coordinator assumed supervision of the sacramental preparation, religious education and worship programs at St. Francis Xavier and St. Leo. The parish bookkeeper, Lorraine Cottrell, who was employed by St. Francis Xavier is now working at the Pastoral Center in Augusta. Nancy Yocono, the St. Francis Xavier Parish Catechetical Leader maintains an on-site office at the St. Francis Religious Education Center, while meeting on a weekly basis with Gail Gould at the Pastoral Center in Augusta.

All St. Francis Xavier Parish sacramental records, parish files, and financial records have been transferred to the Pastoral Center in Augusta. The St. Francis Xavier Parish office was only open one morning a week (Mondays), staffed by a volunteer secretary. We have continued to maintain these Monday morning office hours for the convenience of parishioners. Parishioners are also now served at the Pastoral Center in Augusta Mondays through Fridays from 9 a.m. until 5 p.m.

The St. Francis and St. Leo Pastoral Councils and Finance Councils have continued to meet in preparation for this report. Two members from the St. Francis community and two members from the St. Leo community have been serving on the St. Michael Pastoral Council since July, 2007. Likewise, two members from the St. Francis and St. Leo communities have represented their churches on the St. Michael Finance Council since July, 2007. Following the merger of St. Francis Xavier Parish into St. Michael Parish, the St. Leo and St. Francis Pastoral Councils will become church life

subcommittees, and the former Parish Finance Councils will become budget and property subcommittees for the two worship sites.

Process of Collaboration and Consultation

In the past ten months, there has been a considerable and ongoing effort at collaboration between the St. Francis, St Leo and St. Michael communities. These collaboration efforts include nearly every facet of parish life, both administrative and pastoral. These are described below.

Religious Education and Faith Formation Programs

We have continued to maintain the St. Francis Xavier religious education site. The on-site director is Nancy Yocono who has served in this capacity for 19 years, and the program is under the supervision of the St. Michael Parish Life Coordinator, Gail Gould. There are 98 students enrolled in the elementary religious education program at St. Francis and 23 high school students in youth ministry. St. Leo church no longer maintains an on-site religious education program. Children of parents who attend Mass at St. Leo receive their religious education at either St. Francis Xavier or St. Joseph in Gardiner.

In accord with the original Cluster 13 Pastoral Plan, following the parish merger, we will continue to offer religious education at four sites: St. Mary (Augusta), St. Joseph (Gardiner), St. Denis (Whitefield) and St. Francis Xavier (Winthrop). There will be one integrated curriculum for all four sites, and all four sites will maintain the same calendar. The Parish Life Coordinator supervises and coordinates the work of all the Parish Catechetical Leaders serving St. Michael Parish.

Liturgical Collaboration

Currently, both the St. Francis Xavier and St. Leo communities maintain an active Worship and Spirituality Committee to plan and coordinate liturgical functions at its respective worship site. Additionally, both of these worship sites have representatives on the combined St. Michel Parish Worship and Spirituality Commission, composed of members from each of the seven on-site Worship and Spirituality Committees which meets approximately four times each year to plan and coordinate those liturgical events that involve more than one faith community. These have included Reconciliation Services, Advent and Lenten spiritual programs, Thanksgiving Day Mass, Celebration of First Eucharist and Confirmation, and the Easter Triduum.

Communications

In addition to the St. Francis Xavier weekly bulletin, the St. Michael bulletin has been made available on a weekly basis at both St. Francis and St. Leo churches since

August, 2007. The St. Francis bulletin will cease publication in July, 2008, and an expanded St. Michael bulletin will be introduced.

A letter from the administrator explaining the proposal for canonical merger was included as an insert in the January 26-27 bulletins at St. Francis and St. Leo churches. A letter of explanation was also printed in the St. Michael Parish bulletin the following weekend. Copies of these letters are included in the Appendix of this Report (pages 23-25).

Augusta-Gardiner-Whitefield Catholic Pastoral Center

The Pastoral Center, the site of the former rectory at St. Mary, has housed the pastoral and administrative offices for St. Mary's and St. Andrews since the summer of 2003. In August, 2004, the pastoral and administrative staffs of the three Augusta parishes all moved into the Pastoral Center, closing the parish office at St. Augustine. Since that time, the parish offices at St. Joseph and St. Denis have also been closed, the former office spaces utilized for residential and rental purposes, and all administrative staff housed under one roof at the Pastoral Center on Western Avenue in Augusta. As noted above, the bookkeeper employed by St. Francis Xavier Parish has already been relocated to the Pastoral Center. The volunteer secretary continues to staff the parish office in Winthrop on Monday mornings for the convenience of parishioners. In all likelihood, we would continue to offer this service after the merger takes effect providing volunteer service is available. Currently, in addition to the clergy, there are a total of 14 employees (full and part time) assigned to the Pastoral Center, serving both the St. Michael and St. Francis Xavier parishioners.

Consultation with the Pastoral Councils

The administrative and pastoral team has been in regular and on-going dialogue with the Pastoral Councils and Finance Councils of St. Francis and St. Leo (even though St. Leo is a mission of St. Francis Xavier, it has maintained a separate Pastoral Council and Finance Council). In the Fall of 2007, following the August, 2007 assignment of the administrator and parochial vicars to St. Francis Xavier Parish, council members began to consider a timetable for canonical merger under the guidelines of the Cluster 13 Pastoral Plan. At the January 15, 2008 combined meeting of the St. Francis Xavier and St. Leo Pastoral Councils, consensus was reached that St. Francis Xavier along with its mission church of St. Leo be canonically merged into St. Michael Parish by July, 2008.

Meeting separately, the St. Francis Xavier and St. Leo Finance Councils also achieved consensus on the July, 2008 merger of the parishes. Here, some concern was raised about how parishioners might react to the prospect of the St. Francis savings account in excess of \$400,000 being consolidated into the finances of the larger parish. However, it was also agreed that there are a number of pressing maintenance and repair needs at the St. Francis Xavier facility and that it would be advantageous to address these projects prior to the merger (at least from a budgetary prospective). The St. Francis Xavier Building and Grounds Committee met with the administrator on February 11 to identify and prioritize these needs (See "Church Buildings and Grounds," page 15). The administrator and finance councils agreed that when the parishioners are presented with

the merger proposal, they would also be assured that a number of capital improvements will be made at the St. Francis Xavier facility in the near future.

Additionally, members of the St. Michael Pastoral Council unanimously agreed with the proposal to canonically merge St. Francis Xavier Parish and its mission church of St. Leo into St. Michael Parish by July, 2008. The merger was also approved by the St. Michael Parish Finance Council at its February 25, 2008 meeting.

Pulpit Presentations: February, 2008

The administrator made a “Pastoral Plan Presentation” explaining the meaning, rationale, and ramifications of parish merger at each of his weekend Masses at St. Francis Xavier on the weekend of February 3-4 and at the Sunday liturgy at St. Leo on February 10. This 15 minute presentation explained the reasons we are seeking a merger of the five parishes at this time, as well as the practical implications and benefits of the proposed merger and how it will affect parishioners. Parishioners were then encouraged to attend and participate in one of the upcoming three listening and information sessions.

Information and Listening Sessions

In order to provide an opportunity for parishioners to ask questions about the mergers and to share their insights or concerns about the proposed parish consolidation, a series of three “information and listening” sessions with the administrator and members of the Pastoral Council were scheduled. The first of the sessions took place between the 8:00 a.m. and 10:30 a.m. Masses at St. Francis Xavier Church Hall on Sunday, February 24. This was followed by an evening session, also at St. Francis Xavier Hall, on Wednesday February 27 (postponed from February 23 due to snow.). A final session took place after the 11:30 a.m. Mass at St. Leo on Sunday, March 2. Feedback from these sessions was recorded, and will help to guide the pastoral team, pastoral council and parish commissions in implementing the merger plans over the coming months.

No parishioner expressed any objection to the proposed merger at any of the three sessions. The mood at all three sessions was both positive and cordial. Most of the questions and concerns that were raised were about Mass times, perceived maintenance needs, status of parish groups, and procedures for obtaining certificates and Mass cards. The combined minutes of the information sessions are presented in Appendix D of this Report.

Demographic Factors

Registered Families

According to our most recent census figures for the five parishes, the number of registered parishioner households in St. Francis Xavier Parish is 279, with an estimated number of 850 individual Catholics. The current figures for St. Michael Parish are 4025 registered households and 9500 individual Catholics. Thus, the proposed merger will result in a total of 4304 registered households and 10,350 individual Catholics.

Population Trends

The Augusta city area has been experiencing a decline in both general and most notably in school-aged population in recent years. This is a trend that is expected to continue. When taken as a whole, the projected population of all the towns that comprise Cluster 13 remains relatively steady over the next 15 years. Two areas of growth within the Cluster are indicated: Whitefield (St. Denis) and the Winthrop/Litchfield area (St. Francis and St. Leo).

In December, 2005, the Maine State Planning Office released its population projections for the years 2005 through 2020 by county and town. The next two pages present a table of these projections (general population and age 5-17 year-old population) for the towns that comprise Cluster 13, which represents both the potential pool of students for our Augusta Catholic Schools as well as the next generation of parishioners. On the third following page, a demographic analysis of the current St. Francis Xavier Parish area is provided since population projections there indicate a significantly different trend than the rest of the cluster areas with the exception of Whitefield which is presented below.

POPULATION PROJECTIONS FOR ST. DENIS CHURCH AREA, WHITEFIELD

2005-2020

SOURCE: Maine State Planning Office
December, 2005

County	Minor Civil Division	2000	2005	2010	2015	2020
Knox	WASHINGTON	1345	1458	1574	1686	1788
Lincoln	JEFFERSON	2388	2593	2803	3010	3200
Lincoln	WHITEFIELD	2273	2449	2629	2803	2960
TOTALS		6006	6500	7005	7499	7947

CLUSTER 13 TOWNS

GENERAL POPULATION PROJECTIONS

2005-2020

SOURCE: Maine State Planning Office
December, 2005

County	Minor Civil Division	2000	2005	2010	2015	2020
Kennebec	AUGUSTA	18560	17924	16996	15931	14700
Kennebec	BELGRADE	2978	3281	3554	3814	4044
Kennebec	BENTON	2557	2706	2825	2930	3011
Kennebec	CHELSEA	2559	2629	2665	2685	2682
Kennebec	CHINA	4106	4517	4886	5237	5547
Kennebec	FARMINGDALE	2804	2924	3008	3077	3119
Kennebec	FAYETTE	1040	1137	1223	1305	1376
Kennebec	GARDINER	6198	6130	5970	5768	5509
Kennebec	HALLOWELL	2467	2413	2322	2213	2082
Kennebec	LITCHFIELD	3110	3470	3799	4117	4403
Kennebec	MANCHESTER	2465	2665	2838	3000	3137
Kennebec	MONMOUTH	3785	4093	4360	4608	4819
Kennebec	MOUNT VERNON	1524	1684	1828	1966	2089
Kennebec	PITTSTON	2548	2706	2833	2948	3037
Kennebec	RANDOLPH	1911	1947	1957	1955	1935
Kennebec	READFIELD	2360	2542	2697	2841	2962
Kennebec	SIDNEY	3514	3944	4341	4724	5072
Kennebec	VASSALBOROUGH	4047	4292	4489	4666	4802
Kennebec	WAYNE	1112	1232	1340	1444	1537
Kennebec	WEST GARDINER	2902	3176	3420	3651	3853
Kennebec	WINDSOR	2204	2397	2567	2726	2864
Kennebec	WINTHROP	6232	6536	6762	6955	7088
Knox	WASHINGTON	1345	1458	1574	1686	1788
Lincoln	JEFFERSON	2388	2593	2803	3010	3200
Lincoln	WHITEFIELD	2273	2449	2629	2803	2960
TOTALS		86989	90847	93686	96061	97614

CLUSTER 13 TOWNS

POPULATION PROJECTIONS FOR AGE GROUP: 5—17 YEARS

2005-2020

SOURCE: Maine State Planning Office
December, 2005

County	Minor Civil Division	2000	2005	2010	2015	2020
Kennebec	AUGUSTA	2859	2399	2005	1801	1662
Kennebec	BELGRADE	603	598	591	616	653
Kennebec	BENTON	495	470	445	448	460
Kennebec	CHELSEA	492	452	416	406	406
Kennebec	CHINA	911	911	907	947	1003
Kennebec	FARMINGDALE	492	454	420	414	420
Kennebec	FAYETTE	194	189	184	189	200
Kennebec	GARDINER	1179	1042	920	861	822
Kennebec	HALLOWELL	413	355	305	280	263
Kennebec	LITCHFIELD	644	648	649	684	731
Kennebec	MANCHESTER	469	453	438	448	468
Kennebec	MONMOUTH	788	770	750	771	806
Kennebec	MOUNT VERNON	315	314	312	326	347
Kennebec	PITTSTON	483	458	435	438	451
Kennebec	RANDOLPH	353	320	291	281	278
Kennebec	READFIELD	521	510	498	511	533
Kennebec	SIDNEY	718	726	730	771	828
Kennebec	VASSALBOROUGH	846	811	776	784	807
Kennebec	WAYNE	230	230	229	240	255
Kennebec	WEST GARDINER	542	529	515	532	561
Kennebec	WINDSOR	439	429	419	431	453
Kennebec	WINTHROP	1104	1026	954	947	965
Knox	WASHINGTON	251	243	237	246	261
Lincoln	JEFFERSON	454	441	432	449	477
Lincoln	WHITEFIELD	482	470	463	480	507
TOTALS		16277	15249	14322	14302	14615

POPULATION PROJECTIONS FOR ST. FRANCIS XAVIER/ ST LEO CHURCHES AREA

2005-2020

SOURCE: Maine State Planning Office
December, 2005

County	Minor Civil Division	2000	2005	2010	2015	2020
Kennebec	FAYETTE	1040	1137	1223	1305	1376
Kennebec	LITCHFIELD	3110	3470	3799	4117	4403
Kennebec	MONMOUTH	3785	4093	4360	4608	4819
Kennebec	MOUNT VERNON	1524	1684	1828	1966	2089
Kennebec	READFIELD	2360	2542	2697	2841	2962
Kennebec	WAYNE	1112	1232	1340	1444	1537
Kennebec	WEST GARDINER	2902	3176	3420	3651	3853
Kennebec	WINTHROP	6232	6536	6762	6955	7088
TOTALS		22065	23870	25429	26887	28127

AGE GROUP: 5—17 YEARS

County	Minor Civil Division	2000	2005	2010	2015	2020
Kennebec	FAYETTE	194	189	184	189	200
Kennebec	LITCHFIELD	644	648	649	684	731
Kennebec	MONMOUTH	788	770	750	771	806
Kennebec	MOUNT VERNON	315	314	312	326	347
Kennebec	READFIELD	521	510	498	511	533
Kennebec	WAYNE	230	230	229	240	255
Kennebec	WEST GARDINER	542	529	515	532	561
Kennebec	WINTHROP	1104	1026	954	947	965
TOTALS		4338	4216	4091	4200	4398

Analysis

Overall, the Maine State Planning Office projects a modest increase in overall population over the next 15 years for the towns comprising the present territory of St. Francis Xavier Parish: an increase of 4207 or 15.13%. This compares to a 7.45% projected increase in population for all of the towns of Cluster 13. Over the same time span, the population of the city of Augusta is expected to decrease by 3224, or 17.98%.

There is also a modest projected increase in the school aged population for the towns comprising the present territory of St. Francis Xavier Parish over the next 15 years: an increase of 182 or 4.14%. While this is a small increase, it runs counter to the trend showing a decrease of school aged population of all the towns of Cluster 13: between 2005 and 2010, there is a projected 6.1% decline in school-aged children (from 15,249 to 14,322); which, for all practical purposes, is expected to be the approximate population of school aged children through the year 2020 in the Cluster 13 towns.

These population projections reveal that we can likely expect continued modest growth and development in the eight towns that are in the closest proximity to St. Francis and St. Leo churches.

Sacramental Data, Mass Attendance, and Religious Education Enrollment

Baptisms

In 2006, there were a total of seven infant baptisms and 2 adult baptisms at St. Francis Xavier Parish. This compares to a total of 67 infant baptisms, 5 minor baptisms, 10 adult baptisms, and 14 received into full communion at St. Michael Parish in 2006.

Marriages

In 2006, there were a total of two weddings at St. Francis Xavier Parish and a total of 35 weddings at St. Michael Parish.

Mass Attendance

On the weekend of March 8-9, 2008, as part of our process in reviewing weekend Mass schedules, attendance counts were conducted at all of the worship sites of St. Michael and St. Francis Xavier Parishes. The results are listed below:

St. Joseph	4:00 p.m.	145
	9:30 a.m.	165
St. Augustine	4:00 p.m.	291
	7:30 a.m.	121
	10:30 a.m.	262
St. Andrew	9:00 a.m.	198
St. Mary	5:30 p.m.	140
	7:30 a.m.	138
	9:00 a.m.	198
St. Denis	11:00 a.m.	138
St. Francis X	4:00 p.m.	186
	8:00 a.m.	110
	10:30 a.m.	158
St. Leo	11:30 a.m.	47*

*(Mass time was recently moved from 8:30 a.m.)

It should be noted that a Mass Schedule Committee is currently working on a revised weekend Mass schedule that would accommodate three priests for a total of 12 Masses per weekend. The Committee will present its final plan to the parishioners by the end of May, 2008, and it will be put into effect if, and when, there are only three priests assigned to St. Michael Parish (currently there are four).

Financial Data

Financial data relating to expenses and revenue for St. Francis and St. Leo has been kept separate on the two churches since 2001. Below are the first year savings accounts ending balances and current savings account data. The Balance of the current joint checking account as of 2/29/2008 was \$11,279.60

Saint Leo's Savings	6/30/2002	\$48,786.88
Saint Leo's Savings	2/29/2008	\$58,836.63
Saint Francis Savings	6/30/2002	\$331,728.63
Saint Francis Savings	2/29/2008	\$418,412.72

The average monthly collections for St. Francis. (July 2001 through December 2007) are presented in the table below. Receipts include interest on savings accounts, donations and bequests. Expenses rose slightly in 2005-06, in part due to an accounting change where receipts for special projects were no longer included as an offset to the expense account. The average expenses of St. Francis include an allocation of rectory & pastor's living expenses, but does not include any cluster allocation adjustment.

RECEIPTS St. Francis:

01 to 02	02 to 03	03 to 04	04 to 05	05 to 06	06 to 07	07 to 08
2,877	3,098	3,265	3,447	3,673	3,921	4,650

EXPENSES St. Francis:

01 to 02	02 to 03	03 to 04	04 to 05	05 to 06	06 to 07	07 to 08
3,633	2,988	3,023	3,233	3,640	3,684	3,916

St. Leo average weekly receipts are listed below. St. Leo had a large bequest not included in the 2003 receipts of \$ 45,630.49. The money was deposited in the checking account to pay for some repairs and maintenance. The intention was to transfer the balance into savings; however, in 2003 through 2006 shortfalls in receipts over expenses resulted in using the money to cover normal operating expenses. The average weekly expenses of St. Leo include the cost to maintain the buildings at St Leo and includes allocation of rectory & pastor's living expenses, but does not include any cluster allocation adjustment.

RECEIPTS St. Leo:

01 to 02	02 to 03	03 to 04	04 to 05	05 to 06	06 to 07	07 to 08
778	883	759	727	807	886	852

EXPENSES St. Leo:

01 to 02	02 to 03	03 to 04	04 to 05	05 to 06	06 to 07	07 to 08
700	752	781	854	1026	775	679

The goal for both parishes was that weekly and monthly collections would cover normal operating costs and any needed repairs and maintenance. If any additional repairs were needed that were not funded through fundraising or the men's or woman's club donations, savings would be used.

Statement of Financial Position
ST. FRANCIS XAVIER PARISH
 YTD Cumulative Thru Period 8 (2/29/2008)

ASSETS**Current Assets**

CASH IN INTEREST BEARING CHECKING	
Cash in Interest Bearing Checking Acct.	11,729.60
CASH IN REGULAR CHECKING ACCOUNT	
PETTY CASH	
Petty Cash	50.00
SAVINGS ACCOUNTS (PASS BOOKS &	
Catholic Women's Club (FCU)	4,347.64
St. Francis Parish Mens Club (KEY)	1,194.78
INVESTMENTS - STOCKS,BONDS,MUTUAL	
INVESTMENTS - DIOCESAN POOL	
DEPOSITS - DIOCESAN S & L	
Deposits-Diocesan S&L-St. Francis Xavier	418,412.72
Deposits-Diocesan-S&L-St. Leo-Litchfield	58,836.63
OTHER ASSETS	
Pre-Paid Fuel	<u>3,040.29</u>
Total Current Assets	<u>497,611.66</u>
TOTAL ASSETS	<u>497,611.66</u>

LIABILITIES AND FUND BALANCES**Current Liabilities**

FICA AND MEDICARE TAXES	
INCOME TAX - FEDERAL	
HEALTH INSURANCE	
INCOME TAX - STATE	
LOANS FROM DIOCESAN S & L	
LOANS - OTHER	
ACCOMMODATION - PRIESTS	
Accom.-Mass Stipends	110.58
ACCOMMODATION - EMPLOYEES	
ACCOMMODATION - PARISH	
Accom.-St.Leo- Parish	(856.09)
ACCOMMODATION - OTHER	
Accom-Cattholic Women's Club	4,347.64
Accom.-St F Parish Men's Club	1,194.78
ACCOUNTS PAYABLE	<u>1,432.87</u>
Total Current Liabilities	<u>6,229.78</u>
TOTAL Liabilities	<u>6,229.78</u>
Fund Balance	
UNRESTRICTED FUND BALANCE	487,315.80
Net Activity	4,066.08
Ending Balance	<u>491,381.88</u>
TOTAL Fund Balances	<u>491,381.88</u>
TOTAL LIABILITIES AND FUND BALANCES	<u>497,611.66</u>

Buildings and Grounds / Capital Improvements

As part of the overall planning process for canonical merger, the St. Francis Xavier Building and Grounds Committee, after careful study, presented a number of recommendations for improvements at the St. Francis facility. There are listed below in order of priority:

- 1) Repaving the Parking Lot
- 2) Construction of a handicapped-accessible reconciliation room in the Church
- 3) Completion of Sanctuary Renovations begun in October, 2007
- 4) Replacement of 30-year-old carpeting in church (includes removal of asbestos tile)
- 5) Replacement of 30-year-old shingles on rectory roof.
- 6) Renovation of two restrooms in church hall
- 7) Replacement of rectory furnace with a more energy efficient model
- 8) Replacement of signage
- 9) Construction of additional storage facilities in church and hall

It is proposed that the above projects, once diocesan approval is obtained, be funded with the savings currently held by St. Francis Church (in order of the priority listed above), and that construction begin in the Spring of 2008. This plan has been presented to and represents the consensus of the Parish Administrator, Business Coordinator, St. Francis Xavier Finance Council, St. Michael Finance Council, and St. Francis Xavier Pastoral Council.

The St. Leo Finance Council which also has the responsibility of overseeing the Buildings and Grounds at St. Leo has recommended that it's savings be used to fund the immediate repaving of a portion of the parking lot at St. Leo. The plan has been presented to and represents the consensus of the Parish Administrator, Business Coordinator, St. Michael Finance Council, and St. Leo Pastoral Council.

These projects at the two church sites should suffice in meeting foreseeable capital improvement needs at the two church sites for at least the next five years. While the parishes will not be contributing significant savings when canonically merged with St. Michael Parish, it is also anticipated that the improved physical condition of the two church sites will pose a significant asset to St. Michael Parish while also contributing to the overall morale of the current St. Francis Xavier parishioners who have generously supported their church sites over the years prior to the merger.

Recommendation for Merger

The parishioners of St. Francis Xavier, St. Leo and St. Michael parishes are in general consensus that these communities be canonically merged into one parish of St. Michael in July, 2008. This consensus is a result of several years of pastoral and administrative collaboration between the church communities comprising Cluster 13, and the experience of sharing the same clergy, pastoral staff, and Pastoral Center. There has also been a sharing of material resources, as all of the churches have assumed proportionate responsibility for the shared expenses associated with this collaboration. Pragmatically, the proposed merger is fiscally responsible and administratively efficient. The merger will help this community to exercise sound and prudent stewardship, making better use of the limited human and material resources for the mission of the Church in Central Maine. In short, the proposed merger is a matter of practical evangelization and as such, reflects the vision presented in the New Evangelization Plan for the Diocese of Portland.

Since the approved plan for Cluster 13 incorporates Model 1 of *Telling Anew the Story of Jesus*, the one merged parish model, this represents the second step in realizing our parish vision—coming exactly one year after the July 1, 2007 canonical establishment of St. Michael Parish from the five churches of St. Mary, St. Andrew, St. Augustine, St. Joseph and St. Denis. The parish leaders and the parishioners of St. Francis Xavier and St. Leo Churches have clearly indicated their desire to become St. Michael parishioners on the upcoming first anniversary of the establishment of St. Michael Parish.

As we have come to know one another, pray and worship with one another, and work with and plan with one another, we have also come to trust and respect one another. Our experience of “community” and our experience of “Church” has taken us beyond the confines of any one church building, and now our experience of “parish” is ready to be expanded as well.

Respectfully Submitted,

Rev. Louis J. Phillips
Administrator,
St. Michael Parish
St. Francis Xavier Parish

Kelly Duquette
Chair, St. Michael Finance Council

APPENDIX A

Report of the Cluster Transition Team Cluster 13

Date: June 15, 2006

Participants: William Kiely, Medley Murphy (*St. Andrew's*), Keith Dubois, Laurie LaBonte (*St. Augustine*), Sr. Rachel Boucher (*St. Augustine School*), Deacon Walter Foster, Rachel Horn (*St. Denis*), Russell Cotnoir (*St. Francis Xavier*), Robin Bartholm, Joseph O'Donnell, Esq. (*St. Leo*), Mark Byron, Frank O'Hara (*Sacred Heart*), Nancy Ellis, Ryan McArthur (*St. Mary*), Sr. Barbara Brennan (*St. Mary School*), Joseph Curato, Celeste Turner (*St. Joseph*), Fr. Brian Blanchette, Fr. Ralph Boisvert (*Coordinator*), Fr. Robert Bouchard, Fr. Donald Daigle (deceased), Fr. George Hickey, Fr. Louis Phillips, Ann LeBlanc, Ph.D., (*Facilitator*)

The Gift of Sharing

In the story of the loaves and fishes, Jesus takes a situation of scarcity and turns it into abundance. It was the end of the day, the people were hungry, they were far from home, and they were short of food. There were five loaves and two fishes to feed 5,000 people. Jesus blessed the food, and told the apostles to break it up and share it with everyone. The people shared the food, and when they were done, the apostles collected the leftovers – which came to 12 baskets of food. Jesus blessed the little and it became more than sufficient. The people shared and the scarcity was transformed into abundance.

Today we in the Catholic parishes in the Kennebec Valley – Cluster 13 – feel we are in a place of scarcity. We do not have enough priests. We do not have enough money in the collection. We do not have enough volunteers. We feel we are struggling to keep our heads above water.

The cluster process is an invitation to trust Jesus enough so we can leave our fear of scarcity and experience the abundance that comes from faith and sharing. When we receive what Jesus blesses, there already is abundance. Then we can share with trust and love so the abundance from God becomes reality. Sharing our ministers, money, ideas, faith and energy creates a new reality and we grow as true disciples.

It is in the spirit of the loaves and fishes that we present our cluster report.

Model Chosen

The four models proposed by the Diocesan New Evangelization Planning Committee were reviewed and considered. These were:

<i>Model I</i>	One Pastor, Merged Parish, Centralized Team and Council
<i>Model II</i>	One Pastor, Separate Parishes, Centralized Team and Council
<i>Model III</i>	One Pastor, Build and Close, Centralized Team and Council
<i>Model IV</i>	One Pastor, Combination of Models, Centralized Team and Council

Model I was chosen because it was seen as the best way of using the resources available in the cluster, with the least duplication. Since, regardless of the model chosen, our cluster would have one pastor, a centralized pastoral team, and a single pastoral council, Model I was seen as most applicable to Cluster 13 because of the relatively small geographical distribution of existing parishes. Using this model, it would be possible for priests assigned to the new merged parish to live in a rectory that was centrally located, in Gardiner, facilitating needed travel. In addition, it would be possible to have the Parish Center located in Augusta, the population center for the cluster, and the town where most parishioners would come regularly for work, appointments, and errands.

Model II was actively considered, primarily because of the value of preserving, as much as possible, the distinct identities of individual communities. It was decided, however, that this value could be addressed in Model I, with special attention to strengthening the role of commissions in each church, as well as to the method of selecting pastoral and finance council members. The importance of preserving an equal voice for smaller worship sites was identified as a critical value. Maintaining and strengthening activities unique to each worship site was seen as just as important as increasing collaboration on other, shared and overlapping projects. Model I was seen as having the best potential to be inclusive, as well as unifying, one of the characteristics that we identified as critical for a good plan.

Participants saw Model III as a subset of Model I, believing that the decision to close any existing worship sites and building new should be assertively considered only after existing parishes were merged. While this was seen as the most practical solution in the long run, we agreed that it could be undertaken only after a spirit of trust and collaboration was firmly established in the new, merged, parish. Due to economic pressures this may also be forced upon the Cluster sooner than expected.

Model IV was considered, but, given the relatively short distances between parishes, Model I was preferred.

Implementation Timeline

Cluster 13 in the Augusta, Gardiner, and North Whitefield communities, which comprise 5 worship sites, have already begun sharing three priests, a deacon, and a Pastoral Center staff. In essence, as of this writing 63% of the cluster plan has already been implemented. As indicated elsewhere in this document, the councils, committees, and commissions are already working collaboratively and sharing each others gifts. This document expands upon the efforts already under way.

Specific dates have not been assigned to all tasks below, since there is no way to predict when the plan might be accepted.

- In the Fall, 2006, steps will be taken to discern whether there is a consensus for immediate merging of the three Augusta parishes, and consideration of when St. Joseph (Gardiner) and St. Denis (Whitefield) should be included in this process.
- Combine Augusta/Gardiner/North Whitefield Finance Councils (initiated 3/06). It is expected that financial decisions will be managed by a merged Cluster Finance Council. Resources and deficits are identified in the Parish Inventory.
 - Each church will retain a Budget/Property Subcommittee, two members of which will be appointed, by the Pastor, to the Cluster Finance Council. Each worship site, regardless of size, shall be represented by two members on the Cluster Finance Council.
 - It is recommended that a process be developed allowing individual worship sites to be able to retain and use income from certain unique fundraisers, such as the St. Denis Irish Picnic.
 - Beginning in the fall of 2006, representatives from all cluster parishes will periodically participate in combined Finance Council meetings in order to facilitate the eventual merging of finances. Representation will be according to the two-representatives-per-parish model described above.
- Hold a Cluster-wide information/listening session (completed 4/21/06)
- Beginning in September, 2006, the priests and deacon currently assigned to the cluster will occasionally, when convenient, exchange pulpits between parishes not already sharing priests. The idea here is to begin emphasizing shared ministry within the cluster.
- Host a Cluster-wide activity, possibly a shared celebration, yet to be determined.
- For the past two years the Augusta parishes have been sharing a single bulletin. This was recently expanded to include Gardiner and North Whitefield. . A single cluster bulletin provides easily accessible information about shared activities as well as those unique to individual worship sites.
- The current Augusta-Gardiner Catholic Community website would eventually be expanded.
- Merge Pastoral Councils (already initiated with Augusta parishes)
 - Each church will retain a Service Subcommittee, two members of which will be elected to the Pastoral Council. The role of the service committee will be to actively focus on strengthening commissions within the church, such as Worship and Spirituality, Church Life, in order to maintain the distinct character of each worship community, while establishing strong bonds with the larger parish. It is very strongly recommended that each worship site, regardless of size, be represented by two members on the Pastoral Council.
 - Existing pastoral councils will continue as long as those parishes have a separate pastor, then merge into the larger, merged pastoral council, as described above.
 - An assertive focus on active, rather than primarily receptive participation by parish representatives involved in developing ideas, programs, and direction. The Transition Team emphasized that the function of members of any parish Commission should be much more than simply reviewing and approving options already selected by the clergy, staff or chairpersons.
 - Beginning in September, 2006, an Implementation Planning Committee, represented by two members of existing pastoral councils, will begin to meet at least monthly to develop specific plans for merging. The first

priority for this committee will be the immediate development of a plan to select a name for the new parish and school. Active involvement of students, their parents, teachers, and school staff will be emphasized in recognition that the new name for the parish will also be the new name for the school. A list of unavailable names will be published, and all worship sites will participate in an initial canvassing of suggested names.

- Within six months, the Implementation Planning Committee will also develop:
 - A review of existing staff, staffing needs, and proposed staffing structure, to include both paid and volunteer positions, based on financial resources
 - A plan for shared worship and other spiritual activities that enables the broadest participation possible, while recognizing individual needs and interests.
 - A plan for centralized coordination of all parish commissions, including shared, collaborative efforts, and those unique to individual worship sites.
 - A Faith Formation plan with centralized leadership to include
 - A common instructional program. Parishes should immediately begin to select instructional programs that can be shared by the entire cluster when new programs are needed.
 - A shared training program for teachers and other participants.
 - An Adult Faith Formation/RCIA Director in addition to a Youth Faith Formation Director to recognize and advance the differing focus, educational approach, and tone of Adult Faith Formation and RCIA programs.
 - Plans for geographical distribution of programs to encourage shared resources, and vibrant, compelling programs.
- Beginning in September, 2006, representatives from existing parish Commissions, such as Social Justice and Peace, Worship and Spirituality, and Parish Life will meet and, utilizing the Parish Inventory, will identify activities and projects that should be shared, and those that are best limited to individual worship site efforts. They will be charged with forming a strong spiritual basis for their respective ministries, which will foster evangelization within as well as beyond our merged parish.

Mass Schedule

With three priests, it is expected that it will be possible to schedule 12 weekend Masses: one at each church on Sunday, with a Saturday Mass at each of the four largest churches. Three alternative schedules are proposed and listed in Appendix B.

Pastoral Care to Hospitals, Nursing Homes, College Campus, Jail

Hospitals and nursing homes are located in Augusta and presently served by priests in Augusta. All priests assigned to the Cluster will share this function. Laypersons are presently being trained to provide support services, supervised by the deacon, in the

hospitals. The Kennebec County Jail is presently served by an outreach coordinated by Deacon Foster and a St. Denis parishioner, and this is expected to continue.

Services are not provided at the University of Maine at Augusta, since this is not a residential campus.

Catholic Schools

The St. Augustine and St. Mary's school boards have begun planning to share resources and curricula, with active merger activities to begin in the 2006/2007 school year, with probable complete consolidation in 2007/2008. The schools will merge under the name of the new parish, with one principal. It is expected that the new school will be operated under a two-campus model, while the feasibility of a new building is examined. Sharing of events and resources has already begun, and all new purchases will be made with the impending merger in mind.

Social Justice, Church Life

Numerous programs, projects, and other activities have been identified in the parish inventory (see Appendix A). Some are unique to a particular community, and others (food projects for the needy) are common in all the churches. The Cluster Transition Team believes that the process of deciding which activities can and should be shared in the new parish, and which should remain as unique to an individual church should be part of the merging process. We believe that these matters should not be decided in advance by the Transition Team, but addressed by those individuals actually involved in similar activities. We do not intend to short circuit the very process by which members of different churches will be able to learn to work together, thereby building the trust and fellowship essential to becoming one parish.

Paid and Volunteer Staff

As discussed above, a survey of existing staff and resources, and the proposal of a staff structure is seen as one of the first tasks facing the new Pastoral Council. It is strongly recommended that this process include formal consultation, possibly with Diocesan Parish Development staff who have expertise in this area. Ideally, the key team members, in addition to the Pastor and two Parochial Vicars, would consist of a Parish Life Coordinator, a Business Manager, and the School Principal, as proposed by the Evangelization Task Force. Realistically, however, the initial task would be to centralize existing staff, as much as possible, in the Parish Center, while an assessment of resources and needs is conducted.

A proposed administrative structure is as follows:

Pastor			
Parochial Vicars	Parish Life Coordinator	Business Manager	School
Principal			
Deacons	Faith Formation Director	Bookkeepers	Asst.
Principal			
	Adult Ed./ RCIA Director	Maintenance Director	Secretary
	Lay Ministers, incl. Music Director	Maintenance Staff	
	Commissions		
	Head Sacristan		
	Secretary		

APPENDIX B

Letter to St. Francis Xavier & St. Leo Parishioners

January, 2008

Dear St. Francis Xavier & St. Leo Parishioners,

Now that we have begun a new calendar year, we need to focus on the work ahead of us as we embark upon a new evangelization effort along with our Bishop Malone and our fellow Catholics throughout the Diocese of Portland, Maine.

The diocesan document *Telling Anew the Story of Jesus* stated one of the most practical and perhaps the most far-reaching challenge of the new evangelization: “In order to facilitate parish re-vitalization and evangelization, the Church must make more effective use of its resources. The Church must alleviate the administrative burden on priests and make management of parishes more effective. To accomplish these ends, new parish structures must be and will be established.” In response to this mandate, the “Cluster 13” Planning Committee, which included representatives of St. Francis Xavier and St. Leo, submitted its final recommendations to the Bishop at the end of June, 2006. Based on the consensus of the Committee, this included a recommendation that the eight churches that compose the cluster be united into one “canonical” parish, while retaining the eight separate worship sites. These recommendations that formed the Cluster 13 Plan were formally approved by Bishop Malone in August of 2006. The first phase of this took place last summer when, on July 1, 2007, the churches of St. Denis, St. Augustine, St. Joseph, St. Mary, and St. Andrew formed St. Michael Parish.

At a combined meeting of the St. Francis Xavier and St. Leo Pastoral Councils on January 15, 2008, a unanimous recommendation was made to me as the Administrator of St. Francis Xavier Parish to proceed immediately with the necessary steps in petitioning Bishop Malone to consolidate and “canonically merge” St. Francis Xavier Parish, along with its mission church of St. Leo into St. Michael Parish on July 1, 2008.

Prior to acting upon their recommendation, I want to take an opportunity first to explain what this would mean for the St. Francis and St. Leo’s communities, and what the parish consolidation procedure entails during the homily time at each of the weekend liturgies at both churches, and then to arrange for a series of “information and dialogue” sessions where I, and other members of the Pastoral Council, can gather feedback from parishioners and respond to any particular questions or concerns that you might have.

I will make a “Pastor’s Presentation” during the homily time at all three weekend Masses at St. Francis Xavier on February 2nd and 3rd. On the following Sunday, February 10, I will make my presentation during the 8:00 a.m. Mass at St. Leo. Three “information and dialogue” feedback sessions have been scheduled and are listed below. Please attend any one session of your choice based on what is most convenient for your schedule, regardless of where you customarily attend weekend liturgy.

- 1) Sunday, February 24 at 9:15 a.m.(between the 8:00 and 10:30 Masses)—St. Francis Parish Hall
- 2) Tuesday, February 26 at 7:00 p.m., St. Francis Parish Hall (Snow date: February 27)
- 3) Sunday, March 2 at 9:00 a.m. (following the 8:00 a.m. Mass)—St. Leo’s Church Hall

Following these feedback sessions, the combined Pastoral Councils will meet again on March 4 to finalize, confirm and/or revise plans for consolidation and make our formal request to the Bishop.

The language that we use is important for the process. In discussing the collaboration, “church” refers to a building. The word “parish” refers to the *people* of God who form a local community. So, all of us, regardless of what particular church we might customarily attend for worship, will belong to the same “parish” community of St. Michael. Both St. Francis and St. Leo churches will remain open when the consolidation takes place, and weekend liturgies will continue to be scheduled in both churches. And in the process, our concept and experience of what it means to be “parish” will enlarge and expand.

Some of you might think that the parish consolidation has already taken place since there is a new administrator who is also the administrator of St. Michael Parish, and you are now served by all four priests of St. Michael Parish. There have been a number of liturgical celebrations, programs and events that have been collaborative efforts involving the local church communities of all of the worship sites comprising St. Michael Cluster. So, in this sense, we have already experienced some significant change and are already functioning as a united parish. The canonical (i.e., official or legal in the language of the Church) consolidation of parishes is really more a matter of administrative and financial organization. It will make record keeping, accounting, and pastoral services more effective and efficient. (I’ll explain this in greater detail during my pulpit presentation and feedback sessions). In terms of our weekend Mass experience, you really won’t see any difference. And the various groups and organizations that currently meet at St. Francis and St. Leo churches will continue to function.

I do realize that there is some concern about finances since, in a parish consolidation, the assets and liabilities of all the churches are combined. Over the years, through your generosity and sense of stewardship, St. Francis Xavier Parish has built up a rather considerable savings account. At the same time, the St. Francis Xavier Building and Grounds Committee has also identified a number of areas where capital improvements are needed within the St. Francis properties. The four most pressing areas of concern include repaving the parking lot, completing the sanctuary renovations of the church, installation of a handicapped-accessible reconciliation room, and replacing the 30-year-old carpeting in the church. The restrooms in the Church Hall also need serious attention. It is our intention to tap into the financial resources currently in the savings account in order to make these capital improvements, as well as some additional improvements as the budget allows, *prior to* the consolidation. So, please be assured that these parish funds will be used for their intended purpose: to maintain and improve St. Francis Xavier Church.

There is obviously a great deal of activity going on, and much work to be done in a relatively short period of time. The good news is that the church communities of the St. Michael Cluster have already been working together successfully as one united Catholic community. In the words of the New Evangelization Plan, we have truly been “collaborating in ministry” and the results have been astounding. We are already worshipping together, praying together, and truly being “Church” together. I have no doubt that, together, with God’s help, and with faith in God and with faith in each other, we can build on the rich traditions of the past while looking to a future filled with promise and possibility, and new traditions that will provide a legacy of faith and community for our children and grandchildren.

Sincerely in Christ,

Fr. Lou Phillips
Administrator

APPENDIX C

Letter to St. Michael Parishioners

February, 2008

Dear St. Michael Parishioners,

At a combined meeting of the St. Francis Xavier and St. Leo Pastoral Councils on January 15, 2008, a unanimous recommendation was made to me as the Administrator of St. Francis Xavier Parish to proceed immediately with the necessary steps in petitioning Bishop Malone to consolidate and “canonically merge” St. Francis Xavier Parish, along with its mission church of St. Leo into St. Michael Parish on July 1, 2008.

Prior to acting upon their recommendation, I want to take an opportunity first to explain what this would mean for the St. Francis and St. Leo’s communities, and what the parish consolidation procedure entails during the homily time at each of the weekend liturgies at both churches, and then to arrange for a series of “information and dialogue” sessions where I, and other members of the Pastoral Council, can gather feedback from parishioners and respond to any particular questions or concerns that they might have. You may recall that this is the same process that we used last year in preparation for the consolidation of the Augusta, Gardiner and Whitefield parishes into St. Michael Parish.

This weekend, February 2-3, I am making a “Pastor’s Presentation” during the homily time at all three weekend Masses at St. Francis Xavier. On the following Sunday, February 10, I will make my presentation during the 8:00 a.m. Mass at St. Leo. Three “information and dialogue” feedback sessions have been scheduled and are listed below. All interested parishioners of St. Michael Parish are welcome to attend.

- 4) Sunday, February 24 at 9:15 a.m.(between the 8:00 and 10:30 Masses)—St. Francis Parish Hall
- 5) Tuesday, February 26 at 7:00 p.m., St. Francis Parish Hall (Snow date: February 27)
- 6) Sunday, March 2 at 9:00 a.m. (following the 8:00 a.m. Mass)—St. Leo’s Church Hall

Following these feedback sessions, the combined Pastoral Councils will meet again on March 4 to finalize, confirm and/or revise plans for consolidation and make our formal request to the Bishop.

There is obviously a great deal of activity going on, and much work to be done in a relatively short period of time. The good news is that the church communities of the St. Michael Cluster have already been working together successfully as one united Catholic community. In the words of the New Evangelization Plan, we have truly been “collaborating in ministry” and the results have been astounding. We are already worshipping together, praying together, and truly being “Church” together. I have no doubt that, together, with God’s help, and with faith in God and with faith in each other, we can build on the rich traditions of the past while looking to a future filled with promise and possibility, and new traditions that will provide a legacy of faith and community for our children and grandchildren.

Sincerely in Christ,

Fr. Lou Phillips
Administrator

APPENDIX D

Information Sessions Minutes

Fr. Lou presented general overview of process.

- SFX and St.Leo Councils approval
- Three Boards – approval
- Decree from Bishop
- Date 7/1/08

Opened to questions

Mass Schedules

- 12 Masses – 3 priests
- Head counting to determine need of one or two Masses on Sunday
- 4 largest sites will continue with Vigil Masses = SFX one of the four
- Will coordinate with Religious Ed, not too early, not too late.

Finances – spending before merger

- Committee evaluating and submitting recommendations
 - Parking Lot
 - Church carpet, possible asbestos removal
 - Rectory roof
 - Sanctuary plans – request Eucharist focus, committee?
- Pool of money and number of churches

Different Church environments – all one- worship where you like.

Spiritual Experiences

- We are doing more than most
- Possible video satellite feeds
- Current focus = Disciples in Mission

Priest availability for Sacraments

- Weddings multiple? NO
- Baptism – first child classes. 3rd Sunday of the month Encourage during Mass (15 min before Mass, preliminary rites, rest during Mass)
- Funeral – choice

Maintenance – staff. Currently Armand

Mass Intentions – request for a place

- Place – yes
- Date – maybe. Explained situation and process

Sacred Heart included in merger? Not at this time. has its own pastor. Eventually

Confirmation/Holy Communion, where and who? St. Augustine, 2 ceremony's, Bishop Malone. St. Augustine largest with 700 capacity.

Divine Mercy Sunday here – can host smaller gatherings

Fr. Lou reviewed other session's questions –
Multiple sacrament celebrations

Funeral Priest preference – yes.

Mass Intentions – Fr. Lou explained theology behind request
One Mass said for multiples – Not in this Diocese
All Souls Collection explained
Ind. can request 1Mass for several family members.

Extra Ciborium – need to have whole teaching and training on Communion Services.

Daughters of Isabella – rent St. Monica for meetings? Donation
Hall rentals – church groups – free
Non church groups = fee (insurance rider)

Fr. Lou asked if there was any Finance questions.
Watch collections after merger

Separate meetings scheduled to discuss with Men's Club and Bingo.

Mass schedule – St. Leo at 11:30 – 7 Churches – 3 Priests

Christmas and Easter may require extra Masses