

INTRODUCTION

“It helps, now and then, to step back and take a long view.”

These words from the Prayer of Oscar Romero (see Epilogue) capture the rationale for the development of this Pastoral Strategic Plan.

Over the years, all of us have witnessed and participated in the growth of St. Ignatius Church into a vibrant, dynamic parish. The parish has grown to include worshipers from areas all across metropolitan Boston, who are drawn by our liturgies, preaching, artistry and our welcoming nature. We have attracted dedicated and talented Jesuit priests and lay staff, as well as generous and gifted parishioners, who have contributed to the development of the parish.

We have seen a proliferation of new programs and activities aimed at meeting the spiritual needs of parishioners of diverse backgrounds and ages, as well as programs designed to reach out and help others in the community beyond the parish walls. We have experienced the burgeoning (and the welcoming) of lay involvement in parish life, ranging from participation in liturgies, to coordinating spiritual development programs, to leadership on various commissions, as well as many other areas of endeavor. Our whole concept of “church” has evolved well beyond traditional models of the past. As a result, we are both energized by the opportunities to more fully live our faith, and challenged by the limited availability of people, time, money and other resources needed to build the Kingdom of God.

Here at St. Ignatius, as in other areas of our lives, it is easy to get caught up in the hectic day-to-day routine of attending to the present agenda, and to lose sight of what we can become in the longer term. This planning process has been our attempt to step back, to give ourselves time to reflect upon who we are and where we have been; to articulate our vision of the future, and, with the grace of God, to chart a course for arriving at that envisioned future.

PLANNING PROCESS AND PARTICIPANTS

The development of this plan reflects the involvement of many people in the parish over the last two years. The following is a summary of the planning process and participants.

The foundation of the plan is the *Mission Statement*, completed by an ad hoc committee of the Parish Pastoral Council in early 2001. All subsequent work in the planning process was undertaken with the objective of fulfilling the parish mission.

Our pastor, Fr. Bob VerEecke, drafted the *Vision Statement*. He depicts the parish of the future as a place where an empowered people of God more fully claim their baptismal inheritance; and draw strength, energy, inspiration and comfort from their participation in the parish community.

The Parish Pastoral Council (PPC) undertook an assessment of the parish's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and challenges ("*SWOC*" analysis). The SWOC analysis represents the candid opinions of the PPC members regarding critical issues facing the parish. Over 40 parishioners, who participated in focus groups in October 2001, largely confirmed these opinions. The PPC also reviewed and contributed to the draft plan at several junctures in its development.

The parish commissions have been instrumental in the plan's development. In 2001, the commissions analyzed their respective roles, the expectations of parishioners, and critical issues in their areas of responsibility. Preliminary commission-specific goals were drafted. In subsequent stages of the process, the commissions reviewed and commented on draft reports produced by the Strategic Planning Committee.

The ad hoc Strategic Planning Committee (SPC) was convened in February 2001, to coordinate the planning process and to develop the planning document. The SPC reviewed and analyzed the input from the other groups involved in the process, gathered additional information, identified gaps as well as areas of overlap, integrated the work of the other groups involved in the process and developed this document. The

SPC members worked in several subgroups, each addressing a particular area (liturgy, spiritual life, finance, etc.), and drafted reports outlining strategic goals, objectives and actions in each area. These reports, once reviewed by the entire SPC, were distributed to the commissions for further review and comment. After reviewing and incorporating the comments of the commissions, as well as the Parish Pastoral Council, the SPC issued this *Pastoral Strategic Plan*.

We gratefully acknowledge the participation of everyone involved in this important work of the parish. The participants of each group are identified in the Appendices.

PLANNING TIME FRAME

In formulating the goals and objectives, the SPC has utilized a three-year planning horizon, for the most part. Some of the actions involved in various goals have already been achieved, and these are noted. Accomplishing other goals and objectives may require additional time beyond that projected in this document. The plan will be reviewed and updated annually.

COMMON THEMES

In reading the strategic goals and objectives, readers will note the appearance of several themes, which affect virtually all areas of parish life. Four prevalent themes are as follows:

- Integration. There is a need to more effectively integrate efforts among various endeavors (e.g., the work of commissions, as well as the integration of faith in our daily lives). This is seen not only as an area that needs improvement, but also as an opportunity for enrichment and growth as we increasingly find “intersections” among different aspects of parish life (e.g., spiritual life and social ministries).
- Communication. We need to communicate more effectively with each other, not only concerning the dissemination of information, but also in developing our identity as a community whose members know each other and care for and about each other.

- Education. The need for “education” in all areas of parish life is of paramount importance, and is not confined to formal religious education programs. Education is seen as a continuous process in which all parishioners have a role in both teaching and learning.
- Participation. While there are many dedicated parishioners who give their time and talents in contributing to the growth of the parish, almost all of the commissions have identified a crucial need for additional volunteers. We need to find more effective ways of recruiting and retaining people in these important roles.

We invite all parishioners to read and prayerfully reflect on the contents of this plan. We encourage your feedback. Comments can be addressed to the Strategic Planning Committee and can be sent to the rectory.

For the Strategic Planning Committee,

Marilyn Dunphy
Chairperson

Rev. Robert VerEecke SJ
Pastor

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