



**VOICES IN
ACTION**

Transforming Our Church Together

VOICE

VOICE OF THE FAITHFUL

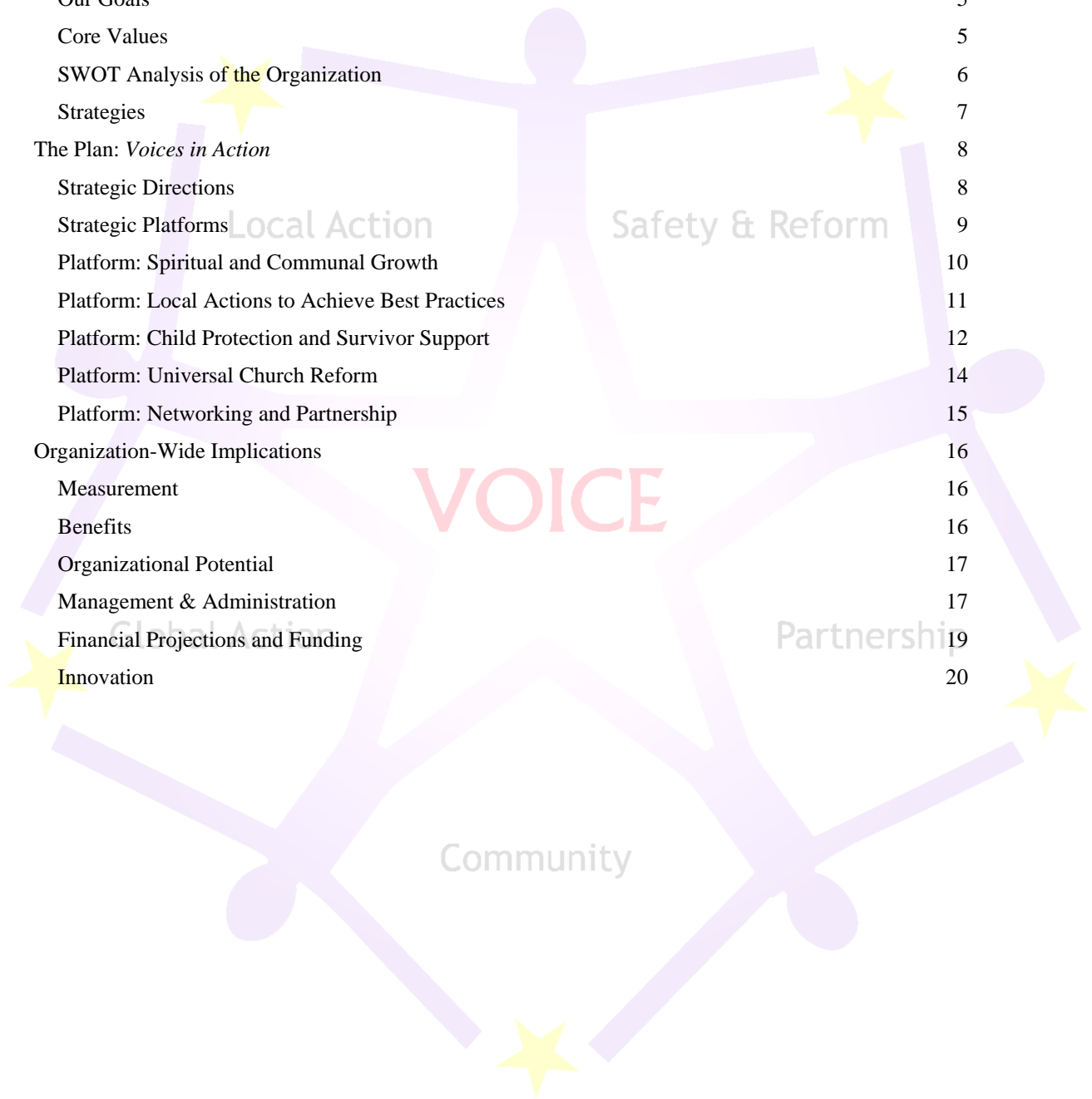
Strategic Plan: 2009–2011





Contents

Introduction	2
Mission, Values, Goals, and Strategies	5
VOTF Mission Statement	5
Our Goals	5
Core Values	5
SWOT Analysis of the Organization	6
Strategies	7
The Plan: <i>Voices in Action</i>	8
Strategic Directions	8
Strategic Platforms	9
Platform: Spiritual and Communal Growth	10
Platform: Local Actions to Achieve Best Practices	11
Platform: Child Protection and Survivor Support	12
Platform: Universal Church Reform	14
Platform: Networking and Partnership	15
Organization-Wide Implications	16
Measurement	16
Benefits	16
Organizational Potential	17
Management & Administration	17
Financial Projections and Funding	19
Innovation	20





Introduction

In spring 2008, Voice of the Faithful members elected a new slate of officers. The election was a challenging period which, in the end, helped VOTF to define the core of who we are as an organization. It also sharpened our attention on several issues demanding resolution:

- ❖ We needed to connect with and engage members in a manner that helped us better acknowledge and meet with their needs.
- ❖ We needed to clearly define the organization and its aim so that there is no mistake about who we are and what mission we are here to fulfill.
- ❖ We needed to better emphasize **actions** that support our mission and goals, which we believe are still as meaningful today as they were when created.
- ❖ We needed to re-examine the organization's readiness for change.

In reviewing these needs, we noted the strong relationship between the theory of organizational life-cycle stages and the position of Voice of the Faithful on its sixth anniversary. Specifically, as an organization we experienced significant early growth in membership when Catholics saw VOTF as a prophetic group, speaking decisively and challenging the decisions, the hierarchy, and the institutional practices of the Church in an effort to reform it. Our image was that of a visionary organization, passionate in our faith, and of a grassroots entity with a structure that matched the needs of our mission and of our constituency.

As we matured, zeal drove many to speak out with authority on issues known well to us. We worked to bring ideas to action. We broadened our constituency so that there would be power in numbers.

There were many workers in the vineyard at that time with many taking personal responsibility for tasks while systems were developed to carry the organization forward.

As VOTF matured, we also encountered stumbling blocks, made choices that dissipated our energies, and occasionally lost focus. As a result, at the sixth anniversary of VOTF, as newly elected officers we identified some significant concerns: a need to increase our response speed and communications efficiency; a hope that we could extend our organizational reach to other reform groups; a need to develop long-term plans; and a method for better utilizing the talents and skills of our members to effect change.

These realizations preceded a crippled economy and a significant drop in donations (independent data show that the drop in revenue among other not-for-profit organizations has averaged 30%)—two circumstances that created an additional focus on how to do “more with less.”



Faced with this combination of factors, we saw membership attrition and a loss of momentum for several reasons, both external and internal.

Externally, the rage engendered by the sexual abuse scandal ultimately led to media saturation and a general desire to “get over it” among some in the general population. As some of our early members experienced burnout from the intensity of the issues, continuity and consistency in our messages occasionally suffered. Our purpose as an organization did not seem to be clear to those who did not already know us.

Internally, friction among members regarding organizational priorities consumed enormous amounts of time and energy—and sometimes remained unresolved. The National Representative Council, which had been designed to function as a voice from and to membership, reached impasse rather than consensus and was suspended until healthy and productive communications could be renewed, or until a new form of member input could be devised. Members caught up in the internal conflicts sometimes left the organization.

There was little opportunity to sort through these issues when news of Pope Benedict XVI’s visit to the U.S. was announced. Given the historic opportunity, all work on VOTF’s underlying issues halted as we shifted attention to a proactive response for the visit.

Our members responded wholeheartedly to a four-week campaign that brought in enough funds for a full-page ad in the *New York Times*—an ad delivering the message that bishops should be held accountable for the scandal, that our Church must be transformed to address the many ills it faces in the 21st century, and that the path to transformation must include the laity. It was a bold, targeted message, and VOTF gained the attention of more than 200 media outlets worldwide as we delivered our message.

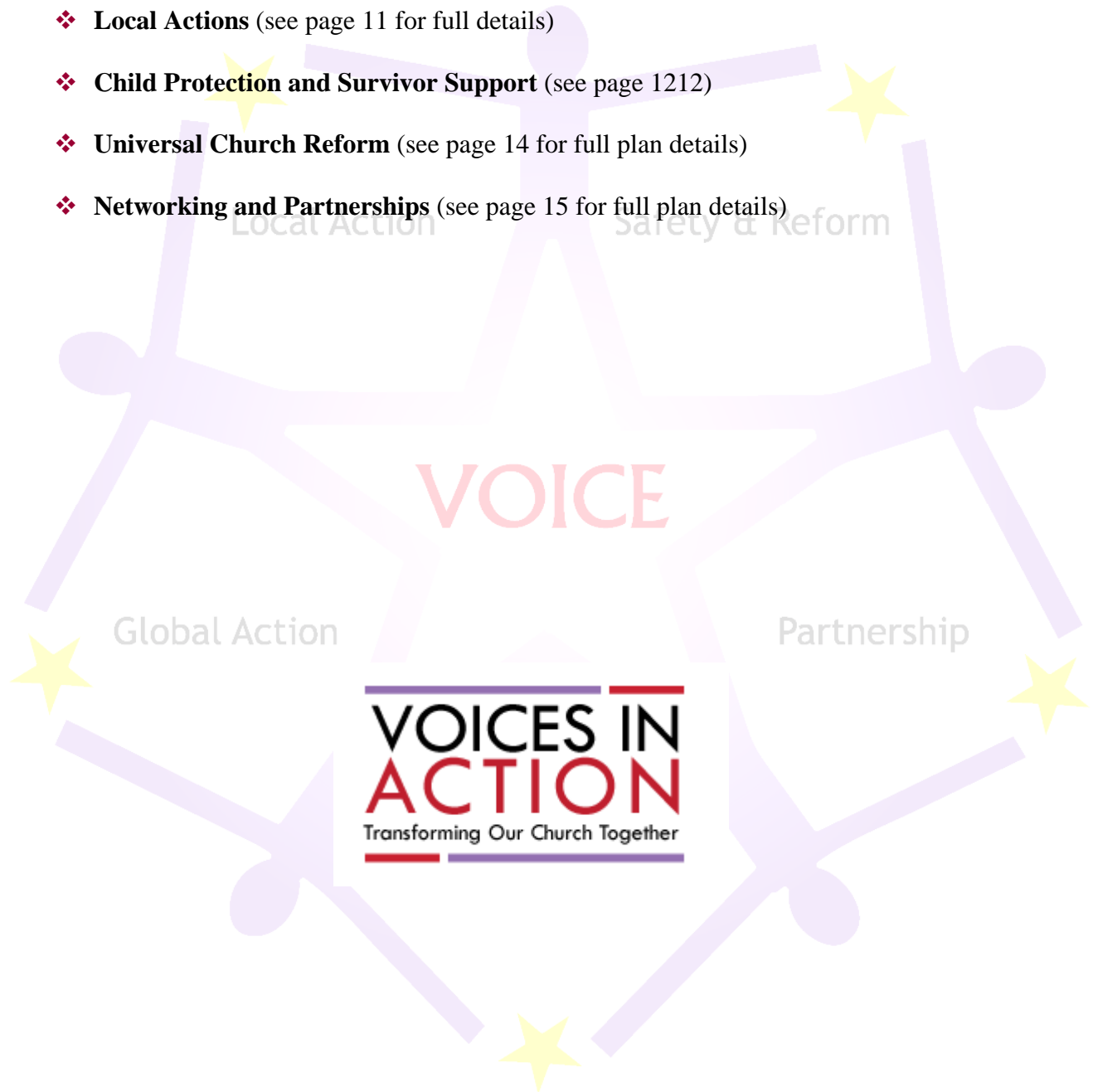
Following this peak, and building on our re-energized membership, we returned to the organizational work that was needed. To apply the best decisions and the most effective solutions, the officers developed a survey that asked our members what they saw as the most important needs and how best to respond to them; that assessed the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats facing VOTF; and that sought to gauge the commitment of individual members to the organization.

More than 500 of our members responded to the survey, and we combined those results with the survey responses from the officers, the Board of Trustees, and other leaders in the organization.



From the survey, we then developed five platforms that represented the dominant areas where our members sought action:

- ❖ **Spiritual and Communal Growth** (see page 10 for full plan details)
- ❖ **Local Actions** (see page 11 for full details)
- ❖ **Child Protection and Survivor Support** (see page 1212)
- ❖ **Universal Church Reform** (see page 14 for full plan details)
- ❖ **Networking and Partnerships** (see page 15 for full plan details)





Mission, Values, Goals and Strategies

VOTF™ Mission Statement

To provide a prayerful voice, attentive to the Spirit, through which the Faithful can actively participate in the governance and guidance of the Catholic Church.

Our Goals

- ❖ To support survivors of clergy sexual abuse
- ❖ To support priests of integrity
- ❖ To shape structural change within the Catholic Church

Core Values

As an organization, we share:

- ❖ A deep love for our Church within a Vatican II model
- ❖ A mandate to use our experiences and skills to help repair the institution with meaningful, responsible reform
- ❖ A need to model respect, collegiality, cooperation, compassion, transparency and accountability in all interactions



SWOT Analysis of the Organization

Results of the member survey provided a clear assessment of the organization's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. The results were as follows:

Strengths

- ⇒ Talented membership
- ⇒ Name recognition
- ⇒ Extended network of outside relationships
- ⇒ Generally viewed as a centrist organization

Weaknesses

- ⇒ Governance structure
- ⇒ Lack of clarity about who we are/what we stand for (i.e., our brand)
- ⇒ Lack of clearly defined priorities
- ⇒ Lack of sufficient funding
- ⇒ Plateaued growth

Opportunities

- ⇒ Ongoing, long-term initiatives like a Synod
- ⇒ Potential for maximizing our efforts through affiliation with other reform organizations
- ⇒ Ability to define ourselves through our actions
- ⇒ Ability to motivate Catholic citizens, non-VOTF members, and Catholics who have left the Church

Threats

- ⇒ Lack of sufficient funds to perform the needed work
- ⇒ Internal conflicts
- ⇒ Discouragement and apathy among members and non members alike with our limited ability to generate meaningful change in the existing institutional Church



Strategies

The survey we conducted in 2008 included multiple-choice answers as well as open-ended responses, giving us both the metrics needed for objective assessment and a context in which to judge, and build upon, the data collected.

We developed strategies based directly upon both the data and the contexts of our membership survey.

As a first step for strategy development, we used the survey results to adopt guiding principles that would keep us focused on realistic projects with attainable outputs, rather than pursuing grandiose dreams with no potential for success. We divided the principles into Primary and Secondary roles.

Primary

- ⇒ Must be consistent with our mission, goals and identity statement.
- ⇒ Must be consistent with the findings of the SWOT analysis.
- ⇒ Must be executable—there must be a reasonable expectation that what we propose can actually be achieved given our current organizational resources and SWOT findings.
- ⇒ Must be consistent with our core values.

Secondary

- ⇒ Must be in line with constituent expectations—which should significantly increase our fundraising ability.
- ⇒ Must engage and energize membership, tapping into their gifts so that more are mobilized and contribute talents and treasure.
- ⇒ Must be easy to understand and articulate.



The Plan: Voices in Action

The Strategic Plan was developed from the perspective that our strategic objectives must:

- ❖ Capitalize on our strengths
- ❖ Mitigate our weaknesses
- ❖ Embrace opportunities
- ❖ Develop realistic solutions to future threats

In developing the plan, the officers also adhered to what we believe are **fundamental characteristics of our organization**: We have been called a “prophetic” organization since our inception. We are prophets by our very membership: individuals who, on the basis of reliable fact, always challenge others to change. We are the Church. To change ourselves is to change the Church!

Supporting this belief, the following strategies build upon the assumptions that we need to:

- ❖ Strengthen our relational connection with our membership
- ❖ Make more efficient and effective all our processes, including a firm resolve towards action
- ❖ Encourage the greater use of technology to expand our reach to all Catholics
- ❖ Focus on our infrastructure issues to build a stronger organization based upon prayer and a deepened conviction of our prophetic call to be stewards of our Church.

Strategic Directions

1. **We must maximize the “giftedness” of our membership.** We must develop a relational net holding our members close, affirming their giftedness and inviting them to share in the reign of God with us as partners. We have the people power for change! Our members are the organization’s greatest asset and possess together a capacity and capability for transformation that exceeds what any of us could achieve alone. We must build “an ownership philosophy” with our members to extinguish any sense they may retain of a hierarchical structure.



2. **We must develop swifter, bolder communications with members, the media and the Church, delivering information that keeps all aware of issues, of progress in the resolution of critical issues and in our communal commitment to deepening our spirituality.** The papal ad in April 2008 was a spark that our members said they would like to see expand. We need to use Internet tools that can send communications to all Catholics. This will allow for co-governance and project management that drives, integrates, and coordinates personal, communal and organizational transformations to effect change.
3. **We must deliver more well-developed actions that have a national and local impact.** Members want nationally developed action plans that can be applied on a local level and serve as awareness builders and change inducers.
4. **We were born out of one of the greatest Church scandals in 2000 years: clerical sexual abuse.** We can never forget victims, and we continue to be mindful of prevention. We must learn vigilance from the painful reality of the past. The scandal woke us from our slumbers and exposed a Church in systemic crisis.
5. **We must be “branded” with the vision that We are Church.** It has been said that if we truly know who we are (Baptismal gifts of Priest, Prophet and King), we would act differently. This is our own transformation strategy: using our Baptismal gifts, we embrace the Spirit of Vatican II.

Strategic Platforms

This analysis resulted in a plan with **five strategic platforms**.

- ❖ **Spiritual and Communal Growth**
- ❖ **Local Actions to Achieve Best Practices**
- ❖ **Child Protection and Survivor Support**
- ❖ **Universal Church Reform**
- ❖ **Networking and Partnerships**

As a demonstration of inclusivity, we have invited the entire organization to support and participate in one or more of our five platforms. The response in terms of volunteers and contributions will strongly influence our priorities, which will guarantee success.



Platform: Spiritual & Communal Growth

VOTF as community builder, spiritual support and educator

Our mission with this platform is to facilitate spiritual development and foster community within Voice of the Faithful by using resources, programs and activities that encourage members to maintain a prayerful voice attentive to the Spirit.

Towards this goal:

- ❖ We will establish a **web-based Resource Center** dedicated to spiritual growth and community and grounded in the Christian tradition.

Practical Applications

- ⇒ Web pages exploring the types and histories of prayer forms, with examples and resource links
- ⇒ A blog supporting an interactive prayer community

- ❖ We will survey affiliates for successful prayer- and community-centered events they have run.

Practical Applications

- ⇒ Selection of three or four events that can be replicated elsewhere to promote VOTF
- ⇒ Reinforcement of VOTF communities and appeal to the broader faith community

- ❖ We will explore development of spiritual and commercial opportunities with selected religious communities and organizations to enhance the image of VOTF as part of the fabric of the Church.

Team Leaders

Brother Edward Bacon, O.S.F.
Kevin Connors
Ron DuBois
Kathy Rose Cerruti
Mary Farmer
Gaile Pohlhaus

To volunteer, or for more information, email Ron DuBois at debber@beld.net.



Platform: Local Actions to Achieve Best Practices

VOTF in action at the parish and diocesan levels

Our team seeks to increase active participation of the lay faithful in the mission and ministries of each parish and diocese. We believe that **Global Change Begins with Local Action.**

Our focus is on creating practical, pragmatic tools used to promote local change, including:

- ❖ Parish-based programs for renewal

Practical Applications

- ⇒ Identify models or “best practices” in parish councils and parish life, and develop case study reports that tell the stories of these parishes—how they work, and how they developed the capabilities
- ⇒ Find parishes and dioceses with outstanding financial reporting

- ❖ Parish-based safe environment committees

Practical Applications

- ⇒ Develop an assessment tool to identify parishes without Safe Environment Committees
- ⇒ Build child safety committees in parishes and training programs in dioceses

- ❖ Help local VOTF affiliate groups improve and sustain their effectiveness

Practical Applications

- ⇒ Develop an online survey to assess affiliate health
- ⇒ Pilot and then extend an affiliate-strengthening program
- ⇒ Develop a “microsite” for starting new affiliates

Team Leaders

Bud Bretschneider

Francis Piderit

Pat Gomez

Brad Pritts

Julie McConville

Margaret Roylance

Sean O’Conaill

Anne Wilson

To volunteer, or for more information, email FrancisPiderit or Brad Pritts at votf-local-action@googlegroups.com.



Platform: Child Protection and Survivor Support

VOTF action to increase protection of children from abuse and support victims/survivors of clergy sexual abuse

Voice of the Faithful recognizes and respects the life-long struggle of childhood victims/survivors of sexual abuse by members of the clergy and religious in our church community. Our platform mission is to direct action at the national, regional and local levels that will protect children and advance healing and justice for survivors:

- ❖ Reform statutes of limitations that govern redress for victims of childhood sexual abuse and support legislation for mandatory reporting of child abuse.

Practical Applications

- ⇒ Develop a comprehensive resource and strategy guide to help VOTF members partner with others to help victims/survivors of child sexual abuse gain justice and protect children.
- ⇒ Publish the guide for VOTF members and others to use.

- ❖ Support and collaborate with other organizations to expand child abuse prevention education and awareness programs in both the Catholic environment and the broader communities.

Practical Applications

- ⇒ Provide a model template and pilot projects for evidence-based adult education programs in our faith communities to help prevent, recognize, and act responsibly to child sexual abuse.
- ⇒ Partner with other groups (child advocacy groups, local child abuse councils, and mental health associations, for examples) to introduce effective programs into our parish communities.

- ❖ In connection with other advocates for child protection, promote a VOTF campaign that publicizes the need to protect children and promotes a better understanding of the epidemic of child sexual abuse in our society.

Practical Applications

- ⇒ Identify safety-awareness and child-protection efforts under way in key cities
- ⇒ Work with organizers to promote existing programs (such as Child Abuse Prevention Month)



- ❖ Support victims/survivors in their journey of healing by providing opportunities for survivors to share their stories, ideas, and insights about traumas of childhood sexual abuse.

Practical Applications

- ⇒ Develop a platform web presence that provides a forum for survivors and their families, as well as readers, to speak and hear the truth about the devastating effects of childhood sexual abuse by clergy or other persons of trust.
- ⇒ Encourage collaboration and partnering with groups and organizations that serve the victims/survivors to increase understanding and support for survivor issues and concerns.

Team Leaders

Bill Casey
Maureen Gilreath
Frances Hofmeister
John Marshall Lee
Tom Meany
Sister Maureen Turlish
Kathy Weyer

Local Action

Safety & Reform

VOICE

To volunteer, or for more information, email Frances at info@votfcps.com.

Global Action

Partnership

Community



Platform: Universal Church Reform

VOTF action engaging the global Catholic community to bring a lay voice into issues affecting the broader Church and the entire People of God

Our platform focuses on conversations about structural change and processes that will foster greater lay participation in the governance and guidance of our Church.

- ❖ Influence dioceses to initiate consultative processes that involve the participation of the local community (the “People of God”) in the selection of their next bishop, and that encourage selection of the bishop from that local diocesan community.

Practical Applications

- ⇒ Publish on the VOTF web site the mandatory retirement dates for all bishops and auxiliary bishops in the U.S., to serve as a resource for all laity. Also report on the history of bishop selection and how it has evolved.
- ⇒ Develop a method for ongoing, incremental lay comment on—and, eventually, input into—the process for identifying suitable candidates for five dioceses by December 2011.

- ❖ Work with the Priest Support Working Group to foster discussions about mandatory celibacy requirements and other issues affecting diocesan priests.

Practical Application

- ⇒ Extend support for the conversations initiated by the national working group.
- ⇒ Examine the problems and promises affecting the priesthood today and ask how those realities affect our parishes and sacramental lives.

- ❖ Carry out work previously initiated aimed at reviewing the roles of women in the Church.

Practical Application

- ⇒ Encourage those members who share a concern for the role of women in the Roman Catholic Church to find a comfort level that will facilitate discussion.
- ⇒ We appreciate that a one-size-fits-all approach cannot work; thus, our hope is that a diversity of approaches can be adapted to accommodate a variety of needs

Team Leaders

Dan Bartley
Jim Beyers
Nick Mazza

Phil Megna
Doug Roach

Anne Southwood
Ed Wilson

To volunteer or get more information, email Nick Mazza at nmazza2568@yahoo.com or call Nick at 908-370-9912.



Platform: Networking & Partnership

VOTF as facilitator of inter-organization dialogue and activities

While faithfully maintaining our allegiance to the mission, goals, and identity statement of VOTF, we propose to develop collaborative actions with other Catholic groups in order to effectively nurture meaningful reform in the spirit of Vatican II.

- ❖ Begin the process of reaching out to other Catholic organizations in order to form relationships that will lead to networking. Goal is to contact 15 organizations by December 2009, with a networking success rate of 25%.

Practical Applications

- ⇒ Develop Guiding Principles for networking with other reform organizations.
- ⇒ Identify potential partners, learn about their work, and evaluate common interests.

- ❖ Maintain records on efforts to work with other organizations.

Practical Application

- ⇒ Generate information useful for additional contacts or future work.
- ⇒ Serve as a resource for other platforms seeking to develop collaborative relationships.

Team Leaders

Tom Dowling
Janet Hauter
Elia Marnik
Hugh O'Regan
Sheila Peiffer
Susan Vogt

To volunteer or obtain more information, email Sheila Peiffer at sheila_peiffer@yahoo.com.



Organization-Wide implications

Fortunately, many of the actions envisioned for *Voices in Action* already are under way. The Strategic Plan aims to supplement and expand these activities and to organize them in a way that they can be managed efficiently and effectively, with clearly targeted progress towards each of our national goals.

Measurement

Each platform's leadership team will design its own measurement matrix for defining incremental success. Overall, VOTF as a whole will target a 25% increase in donations and a 30% increase in active membership as a goal.

Benefits

Voices in Action has great potential for success because it addresses identified needs and establishes clear lines for oversight:

1. It directly addresses the current needs of our constituents, as expressed through the SWOT analysis, which was administered to all levels and groups throughout the organization. By responding to perceived weaknesses and preparing for future opportunities and threats, the officers have the ability to serve the membership and celebrate our respective successes.
2. The plan directly addresses the plateau effect on our member size and donations. We believe that inviting members to join us in tasks that further the mission is a key to recognizing the treasures we have in our membership. In this plan, we engage as many as possible in work that forwards our mission and goals.
3. The officers will oversee the process. Direct involvement by the officer team will help all members experience a grassroots organization that can reach out and build relationships, build community, and collaborate in ways that model the Church we seek to become.

Overall, we seek to manage Voice of the Faithful using a business model that remains grounded in collaboration and imbued with the Spirit of Vatican II.



Organizational Potential

We believe that clarifying who VOTF is and what we are about significantly increases our chances for success.

We also believe that using the gifts of our members by inviting them to participate in *Voices in Action* and engaging them in the furtherance of our mission will help develop the relationships needed for our communal conversions of heart as we model the Church we wish to be.

Key to utilizing this potential is the team of staff members and volunteers we have organized to help monitor and carry out our work and to communicate with our platform teams and our members.

Local Action

Safety & Reform

Management & Administration

Voice of the Faithful conducts its national business using a small staff of full-time and part-time personnel, contractors, outsourced vendors, and both scheduled and occasional volunteers. We rely heavily on members to conduct the organization's action projects, and we rely on the internal staff to provide the resources required for those projects and the communications that enable members, officers, and staff to effectively promote and disseminate information about and outputs from those activities. The staff, in conjunction with VOTF's elected officers, also coordinates the activities of our members and our affiliates.

We take a multi-function, multi-task approach to staff assignments, with each employee expected to fill more than one function: from answering phones to handling member requests to preparing project packages, counting donations, tracking membership data, maintaining databases, filing legal forms, servicing equipment, providing media information, marketing VOTF to other Catholics, and dozens of other operational tasks needed for a non-profit organization.

We take the same approach with the contractors who support the national functions, and we supplement their work and the work of our staff with the hours generously donated by our national volunteers. In addition, our staff and contractors donate a significant number of hours as volunteers.

National staff and volunteers also support the work initiated and carried out by VOTF working groups, platform committees, and other members conducting projects that have a national impact.

The recent downturn in our economy and a reduction in donations forced us to pare both staff and staff hours, placing a greater demand on the multi-tasking activities we expect from our staff and on the volunteers who help supplement that work.



Contractors and Vendors

Key to our multi-function, multi-task approach for national operations is our ability to outsource work that is better performed and more cost-effective when conducted at a larger scale or by contractors with specialized knowledge and experience. To that end, we outsource IT support, backup and archiving functions for all electronic data; large-scale print runs; payroll processing; accounting; media research; web-site hosting; web creation, design, and management; newsletter publication and distribution; and program planning for our development and fundraising.

In most cases, contractors perform their work in collaboration with staff and VOTF members. As an example, the planning, development, marketing, and execution of the *Voices in Action* strategic plan has involved VOTF officers, trustees, national staff, the Marketing & Communications committee (itself a blend of national staff, contractors, officers, trustees, and members), the Branding Committee (also a blended group), volunteer members for the five platforms, the web designer, the newsletter publisher, and affiliate liaison members.

Technology and R&D

Our national operations depend upon effective utilization of the communications technology and software available today via the internet. We utilize to the extent possible open-source web applications and software, which both reduces our per-seat technology costs and allows us to share work performed on-site and off-site, among paid staff and volunteers, with members and contractors. We license email-communication services, web-related services, and database services to avoid the overhead (and risks) of creating and then maintaining these services as proprietary units.

The judicious use of communications media available today allows us to:

- ❖ Easily and quickly inform members about national actions, affiliate work, and activity to support our mission and goals.
- ❖ Distribute *In the Vineyard*, our e-newsletter, and *Focus*, our e-news update, twice per month to members and media subscribers.
- ❖ Make “streaming news feeds” on all Church-related news available to our members via the VOTF web site.
- ❖ Post declarations about our mission, goals, identity, and policies in one easily accessible site.
- ❖ Make available financial information on a quarterly and annual basis so that we adhere to the accountability standards we seek for our parishes and dioceses.



- ❖ Distribute and collect membership surveys, obtain input from members on policy and proposed activities, and seek member support for petitions and other actions aimed at carrying out our Mission and goals.

We continue to research and test the most effective ways to utilize the new media technologies to carry out our work and to reach new members, particularly the younger Catholics who are most at home with some of the new media sites. Thus, in 2008-2009, VOTF has established a presence on Facebook, reached out to Catholics and media outlets that support blogs, and initiated a Twitter account to generate “followers” for VOTF news.

We also are experimenting with email outreach to non-members, but have found ourselves in the forefront here—it is not quite possible, yet, to target Catholic non-members with our message while avoiding the negative (and illegal) activity of “spamming.” However, we have worked with a vendor who is developing email lists of Catholics and a method of targeting such addresses with “accepted” email that does not violate spamming laws.

Financial Projections and Funding

Introducing a major new initiative, even one involving substantial use of volunteer help, will affect an organization’s operations and the cost of doing business. VOTF’s *Voices in Action* Strategic Plan is no exception. To address these impacts, and to finance the incremental costs for the plan, we will ask our members to make financial commitments, we will seek foundation grants and support where appropriate, and we will pay close attention to the ways we can do “more with less.”

Our assumptions regarding the outcomes for membership and donations are:

- ❖ Membership will increase by 30% over the projected three-year life-cycle of the *Voices in Action* plan.
- ❖ Donations will increase by 25%.
- ❖ The Strategic Plan will place a significant strain on our contractor/consultant budget (e.g., technical support, webmaster, and equipment costs) and our small salaried staff (especially the Executive Director, public and media relations, and affiliates and membership support).
- ❖ Anticipated needs include setting up and maintaining websites, enabling electronic member updates and blogs, undertaking polls and surveys, and providing seed money for one-time initiatives with other organizations.

We forecast that an expansion beyond existing expense levels to accommodate the needs of the strategic plan will range between 30-40%.



Voice of the Faithful’s approved FY2010 expense budget is \$418,187 with anticipated revenues of \$448,700. The table below summarizes the budget revenues and expenses anticipated for each of the three years of the *Voices in Action* campaign based on our assumptions. It also shows the incremental costs that are considered necessary to achieve those goals.

Fiscal Year ¹	Revenue	Expenses	Incremental Cost
2010	\$448,700	\$418,187	\$146,365
2011	\$439,085	\$439,085	\$153,680
2012	\$567,900	\$461,034	\$161,362

VOTF will be seeking financial assistance to help offset these incremental costs.

In the past, we have solicited funds exclusively through periodic appeals four to six times per year. As the national economic crisis has overtaken major corporations and tiny non-profits alike, donations have understandably decreased. Equally important, uncertainty about responses has led to fluctuations in operational funding. In response, we have cut our national operations budget by nearly 45% over the last two years. But we cannot cost-cut our way to effective action. To support the *Voices in Action* campaign, we are adopting a business model that combines annual financial commitments supplemented by targeted solicitations. In addition, we are seeking out any foundations and grants that might supplement our revenue.

Innovation

Voice of the Faithful essentially “markets” a belief system based on the teachings of Vatican Council II when we reach out to the Catholic community for donations of money, services, and volunteer time—in other words, when we seek from the laity acting within the world the resources to work towards the betterment of the Church.

We live in a particularly turbulent economic environment today, where not-for-profit foundations operate within constrained budgets to address numerous competing priorities. VOTF, like any other not-for-profit organization, depends for our long-term survival and growth on our ability to attract new members and supporters. Innovation must be at the core of steps we take to meet this challenge.

We must succeed in three areas: delivery of our mission, generation of sufficient revenue through multiple outreach venues, and sound administration.

¹ VOTF’s fiscal year is June 1 through May 31. In August 2009, therefore, we are in Q1 of FY2010.



Delivering the Mission

Innovation is directly related to our mission, to the ways we implement the projects initiated under the *Voices in Action* campaign. New projects tend to be more expensive in costs, labor, support material and volunteer time simply because we have not done them before. But our mission demands that we pursue these efforts, which have grown from the talent and teamwork of a diverse group of individuals—in other words, from the work of our “gifted” members. We pursue innovation also as we seek ways to bring these projects to life for all Catholics, and seek to benefit all Catholics from the actions that help reform our Church.

Developing Financial Resources

Development, income management, fundraising, special events, grants and other resources are all essential to supporting the innovative potential of VOTF. Our success depends on our ability, collectively, to enlist the support of the Catholic community—individually as donors and volunteers, and corporately as sponsors in cash or in kind.

Innovation in development means innovation in meeting the needs of our member supporters. As successful fundraisers know, people support an organization not for the needs that it has but for the needs that it meets. Voice of the Faithful seeks to meet the needs of the laity at gaining a voice, a recognized voice, in the governance and guidance of the Church, and through that voice (or those voices, because we are a “large tent,” as is the Church itself) to address both the problems and the promises we face as Catholics in the 21st century.

Innovation in Development means that we must find ways to bring sponsors to see the needs that we meet, to recognize those needs as their own, and then to support the efforts that address those common needs. To attain such innovation, we must produce clear, coherent, targeted messages about projects to which our members are committed and deliver those messages cleverly in a market where media and message often blend into a gestalt that outpaces content.

Administration

The administrative component of our organization must provide logistic support to both the project work and the development component. Although our permanent, full-time administrative element will never be large, it must adhere to the best human resource and financial management practices; and constantly seek better ways to deliver support to paid staff and volunteers. We expect and pursue consistent cost control, regular review of existing contracts, and ongoing evaluation of ways to obtain the best service for the lowest cost.

But innovation requires us to go beyond these practices in our data gathering and analysis, so that we can support the decisions Voice of the Faithful must make when deciding what projects to launch, which fundraising efforts to undertake, and which foundations to target for grants.



Thus, we must become a learning organization. This effort is difficult for an organization such as ours, because we depend so heavily upon volunteers and upon member-driven initiatives. But it also is critical because we are an event-driven organization and one false step when responding to the media can reverse months or even years of work. As a result, it is imperative that VOTF support a stable and consistent administration, and that we aim with every project and every comment to enhance VOTF's reputation and to raise our visibility in a positive manner.

Only a learning organization can operate successfully in this environment, and the administrative component of the company must create innovative mechanisms to support such organizational learning.

We believe that *Voices in Action* delivers the innovative initiatives that we need for Voice of the Faithful to continue its success:

- ❖ A stronger, more dedicated outreach to our “gifted” members to work with us to renew ourselves as Catholic Christians committed to work of the Spirit as defined by Vatican II
- ❖ A stronger, more targeted and more expedient communications system to keep all equally informed
- ❖ A clearer branded mission so that all understand who we are, what we represent, and what we are targeting to accomplish
- ❖ A stronger commitment to being an action-centered organization that metrically tracks our successes and our learning

We present this dynamically inclusive plan for the future of Voice of the Faithful.

In Christ,

Dan Bartley, President
Janet Hauter, Vice President
Kevin Connors, Treasurer
Julie McConville, Secretary