

St. Joseph's
Catholic
Church
Strategic
Plan

April 10, 2008

2008

The following contents are the direct result and summary of the initial strategic planning process held on January 23, 2008. The enclosed plan is in DRAFT format and is a working document for the Parishioners of St. Joseph's Parish to modify, review and approve. The document is intended to be used as a road map for future planning and decision making.

DRAFT

ST. JOSEPH'S CATHOLIC CHURCH

Fertile, MN

INTRODUCTION

Over the past year St. Joseph's Parish in Fertile, MN has begun initial dialogue with regards to our existing church facility and the long term viability of the structure. Informally parishioners have been discussing this situation for several years. There is concern as to the existing safety and costs to maintain the existing structures of the church building and the rectory next door.

From these conversations, an informal group formed to determine the best course of action for bringing these concerns to the forefront of our congregation. It was decided that instead of "just" looking at a building concern, it would be best to engage in a strategic planning process that would encompass our mission/vision and goals for the next several years.

The planning process highlights the current and foreseen strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of the parish. Additionally, the plan outlines the mission and vision of St. Joseph's Church which is to be the road map for future planning and decision making within the church.

BACKGROUND

St. Joseph's was first built in 1916 as a Mission Church. It later became a full fledged parish in 1955. The current St. Joseph's Church was built in 1956. The church has seen slow, steady growth of parishioners over the span of its lifetime. This is due in some part to the number of converts who married Catholic parishioners and later converted to Catholicism joining the St. Joseph's Parish. Additionally, numbers have increased due to families with children within households.

Recent statistics show that in 1997, St. Joseph's Parish had a total of 72 families as registered parishioners. In 2007, that number has escalated to 92 registered parishioner families.

PARRISH ASSESSMENT

St. Joseph's Catholic Church has enjoyed a positive growth of members and involvement over the past several years. While other small parishes appear to be dwindling, St. Joseph's remains an active and vibrant community of believers. In addition to activity within the church, St. Joseph's enjoys a positive presence in the community of Fertile and its peripheral boundaries.

KEY ISSUES

This section briefly discusses St. Joseph's strengths and weaknesses, in addition to acknowledging opportunities and threats addresses at the initial input meeting. Opportunities and threats relate to external factors beyond St. Joseph's control, while strengths and weaknesses refer to internal issues, which St. Joseph's Parish can influence directly.

SWOT ANALYSIS (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats)**STRENGTHS:**

- Strong RCIA Program
- St. Joseph's Parish is a steward of their money, spending wisely. The Parish has paid in full for repairs and programs as invoices are due
- St. Joseph's Parish currently has no debt
- Positive Growth
- Excellent Choir
- Altar and Rosary Society
- Meal ministry
- Prayer Chain
- Parishioners are cooperative
- Parishioners are willing to serve when called upon
- Committed and dedicated to meeting the needs of Parish Family
- Funeral Ministry
- Self Cleaning
- Mix of generations
- Diverse talents that are utilized to make things work in the background...such as decorating the altar, mass music, religious education program
- St. Joseph's Church owns existing structure free and clear
- Active participation in worship
- Strong fellowship after Mass
- Strong family participation
- Fall Dinner Committee
- Fall Dinner
- VBS Program
- Prayer Blankets
- Dedicated religious education teachers
- Summer seasonal influx of parishioners (primarily generated by lake traffic)
- Mass time
- Supportive members (family atmosphere)
- Resident Sr. (Sr. Mary Jean)
- Faith filled people wanting to do the Lord's work
- Parish children are encouraged and step up when called upon

WEAKNESSES:

- Lack of information to Parishioners, such as:
 - Parish Council Minutes
 - Church Finances and meeting minutes
 - Budget issues
- Finance and Parish Councils – separate (*Currently the only liaison between the two is Msgr. Grundhaus... should be a representative of the Finance Council with accurate, up to date financial information serving on the Parish Council Board*)
- Lack of formal training for council and finance members
- Poor Electrical Situation...not grounded
- Facility not large enough to hold weddings, funerals (130 -150 capacity)
- Not handicap accessible
- Poor parking situation
- No upstairs restroom
- Downstairs basement floor is dangerous to children
- Past basement water damage
- Unresolved water leakage in basement

- Safety issues with regards to sunday school classrooms...no windows and narrow stairwell to get out of in case of fire or emergency
- Lack of gathering space at church entrance
- Choir loft is inadequate...cannot see from back and the danger of no railings to prevent a fall
- Poor sound system
- Lack of space for RE classes next door. Hence, currently using all areas of the church with concerns of: Easy for children to get away from teacher into choir loft and competition for space with those practicing in the choir
- Unavailable parcel for expansion to the north due to easement issues
- Lack of person to oversee maintenance issues such as: electrical, water, staining, painting, heating, etc
- Due to nature of facility, parish is unable to fix appropriately and instead several band-aid initiative fixes have been procured as a temporary solution
- Kitchen space is insufficient and needs many updates; i.e.: appliances
- Concern for youth...grade 9 and up... need activities to keep them involved. No active youth group
- Physical space within the confines of the building is not adequate for special events
- Basement flooring is an eyesore
- Financial obligations for young and fixed income families may be difficult. Thus asking for supplemental funds for remodeling or building new may be detrimental to individual family financial parameters
- St. Joseph Parish does not have a Youth Ministry Program Leader
- Lack of formal Bible based learning foundation
- St. Joseph's Parish has not had a plan for sustaining and growing to ensure long term viability
- St. Joseph's Parish is self sustaining; however they have very limited dollars for extras at the present time.

OPPORTUNITIES

- Ability to draw Children to participate in VBS
- Possibilities to draw in larger events, such as Youth Rally
- Delegation of ministries to lay people

THREATS

- Declining School Enrollment
- Lack of Priests...A concern that St. Joseph's may be one of parishes to close if there were insufficient coverage of priests. *(Msgr. Grundhaus commented on the above statement saying that because of parish community is seen as a vibrant parish, it is unlikely that Fertile would be a parish targeted for closing)*
- Recent Catholic Scandals within the overall Catholic Church
- Advanced ages of priests
- Demographics...competition for lake people
- Technology and entertainment are competing for kids' attention and time...ex. AWANA, KFC, Beltrami Resurrection Youth Program
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COMPETITION

- Area Churches including existing area Catholic churches
- Other Ministries
 - Youth programs
 - Adult programs
 - Television

MISSION

1. Definitions of a Mission Statement

A. A mission statement is “a broad statement of the overall direction and purpose of the parish.”
William Rademacher and Marliss Rogers, The New Practical Guide for Parish Councils (Mystic, CT: Twenty-Third Publications, 1988), p. 163.

1. Clear enough so that its intent is obvious, yet not so detailed that it becomes burdensome.
2. Flexible enough to allow for interpretation: it does not try to cover every conceivable situation.
3. Short, clear, and understandable

B. A mission statement (according to Robert G. Howes, Parish Planning: A Practical Guide to Shared Responsibility (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1994, p. 56) can be described as:

1. The group's reason for existence, its purpose and philosophy.
2. Its fundamental commitments and the way they are managed.
3. The direction and meaning of its activities.
4. Its overall purpose and the purpose of its parts.

C. Characteristics of the statement (Howes, p. 57)

1. It must inspire as well as inform.
2. It must be local and homegrown, not copied from another parish.
3. It must be spiritual.
4. It must be concise.
5. It must emerge from a process in which all parishioners are invited to belong.

2. Basic Elements of a Parish Mission Statement.

A. Dimensions of the mission of the universal Church (Rademacher and Rogers, p. 163)

1. To proclaim the Good News of Jesus Christ.
2. To build up community of Love
3. To celebrate the liturgies of praise and thanksgiving.
4. To serve others in the name of Jesus Christ.
5. To enable all to grow in their relationship to Jesus Christ.

B. The statement should also articulate the situation of the local parish.

1. It should state particular issues that distinguish the parish from other parishes
2. It should refer to the parish's locale and time in history.
3. It should speak of the gifts that enable the parish to undertake its mission.

The following were key phrases and words that the initial members of the St. Joseph's Strategic Planning Session had asked to be considered in the frameworks of the Mission Statement.

- Family
- Faith
- Building
- Community
- Future generations
- Fellowship
- Viable, grow in faith and size
- Instruct youth in the Christ so they become sustaining Catholics for life
- Serve parish members
- Follow gospel according to Jesus
- Honor sacramental life
- Comfortable fellowship
- Growth and prosperity
- Place to be faithful to Christ's message
- Build the Kingdom
- Serve Catholic needs
- Eucharistic Centered
- Provide for Future

Mission of St. Joseph's Catholic Church

St. Joseph's Catholic Church, as a parish, which is united with the Catholic Church throughout the world, proclaim our belief in the message and mission of Jesus Christ.

We as a parish family will continue to build and evolve as a strong Catholic community that values worship, faith, fellowship, evangelization, and the sacraments. We are committed to the viability and sustainability of our parish through our dedication to instructing all parishioners in following Christ so we continue to build the Kingdom of God as we live out our Catholic Faith.

Our parish life will center on the Eucharist during which we will celebrate the presence of the Risen Lord among us. As a baptized faith community, we the people of St. Joseph's Parish will be filled with the Spirit of Jesus who brings new life to us all.

VISION

A Vision Statement provides an inspiring mental image of what the parish wants to be.

St. Joseph's Catholic Church Vision Statement

We are a Catholic Christian Community committed to each other and the world through ministries of faith and works of corporal and spiritual mercy. We respond and bear witness to the call of Jesus through the word of God, celebration of the Eucharist and compassionate Christian fellowship.

RECOMMENDED GOALS/OBJECTIVES

Parish goals are broad statements supported by strategies and tactics for achieving specific goals.

Based on the internal strategic planning session and conversations with parishioners, the following goals have been developed for congregation approval. Goal number 2 was immediately activated at the planning session to begin preliminary investigation. The two goals outlined will need considerable time to flush out tactics and timelines for goal completion. In addition, action plans with timelines associated should be detailed out and included in final strategic plan.

Goal # 1: Create a solid foundation and continued faith growth for all, encompassing the philosophy of our Christian life long journey.

Strategy 1: Expand Knowledge of our Catholic faith.

Tactic: Seek out volunteer or minimally paid position to coordinate adult education within the parish.

Tactic: Understand better the workings of the Catholic Church

Tactic: Bible study groups for couples, adults, youth, women's, men's (suggestions were for Bible studies that include life applications)

Tactic: Develop Mentoring program for adults within the Parish family (ie: pair up married couples who have been married for several years with those that are newly married or wish to have a mentor couple)

Tactic: Implement prayer partner or prayer family program

Strategy 2: Increase evangelistic ministries in our parish family, community, region and the world.

Tactic: Develop a Evangelization Committee responsible for:

- Visiting with existing parishioners
- New Parishioner Welcome
- Local/State/Global Mission opportunities

Tactic: Msgr to spend a moment welcoming at the beginning of Mass, shaking hands and introducing each other particularly to visiting parishioners.

Strategy 3: Increase Fellowship Opportunities within the Parish Family

Tactic: Expand existing after mass fellowship to include summer fellowship

Tactic: Plan and host a summer picnic or Pig Roast for Parish Family

Tactic: Plan a fun family winter fun event

Strategy 4: *Expand Youth programs and opportunities.*

Tactic: *Develop a designated youth budget*

Tactic: *Coordinate a Youth focus group meeting to determine what their needs are for catholic education and events they would like to see within the parish.*

Tactic: *Research the possibility of hiring a Youth Director (Part time) (Youth Director to coordinate CYO, release time, youth group fun trips, activities within the parish reaching out to other youth within the community.)*

Tactic: *Research the possibility of hiring a Religious Education Person for future (This person would be responsible for evaluating/coordinating/scheduling volunteers and implementing all youth education within the parish. This includes all Sunday School programming and summer VBS programming.)*

Tactic: *Appoint a Youth Representative to the Parish Council*

Tactic: *Investigate and implement a Youth Music program including voices and instrumentals. Seek out adult volunteer to head up.*

Tactic: *Develop a Youth Mentoring Program (Suggestions were both an adult parishioner to a youth and an older youth to younger youth mentorship)*

Strategy 5: *Expand parishioner involvement within existing and new ministries.***Parish Council/Finance Council**

Tactic: *Review Parish Structure*

Tactic: *Outline Parish Council/Financial Council positions*

Tactic: *Develop a mandatory training component for all serving on Parish/Financial Council to ensure council cohesiveness and ease of incoming/outgoing Council Members.*

Tactic: *Appoint a youth representative for inclusion on the Parish Council (suggested 1 year rotating position)*

Tactic: *Develop plan for sharing information with Parishioners with regard to overall decisions and financial status.*

Tactic: *Publish Agenda and encourage involvement*

Current Ministries available for involvement

- Prayer blankets
- Meal Ministry
- Altar Society
- Adult Choir/Music

- Youth Education
- RCIA
- Sunshine Committee
- Parish/Finance Council
- Altar & Rosary Society
- Eucharistic Ministers
- Liturgy Committee
- Altar Servers
- Decorating
- VBS
- Fall Dinner Committee

Strategy 6: Create a Fundraising Arm of the Parish to assess prioritized programs and outline and develop fundraising program to assist with achieving prioritized strategies.

Goal # 2: Create a physical space that allows all Sacraments of the Catholic Church to be celebrated together and accommodates all parishioners within confines of one facility.

Strategy 1: Create an environment conducive to achieving Goal # 2.

Strategy 2: Form a Committee to evaluate existing St. Joseph's Church facility and the possibility of building a new facility.

Tactic: Review Diocesan planning and expectations for research and evaluation of renovation/remodeling and/or new building

Tactic: Conduct due diligence with regards to renovation vs. building

Tactic: Develop a plan for both of the above options

Tactic: Present Options to Parish family members

Tactic: Based on Parish family conversations, make decision on future renovation/building options

Tactic: Hire or appoint a volunteer maintenance person to oversee and coordinate all maintenance issues.

NEXT STEPS

- Review Strategic Plan
- Parish Family Visits
- Prioritize strategies and tactics based on parish family visits
- Develop action plans with names of those responsible for carrying out goals/strategies
- Develop budgets for action plans
- Develop realistic timelines for achieving goals
- Annual review and update of strategic planning document
- Annual evaluation of goals/strategies by Parish Council and ad hoc congregational members at large.

CONCLUSION

St. Joseph's Parish enjoys a very positive situation at the present time. Parishioners are committed to their faith formation and the ideals and beliefs of the Catholic Church. Additionally, they are dedicated and willing to step forward in whatever capacity they are needed.

The parishioners are currently feeling the confines of growth and an aging population both in numbers and limitations. The Strategic Planning process is the catalyst for redefining the parameters for the future of St. Joseph's Parish.

The planning process is a time of growth and stretching one another to "look outside the box" with creativity and innovation for ensuring St. Joseph's long term viability and sustainability.

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