The Advisory Committee for OLPR engaged in a strategic planning process with Dr Dan Ebener during spring 2022. The process began with invitations to CHMs and CHM publics to share their views of OLPR in a focus group or interview.

Seven (7) focus groups and five (5) interviews were conducted by Dr Ebener as follows:

Focus groups: 1) Retreatants; 2) CHM Sisters; 3) President’s Staff; 4) Volunteers; 5) OLPR Staff and Neighbors; 6) Presenters; 7) Advisory Committee

Interviews: 1) Todd Seifert, OLPR Property and Operations Manager; 2) Sr Margaret Kruse, outgoing OLPR Director; 3) Barb Arland-Fye, *the Catholic Messenger*; 4) Sr Kathleen Storms, former OLPR Director; 5) Sr Jude Fitzpatrick

Focus group participants and interviewees responded to nine questions. Their responses have been compiled and reports provided by DrEbener. Go to the **CHMnet** and into the folder, **OLPR Strategic Planning Process** to view all of the reportsfrom groups and interviews.Several copies will also be available at General Assembly.

Information collected during interviews and focus groups were essential to the OLPR Advisory Committee’s strategic planning discussion. Responses to the questions provide a glimpse of some stakeholders’ experiences of OLPR, as well as various ideas.

The final report from the OLPR Advisory Committee’s strategic planning discussion is provided in this pre-Assembly mailing. It will be the focus of presentation by Dr Ebener at General Assembly.

You may be wondering, ***what did people say***? Here is a sampling of responses.

1. Tell us about the Prairie. What are your general impressions?

* Peaceful, calm, centering in nature. Uplifts my spirit because I am in God’s country.
* A love for the place. Appreciation of beauty of surroundings. Variety of ways to connect with God, outside in nature or inside in rooms.
* Perfect setting for us as a community to claim that we care for the earth. It allows us to practice what we preach. (from a CHM)
* Place of quiet and beauty to experience God and creation. It’s an important ministry we can hopefully continue. (from a CHM)

1. What are the strengths of the Prairie?

* There’s a peace once you get out of the car, and you don’t want to leave.
* Attentive to how God is calling them/CHMs to be stewards of nature.
* Hospitality is key to this place. The whole place feels like sacred space.
* Contemplative everywhere you go.
* Mattresses were just updated; new barn is a good addition.

1. What are the weaknesses of the Prairie?

* The gravel road and finding it can be tough.
* It seems like everyone is older and young people aren’t attracted out to the Prairie.
* Website could be more dynamic, easier to access.
* Need more retreatants attending retreats. Need more marketing.

1. How would you improve upon the weaknesses?

* They (CHMs) need to tell their story about how they are bringing back flowers, bees, etc.
* Find a most capable director. (from a CHM)
* Work more with religious organizations on programming and advertising.
* Work with colleges and ecological or biology professors to attract younger people.
* Offer it as a sabbatical place or longer-term stay. (from a CHM)
* Gear programming towards families and younger generations.

1. Anything they should stop doing? N/A
2. What do you see as opportunities to grow the Prairie?

* Zoom is a great tool, but it needs to lead people to the Prairie in-person experiences.
* Weekend retreat opportunities; expanding program opportunities to people of other faith traditions. (from a CHM)
* More programs with *Laudato Si’* and other church teachings about stewardship of the environment and global climate change.
* Focus on young people and young adults- urban vs peace & quiet; family reunions.
* Potential partners mentioned: religious communities; Kingdom Trail Riders; groups concerned about sustainability of the earth; Newman Centers; Catholic Climate group in Diocese; New Mallory community [New Melleray Abbey of Trappists]; Iowa astrologers; Diocese; Benet House.

1. What do you see as the greatest obstacles to growing the Prairie? *Skipped here*
2. What do you suggest as strategies moving forward?

* We need to find a way to ensure the legacy of the Prairie beyond our community’s ability to be so directly involved going forward. (from a CHM)
* Hospitality has to continue to be a core value and priority.
* Having more than one person living there all the time would help a lot.
* It may have to become a separate 501c3 of its own with support from the CHM.

1. What else would you like to share about the Prairie. Anything else? *Skipped here*