

**Vibrant Parish Life –  
Phase II**

**Cluster Plan for**

**St. Angela Merici  
Church**

**and**

**St. Christopher Church**

Vibrant Parish Life – Phase II: Cluster Plan for  
St. Angela Merici and St. Christopher Parishes

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1. Parish strengths (individual/collective) and existing collaboration to build upon to strengthen pastoral care in the cluster area.

Both St. Angela Merici and St. Christopher have strong Catholic schools, with about 500 students enrolled in each K-8 school. At St. Christopher the number of students has consistently been over 500 since 1999. At St. Angela Merici enrollment has declined to nearly 500, plus a pre-school of 80.

Both parishes also have a strong PSR program for grades 1-8. At St. Christopher the number of students continues to grow with current enrollment at about 500 students. St. Angela Merici PSR enrollment has been stable at some 300.

As we looked at both parishes' composite summaries there were no significant areas where we could realistically say we were already collaborating, although there were certainly ministries where we have been cooperating by opening our doors to each other's programs and inviting parishioners to attend. Examples of these would be in the areas of bereavement, separated/divorced, youth, marriage preparation and the nine-week Ignatian Spirituality program. It is recognized that there currently are parishioners in each church who attend the other from time to time for daily mass or weekend liturgies.

St. Christopher has a long-term *Church in the City* partnership with St. Colman and Our Lady Help of Christian parishes. St. Angela Merici does not have such a relationship so there is a wonderful opportunity to expand those efforts as a Cluster. *Church in the City* Partnerships may in the future be impacted by the overall clustering outcomes of city, suburban and rural churches. This will include the St. Christopher, St. Colman, and Our Lady Help of Christians and their respective cluster partners, including St. Angela Merici.

Careful review of the two composite summaries did show the following areas in which both parishes indicated being open to discuss collaboration. They are:

Liturgical

- Days of Reflection for Liturgical Ministers – St. Christopher has had this ministry in the past but it is no longer active. St. Angela Merici does not have it.

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- Pre-Cana – St. Christopher has this ministry and said it was already vibrant; St. Angela Merici does not have it.
- Bereavement Ministry – Both St. Christopher and St. Angela Merici have this ministry and both said it is already vibrant.

Spiritual Formation

- Parish Retreat or Mission – St. Christopher has had this ministry but said it needed to be enhanced; St. Angela Merici has had this in the past and has migrated to the blended version of Generations of Faith with significant success.

Education

- Adult Education Programs – St. Christopher has had this ministry in the past and is active in a limited way presently. St. Angela Merici has this ministry but said it needs to be enhanced.
- Scripture Study – St. Christopher has this ministry on a somewhat limited basis but said it needs to be enhanced; St. Angela Merici does not have it.

Participating

- Youth Ministry – St. Christopher had this ministry in the past but it is no longer active. St. Angela Merici has it and said it is already vibrant.

2. Key realities, trends and their implications for pastoral care in the cluster area that provide a context for the proposed cluster plans.

Demographics – based on the 10 year Parish Cluster Trends from Status Animarum Reports and area demographics from Claritas:

	<u>1996</u>	<u>2006</u>	
<u>Persons registered</u>			
St. Angela Merici	8,694	8,123	
St. Christopher	6,370	8,069	
Total	15,064	16,192	<u>+7%</u>
<u>Households registered</u>			
St. Angela Merici	3,398	3,328	
St. Christopher	3,285	2,836	
Total	6,683	6,164	<u>-8%</u>

Present size of St. Angela Merici family 2.4 persons  
 Present size of St. Christopher family 2.8 persons

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	<u>1996</u>	<u>2006</u>	
<u>Average weekend mass attendance</u>			
St. Angela Merici	4,021	2,775	
St. Christopher	2,490	2,249	
Total	6,511	5,021	<u>-23%</u>
<u>Children in parish school (K-8)</u>			
St. Angela Merici	626	499	
St. Christopher	457	522	
Total	1,083	1,021	<u>-6%</u>
<u>Children in PSR (1-8)</u>			
St. Angela Merici	354	309	
St. Christopher	401	477	
Total	755	786	<u>+4%</u>
<u>Baptisms up to 7 years</u>			
St. Angela Merici	150	104	
St. Christopher	112	114	
Total	262	218	<u>-17%</u>
<u>Marriages</u>			
St. Angela Merici	62	22	
St. Christopher	75	34	
Total	137	56	<u>-59%</u>
<u>Deaths</u>			
St. Angela Merici	110	88	
St. Christopher	68	68	
Total	178	156	<u>-12%</u>

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Additional Sacramental statistics from Status Animarum Report (2006/7):

First Communion (under age 18)

St. Angela Merici	86
St. Christopher	<u>136</u>
Total	222

Confirmation (under age 18)

St. Angela Merici	98
St. Christopher	<u>123</u>
Total	221

2007 Claritas report findings:

- Population estimated to have declined 7% since 2000, and another 6% in next 5 years.
- Median age estimated to increase 3% in next 5 years from 44.6 to 46.1 years of age.
- Estimated households to have declined 5% since 2000 and another 5% in next 5 years.
- Average household income estimated to increase 7% in next 5 years to \$80,566.
- Work force: 77% white collar; 13% blue collar; 10% service/farm.
- Estimated people over age 65 was 6,557: 21% of the total population. Of the 6,557 people, 18% were over the age 85.

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Staffing

St. Angela Merici

Pastor

1 Full Time Parochial Vicar

2 Deacons: one retired – both as  
needed

1 DRE

1 Youth Minister/Volunteer  
Coordinator

1 Music Director and another as  
needed

1 Parish Nurse – 10 hours weekly

St. Christopher

Pastor

1 Full Time Parochial Vicar

1 Part Time Parochial Vicar

1 Deacon – as needed

2 Pastoral Associates – one full time  
and one part time

1 Pastoral Associate/DRE

1 Music Director

Facilities

Both parishes have very good facilities that are well maintained and are meeting the needs of the parishes.

Finances

St. Angela Merici has a sound and balanced operating budget and no debt. An endowment of some \$400,000 is complemented by real estate holdings in excess of \$1 million including homes in the neighborhood. Total parish income in 2007 was \$1,842,658 (excluding school revenue). The parish supported the parish school financially in the amount of \$577,461 in 2007. The parish owes the Diocese \$38,000 which is now being retired with scheduled payments.

St. Christopher also has a sound and balanced operating budget and \$1,200,000 in capital debt. A capital campaign was begun earlier this year to do some renovation in the church and gymnasium and reduce the debt. There is an endowment of \$1,700,000 and real estate holdings in the neighborhood. Total parish income in 2007 was \$1,191,518 (excluding school revenue). The parish supported the parish school financially in the amount of \$372,925 in 2007. The parish is not in debt to the Diocese.

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3. Description of the proposed cluster plans

Challenge #1: Continue to explore collaborative possibilities to strengthen pastoral care in an equitable manner.

Key goal: Evangelize our youth.	Key resources and structures required	Financial plan and budget	Action steps	Implementation Timeline	
				< 2 years	3-5 yrs.
Focus on the currently underserved youth community with a comprehensive youth ministry program that offers catechetical, service, liturgical and social experiences for all the teens of both parishes and encourages teens to be active in their Catholic faith now and formed for future Church leadership.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The CPC Team</li> <li>• Pastoral staff and volunteers</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: center;">↓</p>	<p>TBD in Youth Ministry budget</p> <p style="text-align: center;">↓</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maintain an ongoing Cluster Planning and Coordination Team forum for the continuing implementation of the Bishop-approved Cluster Plan.</li> <li>• Expand the Youth of St. Angela (YOSA) program for high school students to include the youth of St. Christopher, not just by invitation, but by collaboration of the two Parish staffs.</li> <li>• Determine what our teens are looking for: talk with the teens at St. Angela for their views; create a teen committee at St. Christopher to get their input; consider an open teen forum after weekend liturgy for all parish teens.</li> <li>• Benchmark with other parishes with vibrant teen organizations to learn new success approaches and strategies to engage teens in active faith practices. Continue participation in Diocesan youth ministry forums and share ideas in collaboration with St. Christopher staff and youth.</li> <li>• Continue and expand formal catechetical experiences for our high school youth.</li> </ul>	<p>2009</p> <p>Begin May 2009</p> <p>2009</p> <p>2009</p> <p>2009-10 school yr.</p>	

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			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Actively invite young adults aged 23-30 to get involved in ministering to the youth group.</li> <li>• Create a forum to solicit the interests of our youth. Screen the <i>Champions of Faith</i> DVD for both parishes and make the DVD resource available to parishioners at large.</li> <li>• Discuss with other local clusters in the Suburban West District programmatic needs and approaches.</li> </ul>	<p>2009-10 school yr.</p> <p>Fall 2009</p> <p>2009</p>	
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Challenge #2: Strengthen evangelization and the social and community services that serve the surrounding neighborhoods.

Key goal: Evangelize and re-evangelize.	Key resources and structures required	Financial plan and budget	Action steps	Implementation Timeline	
				< 2 years	3-5 yrs.
Strengthen ongoing faith formation for adult parishioners with existing and newly emerging programs. Develop a 21 <sup>st</sup> century communication strategy by which the Cluster Partners can reach and engage the broader neighborhood community in the ministries of our Cluster Church community.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The CPC Team</li>   <li>• Cluster Evangelization Committee</li> <li>• Pastoral staff and volunteers</li>   <li style="text-align: center;">↓</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maintain an ongoing Cluster Planning and Coordination Team forum for the continuing implementation of the Bishop-approved Cluster Plan.</li> <li>• Create a Cluster Evangelization Committee charged to investigate and address the gap of over 10,000 Cluster parishioners who are church registered and do not attend weekly liturgy. Assess who the absent are, why they do not attend weekly liturgy and where they worship and what priorities supersede their regular mass attendance.</li> <li>• Identify existing evangelization avenues and assess the effectiveness of present evangelization through YOSA, RCIA, bereavement support groups, separated and divorced support groups, parish missions, family nights during Lent and Advent, Generations of Faith, Welcoming Committees, MOMS groups, mission support, Church-in-the-City partnerships, Ministry of Praise for those aged 60+ and homebound, weekly Eucharist for the homebound, nursing home mass and communion service ministry, funeral ministry.</li> </ul>	2009	2010-12 focus on 2-3 ministries to spur growth
				Fall 2009	
				2009-10	

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			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review Pope Paul VI’s 1975 Apostolic Exhortation on <i>Evangelization in the Modern World</i>.</li> </ul>	Fall 2009	
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Invite Diocesan Evangelization Office Director Sister Margaret Mach to provide guidance and coaching to strengthen and build upon existing evangelization efforts.</li> </ul>	Spring 2009	
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review Diocesan Evangelization Office web-based materials.</li> </ul>	2009	
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Evaluate methods used to invite RCIA participation and benchmark with recognized successes for improved effectiveness.</li> </ul>	2009-10	
		TBD	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop and offer a speaker series throughout the year with special focus during Lent and Advent.</li> </ul>	Advent ‘09 Lent ‘10	Lent 2011
		TBD	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consider using the “Heart to Heart” resource organization for speakers, programs, parish missions, and a possible Adult Education Program series.</li> </ul>	2009	
		TBD	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide a Cluster Partners’ Parish Mission with both a spiritual and an educational component.</li> </ul>	2010	
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Expand the availability of Scripture Study Groups and/or Faith Sharing Groups.</li> </ul>	2009-10	
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discern a method to enhance the faith formation of adults in the community for the purpose of evangelization.</li> </ul>	Review ‘09-‘10	Focus on 2-3 in 2010-2012
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Explore the feasibility of faith formation programs in private homes.</li> </ul>	2009-10	
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop ways to offer additional programs for the faith formation of young adults – married and</li> </ul>	2009-10	

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		<p>single – and enhance those that already exist, e.g. MOMS, Preschool PTA, etc.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Embrace the blended model of Generations in Faith.</li> <li>• Collaborate in formulating joint communications for Parish newsletters on matters that bear on both Parishes and the larger neighborhood community.</li> <li>• Revitalize friendraising and fundraising events in the Parish community.</li> <li>• Revivify the Parish roster with timely Parish census information.</li> <li>• Retool and update Parish web sites as interactive tools.</li> <li>• Develop a media focus to ensure that local press sources receive articles promoting our Catholic life and our Parish lives. Use <i>WestLife</i>, <i>West Shore Sun</i> and <i>Plain Dealer</i> – both Religion sections and community calendars – to promote parish activities.</li> </ul>	<p>Fall 2009</p>	<p>2010</p> <p>2010</p>
			<p>Fall 2009</p>	
			<p>Fall 2009</p>	
			<p>2009</p>	

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Challenge #3: Engage all of our faithful in regularly attending and participating in the Sunday Eucharistic Liturgy.

Key goal: Evangelize through the core of our Catholic faith – the centrality of the Eucharist.	Key resources and structures required	Financial plan and budget	Action steps	Implementation Timeline	
				◁ 2 years	3-5 years
<p>Enhance our Sunday Eucharistic Liturgy experience in ways that will address the needs of the diverse demographic segments of our Cluster Church community.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The CPC Team</li>   <li>• Pastoral staffs and liturgical ministers</li>   <li style="text-align: center;">↓</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maintain an ongoing Cluster Planning and Coordination Team forum for the continuing implementation of the Bishop-approved Cluster Plan.</li> <li>• Assure that youth are trained and encouraged to minister at weekend liturgies. This is already a reality at St. Angela Merici where youth provide the liturgical ministers at the 5:30 PM mass on the first and third Sundays.</li> <li>• Schedule Holy Day liturgies at times that offer parishioners choices on when they can attend mass at either Cluster church, especially those working who want to come after work but do not want to wait until 7 PM.</li> <li>• Provide training and times of reflection for Eucharistic ministers, lectors, and ushers/greeters in order to enhance their ministerial roles at liturgy thus providing a more prayerful and welcoming experience for the members of the assembly.</li> <li>• Address the physical access needs of the elderly and handicapped to the worship experiences.</li> </ul>	<p>2009</p> <p>May 2009</p> <p>2009</p> <p>April 2009</p> <p>2009</p>	

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		TBD	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Evaluate how effectively we are addressing the diverse choices of parishioners with liturgical appropriateness, including music, homilies, mass times. Survey various demographic groups for valuable input. Based on research results, determine a plan for the following year.</li> <li>• Offer seasonal liturgies including Reconciliation Services on different dates so parishioners have choices as to when to attend.</li> <li>• Exchange presiders at the two parishes – pastors and perhaps parochial vicars – so people experience more diversity in presiding styles. Deacons could be included in this effort to preach. Determine frequency for pulpit exchanges.</li> <li>• Offer a Cluster Mission, emphasizing the importance of attendance and participation at weekend liturgies. Extend a District-wide invitation.</li> </ul>	<p>Year end 2009</p> <p>2009</p> <p>2009</p>	Lent 2011
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Challenge #4: Continue to support Church in the City partnerships through cluster-cluster cooperation.

Key goal: Evangelize beyond Parish and Cluster borders.	Key resources and structures required	Financial plan and budget	Action steps	Implementation Timeline	
				< 2 years	3-5 years
Leverage the strength of the existing Church-in-the-City partnership among St. Christopher with St. Angela Merici and St. Colman and Our Lady Help of Christians to incorporate the new Cluster Partnerships,	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The CPC Team</li> <li>• Pastoral staffs and volunteers of all cluster partner parishes</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: center;">↓</p>	TBD  TBD	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maintain an ongoing Cluster Planning and Coordination Team forum for the continuing implementation of the Bishop-approved Cluster Plan.</li> <li>• Engage the Cluster youth group in a joint service program at St. Colman and/or the West Side Catholic Center serving breakfast on Saturday mornings or other service programs.</li> <li>• Explore the feasibility of a multi-cluster event such as a well-known national speaker that would typically exceed the budget of a single parish but might be supported by a group of parishes with their Church-in-the-City partners.</li> <li>• Consider using the “Heart to Heart” resource organization for speakers, programs, parish missions, and a possible Adult Education Program series.</li> <li>• Consider the viability and cost-effectiveness of opening programs to Church-in-the-City parishes and contiguous cluster churches.</li> <li>• Discuss with other local clusters in the Suburban West District approaches to new Church-in-the-City configurations and approaches.</li> </ul>	2009  May 2009    2009   2009	June 2010       2011

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Challenge #5: Continue to monitor enrollment trends and collaborate to insure the long term presence of strong, stable Catholic schools serving this area.

Key goal: Evangelize from generation to generation. Ensure the future vitality of Catholic education and the passing of the faith to future generations of Catholics.	Key resources and structures required	Financial plan and budget	Action steps	Implementation Timeline	
				< 2 years	3-5 years
Collaborate to share best practices between the Cluster Partners in order to continue to offer an attractive and affordable Catholic faith-based alternative to the competitive quality local public schools in the neighborhood.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The CPC Team</li> <li>• Pastoral staff, School staff, School committees and Finance Council</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: center;">↓</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maintain an ongoing Cluster Planning and Coordination Team forum for the continuing implementation of the Bishop-approved Cluster Plan.</li> <li>• Expand the potential value of pre-school and pre-K programs as feeders to the K-to-8 school program.</li> <li>• Focus attention on building endowment support for future generations.</li> <li>• Establish Principal-to-principal dialogue between the Cluster Partner schools to develop stronger relationships for the future.</li> <li>• Expand inter-schools Cluster dialogue to include teachers and select parents to share ideas and opinions to develop stronger relationships for the future.</li> <li>• Create an environment for future collaboration to consider new models to achieve educational excellence and new models to pay for Catholic schools in the face of demographic and fiscal realities.</li> <li>• Elicit the support of alumni.</li> </ul>	2009	
				2009-10	
					2010-12
				2009-10	
					2010-11
					2010-12
					2010-11

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4. Summary of the consultation that was done with parish leaders and parishioners in developing the proposed cluster plan.

As we began the process of preparing a Cluster Plan for our two parishes we reviewed Bishop Lennon's Issues and Challenges for our Cluster and we shared them with our parishioners:

- (1) Continue to explore collaborative possibilities to strengthen pastoral care in an equitable manner.
- (2) Strengthen evangelization and the social and community services that serve the surrounding neighborhoods.
- (3) Engage all of our faithful in regularly attending and participating in the Sunday Eucharistic Liturgy.
- (4) Continue to support *Church in the City* partnerships through cluster-cluster cooperation.
- (5) Continue to monitor enrollment trends and collaborate to insure the long-term presence of strong, stable Catholic schools serving this area.

In addition the team reviewed one of our member's research on parish vibrancy that he did for his doctorate in 2004 at Case Western Reserve University. This research was based on over 52,000 vibrant parish life surveys of parishioners in 135 churches in the Cleveland Diocese. The five indicators of vibrancy are:

- (1) Sense of community – climate of inclusion that unifies the parish into a close-knit caring community
- (2) Stewardship – parishioners take ownership of their parish and give freely of their time, talents and treasure
- (3) Outreach – a sharing community that supports the Christian tradition of giving and inspires its parishioners to reach out and care for its members and neighboring community
- (4) Spiritual development – a community that nurtures spiritual growth and celebrates its faith
- (5) Strategically directed – sharing a common vision and working towards worthy goals

Following our study of the information at hand we developed our Plan using the Diocesan guidelines. The team has met eleven times to discern our priority issues.

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In November of 2007, our Cluster Team held town hall meetings in both parishes to show Bishop Lennon's DVD "The Framework for a Vibrant Church" to give parishioners an opportunity to understand the purpose and goals of clustering and to answer any questions that surfaced. The afternoon meeting at St. Angela was attended by 36 individuals (26 from St. Angela, 9 from St. Christopher, 1 from St. Malachi) and the evening meeting at St. Christopher was attended by 16 people (6 from St. Angela, 10 from St. Christopher). All 10 Cluster Team Members attended both meetings. There was a good exchange of information and participants were encouraged to ask questions.

Our ongoing progress was shared with our parish communities through bulletin articles and by way of articles in each of our parish newsletters. The articles in the newsletters were prepared jointly by our Cluster Team Communication Liaisons. Each newsletter is mailed to all parishioners in our respective parishes. We also prayed for the process of clustering at our weekend liturgies.

Once our Cluster Plan was developed we met with the combined Parish Pastoral Councils and Finance Councils in June of 2008 to explain the Plan and give an opportunity for input. The Plan was also reviewed with the Parish Staffs in that same time frame (June and July) during which input was solicited.

At this meeting we showed the DVD of Bishop Lennon's talk at St. Basil noting his emphasis on evangelization and reviewed the five challenges that he had given our cluster. Then we shared the work of the Cluster Team over the past year and how the plan had been developed. Next we went over the plan and opened the meeting for input, questions, and comments. Finally we asked each attendee to fill out our Parish Consultation Form.

The above meeting was attended by 34 individuals as well as the 10 Team Members. Of the 34 attendees, 28 signed the consultation form indicating support for the Plan as presented, 5 had suggestions for adjusting the Plan and 1 did not turn in a form. The Team discussed the recommendations at our next meeting and determined that 4 of the 5 suggestions had already been considered (most pertained to youth ministry and were in the Plan in some form already). The final suggestion was incorporated into the Plan regarding Parish Schools.

In August and September our two parish newsletters again communicated our Plan to all parishioners. In September 2008, we involved the parish communities by holding additional town hall meetings and by having a pulpit exchange for our two pastors. On the weekend of the pulpit exchange both parishes inserted a copy of the Plan in our Parish Bulletins.

The pulpit exchange took place the weekend of September 13 – 14. Each pastor preached at all the masses at the Cluster Partner Parish and presided at two of those masses. This gave parishioners an opportunity to hear about clustering

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from the pastor at the “other” parish. This effort was positively received and both pastors felt welcomed and enjoyed the experience, as did parishioners.

The two town hall meetings were attended by 50 parishioners (29 at St. Angela and 21 at St. Christopher). A summary of the Plan was reviewed and the meetings were opened up for questions and comments. Following this interaction, participants were asked to fill out a consultation form. At the St. Angela meeting 15 people signed the form supporting the plan as presented. No other forms were turned in. At the St. Christopher meeting 18 people signed the form supporting the plan as presented and 1 person indicated they needed more information to do so. Some couples attended the meetings and may have signed one form for the two of them.

The Cluster Team met on September 23, 2008, to finalize the Plan. We believe it incorporates the collective wisdom of all of the above efforts.

### St. Angela Merici and St. Christopher Cluster Planning and Coordination Team:

Fr. John Chlebo	Pastor, St. Christopher
Fr. Michael Lanning	Pastor, St. Angela Merici
Deacon Jim Agrippe	Deacon, St. Angela Merici
Terry Brizz	Finance Council, St. Christopher
Gayle Cilimburg CPC Chairperson	Pastoral Associate, St. Christopher
Fran Girard CPC Co-Communications Liaison	Parish Pastoral Council, St. Christopher
Mary Horvath CPC Secretary	Parish Pastoral Council, St. Christopher
Dan Platten CPC Vice-Chairperson	Finance Council, St. Angela Merici
Carol Rini	Parish Pastoral Council, St. Angela Merici
Brenda Martens Kavula CPC Co-Communications Liaison – moved to Alabama summer 2008	Youth Minister/Volunteer Coordinator, St. Angela Merici
Linda Heiss – replaced Brenda Martens Kavula	Director of Religious Education, St. Angela Merici