



OUR FAITH, OUR FUTURE

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he first round of listening sessions for the *Our Faith, Our Future* three-year planning process began during September and October in the Grand Haven, Big Rapids and Northwest Lakeshore deaneries. These sessions included representatives from the 46 parishes and missions and eight schools located in the three deaneries. Over 200 lay leaders participated.

The overall *Our Faith, Our Future* planning process involves several rounds of consultations with pastors, priests, and parish leaders. The first round involves listening and data collection. All parishes and schools in the deanery are visited by the consultant team. Interviews are conducted with pastors, principals and lay leaders. The parish/school visits offer local leaders the opportunity to share their experience and vision for their communities.

The second round of consultation will involve a group from every parish, meeting at the deanery level. Participants include pastors and priests, Catholic school principals, key parish staff, and several parish lay leaders from each parish. In November, the deaneries of Grand Haven, Big Rapids and the Northwest Lakeshore each completed their second consultation session. The second session provided opportunities for participants to:

- Hear findings from the listening sessions and data analysis.
- Identify common challenges facing the parishes in their area.
- Discuss pastoral priorities and the characteristics expected in vibrant parishes.

Leaders in the three deaneries are scheduled to meet again in February and April when a draft plan will emerge and a process of review and refinement will take place.

Our Faith, Our Future is an initiative looking to the future of the church in the diocese by building upon the strengths of the parishes and addressing fundamental issues that have a long-term impact on their vitality and vibrancy.

What is a deanery? A deanery is a division within a diocese comprised of a group of parishes. Usually deaneries are formally named by a number or, as in our diocese, by a geographic designation. There are nine deaneries in the Grand Rapids Diocese.

Who is a dean? Dean is the title of a priest appointed by the bishop to aid him in administering the parishes in a particular area, called a “deanery.” The function of a dean involves promotion, coordination and supervision of the common pastoral activity within the deanery.