

SAINT MARTHA PARISH
STRATEGIC PLAN
FALL 2024

SAINT MARTHA PARISH MISSION STATEMENT

We are the Catholic community of St. Martha Parish, united in our mission to worship God, and to learn and spread the Gospel message of Jesus Christ with lives of faith, love and service guided by the Holy Spirit.

A LETTER FROM OUR PASTOR

Dear members of St Martha parish family,

I am delighted to share with you the completion of our Strategic Planning Report, a collaborative effort that reflects the dedication and commitment of our parish community. This report serves as a roadmap for the future direction of St. Martha Parish, outlining our goals, strategies, and action plans to foster growth and flourishing in the years to come.

I want to express my heartfelt gratitude to all who contributed to the development of this report. Your input, insights, and prayers have been invaluable throughout this process. Together, we have discerned the needs of our parish and charted a course that reflects our shared vision and values to continue to flourish St. Martha parish and its ministries.

I am confident that this report will have a significant impact on the growth and flourishing of our parish community. By implementing the strategies outlined within it, we will be better equipped to meet the evolving needs of our parishioners, engage more deeply in our ministries, and build a stronger sense of unity and belonging among all members of our faith family.

As we embark on this journey together, let us continue to pray for God's guidance and blessings upon our parish. May this Long-range Planning Report serve as a catalyst for positive change and renewal, leading us ever closer to God and to one another. I am so grateful to Mr. Richard "Tink" Guthrie from the Archdiocesan office for his guidance and expertise he has offered. I am equally appreciative of the strategic planning committee for their attentive listening, insights and unwavering dedication to the creation of this great project.

Thank you once again for your relentless support and commitment to St. Martha Parish. With God's grace and our collective efforts, I am confident that our future is bright and full of promise.

Yours in Christ,

Fr. Seejo Thandiackal

Pastor

About the Strategic Plan

During the summer of 2021, Fr. Seejo solicited a volunteer group who would be willing to serve on the Strategic Planning Committee for St. Martha Parish. Our goal, through study and input from parishioners, would be to draft a plan that would guide the direction and priorities of our parish for the next five years. Based on feedback from parishioners, the plan would outline the vision for the parish, and provide some specific goals and actions that would support this vision. It is important to note that the plan does not attempt to outline every action, resource, responsibility or timeline that may be needed to work toward our vision.

In early 2022, parishioners were asked to complete a survey addressing the various strengths, weaknesses and suggestions for improvement in the parish. Based on the information provided by this survey, the Committee began the process of reviewing and sorting the responses so that the collective vision for the parish could be formulated.

There were two survey themes that were dominant in the responses:

First – The people of St. Martha feel a very strong and positive community spirit in the parish. The strength of that community spirit was overwhelmingly identified as the greatest strength of the parish.

Second – Parishioners believed that the greatest need of the parish is reengagement and revitalization of the members. This includes increasing mass attendance, return to the principles of stewardship in our daily lives and faith practice, and increasing the enrollment and participation of young members in Saint Martha parish.

These two dominant themes served as the core of the development of this plan. Many other concerns and comments helped as we developed the goals and action plans included herein. Comments regarding worship, leadership, facilities and building community and involvement were all helpful in establishing the plan's action steps. While we were developing the plan, the parish was addressing some of the issues noted in the survey, such as completing a new church accessible restroom, installing new church pews, enhancing church space for better handicapped accessibility. Additionally, during this time, several key personnel changes were happening in the parish. Kristina Morgan Weber was hired as the new Worship Director, Annette Bergamini, long time Director of Faith Formation retired, and Mary Sullivan was hired as Mission Advancement Officer. As the parish adapted to these changes, it naturally impacted items in the strategic plan focus. The plan as outlined here considers the impact of the changes and sets forth, using many of the concerns addressed in the survey, a guideline for actions.

As we continue our faith journey together, and move beyond the difficulties of the Covid years, we are dedicated to **renewing** our commitment to the faith, **engaging** ourselves in faith life and service and **growing**- both in our personal faith and in our membership. These three themes, **RENEW, ENGAGE and GROW**, are the core of this plan. We hope as you read the plan you will give prayerful thought to these themes, and find your place, somewhere in the goals and actions, in continuing to build the community of Saint Martha in love and service to our Lord and to each other.

RENEW

Goal: To promote, facilitate and nurture faith renewal in the lives of each parishioner and the Saint Martha parish family.

Objective 1

Encourage a greater understanding of and engagement in the celebration of the Mass.

Action Steps

1. Encourage attendance and participation at Sunday Mass from all parishioners by expanding opportunities for active participation in established and new ministries.

Note-One new suggested ministry is a program for Sacristans to serve at all masses preparing for masses.

2. Identify and introduce opportunities for parishioners to increase understanding and appreciation for the sacred Mass by offering learning sessions, guest speakers and small group discussions.
3. Reinforce the homily message at each Sunday Mass by publishing and making accessible the homily, or a guided homily summary, in all communication outlets.

Objective 2

Promote attendance at Mass and other church events by addressing physical space, timing, or accessibility issues.

Action Steps

1. Identify and incorporate physical improvements in the worship space, especially addressing the issue of any possible sound improvements.

Note- During the period of developing this plan several space improvements were made in the church including a new restroom, new pews and dedicated handicapped spaces.

2. With input from parishioners, evaluate times for masses on Sundays and Holy Days, to determine if adjustments could be made that would benefit those who attend or wish to attend Mass at Saint Martha.

RENEW

Goal: To promote, facilitate and nurture faith renewal in the lives of each parishioner and the Saint Martha parish family. (continued)

Objective 3

Encourage full participation in the Church through the Sacraments, devotional prayer, and mission and retreat opportunities.

Action Steps

1. Consider increasing the opportunity for the Sacrament of Reconciliation by providing confession times before or after a weekend mass and/or one daily mass.

Note –Since the survey was completed, and now that the parish has returned to the use of the church’s Reconciliation room, the Sacrament of Reconciliation is again being offered prior to Saturday afternoon mass.

2. Establish scheduled devotional opportunities (i.e., Eucharistic Adoration/ Rosary/ Stations of the Cross) and recruit a facilitator for each to implement and oversee promotion, scheduling, set-up and participation details as necessary.
3. Establish a Formation Team to develop programs for faith development with emphasis on our Renew, Engage and Grow themes.

ENGAGE

Goal: Encourage and provide opportunities for greater participation in Saint Martha parish life and ministries.

Objective 1

Promote and facilitate a return to emphasis of stewardship in our daily lives.

Action Steps

1. Establish a Stewardship committee to assist the Stewardship Director in revitalizing all the elements of Stewardship in the parish. This will include reviewing the list of parish ministries to determine if the ministries are working as intended and have enough parishioner involvement to continue. With input from the parish, determine if new ministries could or should be added. Recruit parishioners to fill needed ministry areas.

The parish has hired a Director of Mission Advancement who will also oversee the Stewardship area.

Objective 2

Provide additional opportunities for building the Saint Martha community spirit.

Action Steps

1. Develop an inclusive parish wide social opportunity seasonally that serves to build parish community (not a fund raiser).
2. Explore the opportunity for creating small group communities in the parish. These communities could gather for formation, service, fellowship and support for each other and the parish, especially new parish members.

Objective 3

Enhance communication in all elements of parish life to help members be better informed and to promote engagement.

Action Steps

1. Form a Parish/School/Sports Ministry Alliance Committee, with members representing each, to work together in bridging resources and opportunities in faith formation, ministry and service, technology, and communications.

ENGAGE

Goal: Encourage and provide opportunities for greater participation in Saint Martha parish life and ministries. *(continued)*

Objective 3

Enhance communication in all elements of parish life to help members be better informed and to promote engagement.

Action Steps

2. Assess the need for a parish communications and technology coordinator, who could ensure that parish print and electronic media systems and communications are up to date and well formed. Consider if the parish should have a hired staff position for this role.
3. Prepare and publish a full annual report on the parish. This includes financial information, parish membership data, Sacramental data, school enrollment data and highlights of the parish for the year.

Note – The parish has published its first Annual Report, and the strategic plan is included herein. Updates to the plan will be provided as part of the annual report each year.

GROW

Goal: Develop ongoing opportunities that enhance and grow Saint Martha parish in the mission of serving Jesus Christ, both in our own community and throughout the wider communities of which we are a part.

Objective 1

Provide a Parish campus that reflects our Catholic identity and devotion to praising and serving the Lord. Ensure that it is aesthetically pleasing, welcoming, safe, well-maintained, and designed to serve the needs of all members.

Action Steps

1. Form a facilities Committee for all campus oversight, including all expansion and major updates.

Note – Since drafting of the plan, Pastor appointed a facilities Committee that has been overseeing the facility updates. Their work has included involvement in planning and overseeing the pavement of the church grounds.

2. Perform a campus wide facilities and grounds evaluation determining need for improvements, changes, or expansions. Areas to consider include facility availability, accessibility, and space enhancement. Engage qualified professionals as necessary to assist in evaluations.

Note -Survey respondents addressed specific concerns such as handicapped accessibility in the office, more adult formation space availability, updating Bethany restrooms and expanding the church vestibule to allow for separation of gathering/greeting area, while maintaining quiet prayer time in the church.

GROW

Goal: Develop ongoing opportunities that enhance and grow Saint Martha parish in the mission of serving Jesus Christ, both in our own community and throughout the wider communities of which we are a part. (continued)

Objective 2

Prepare and structure our parish to help ensure continued viability as a strong Catholic presence in our neighborhood.

Action Steps

1. Evaluate and consider hiring an experienced Parish Administrator/Pastoral Associate. The person in this role would support the Pastor in overall parish management and pastoral matters, including pastor transitions.

Note – This role was identified by many surveyed as a high need for the parish.

2. Look for ways to collaborate with neighboring parishes to expand outreach and opportunities.

Objective 3

Increase community visibility and welcoming opportunities in the parish.

Action Steps

1. Establish a Welcoming Committee to welcome new members, visitors and those who are inquiring about joining Saint Martha or the Catholic faith.
2. Explore opportunities that engage the wider community in events or programs at Saint Martha. (The picnic creates a great opportunity for this.) Work to establish one or two additional events that could promote this engagement.
3. Increase community support for the Parish by increasing parish member and community sponsorship for the bulletin, parish directory, picnic and athletics. Add special recognition and thank you to new sponsors and throughout the year highlight existing sponsors in the bulletin.