



VISION AND ACTION PLAN 2019-2024

The mission of Saint Joseph Parish is to celebrate the Eucharist, to proclaim the Good News, to encourage stewardship as a way of life, to form Missionary Disciples, and to grow in faith, justice, love and service to others.

Saint Joseph Parish Vision and Action Plan Process

Over two-and-a-half years ago, the Pastoral Council identified the need to engage more adults in faith formation. We started Alpha in January of 2017 to respond to that need. A program that we hoped would bring in a dozen people welcomed over 240 individuals over eleven weeks. Something powerful was happening in our parish. As we identified and explored the reasons for this overwhelming response, we also courageously attempted to read the signs of the times and invited the Holy Spirit to guide us. We know that millions in our country have walked away from their Catholic faith. Most of us have friends and relatives who no longer practice their faith, and the recent continuation of a scandal that was first uncovered in Boston in 2002 continues to haunt us. Our culture no longer values faith as it once did, so we realized that new strategies and ideas were needed.

We soon discovered that Alpha was, as its Greek name implies, a beginning. As a process of encounter with Jesus, Alpha needed follow-up and accompaniment. The Holy Spirit had begun our parish down a path and process of self-discovery. Along the way, in March of 2017, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) produced a remarkable new document, *Living as Missionary Disciples*, that has provided a path and language to frame our own vision for the future of Saint Joseph Parish. Last spring, as we began to plan our 70th anniversary, we gathered a representative group of parishioners and staff to form a vision and a plan to guide our parish into the future. This plan is focused on the pastoral life of our parish, with financial and campus plans being simultaneously developed to provide the resources and financial foundation to support our parish ministries on into the future. We invited feedback from everyone in the parish, and in response we tried to gather specific ideas, actions and strategies to move us forward. This document, guided with prayer and faith in the Holy Spirit, is the culmination of that process.



Dear Fellow Parishioners of St. Joseph Parish,

“Rejoice in the Lord always. I shall say it again: rejoice!” (Philippians 4:4)

What a wonderful milestone: St. Joseph Parish and School celebrating its 70th Anniversary! I am honored to be your pastor during this time of celebration, growth in missionary discipleship, continual strengthening of stewardship as a way of life and providing a vision for the years ahead that will lead us to our 75th Anniversary.

When I look back on our history since 1949, there is so much that has happened and changed in our Church, world, country and city. The parish was established by the “Baby Boomers.” As the name implies, it was common for young Catholic families to have many children, living in one-bathroom bungalow houses and looking to their parish as the place where family life was encouraged and supported. One can simply look

across Electric Boulevard from the parking lot of the church and see the houses and family footprints of those who were the founders of the young emerging faith community gathering at St. Joseph Parish.

By the time Fr. Tim O’Connor arrived in 1996, Avon Lake was an emerging western suburb. Growth in housing was seen throughout the city. As Fr. O’Connor’s pastoral leadership unfolded, it became apparent that both the school and the church were bursting at the seams.

So, in 1998, the next school addition was added, and on the parish's 50th Anniversary, the community broke ground for a new church. Shortly after that, the final classroom addition was added, and the practice of *Stewardship as a Way of Life* had taken root. The new church was dedicated in June of 2000, and the former church became St. Joseph Hall, giving us a place to host large meetings and meals.

When I arrived in June of 2013, the church construction mortgage had been paid off, and plans were finalized to build the final addition to our parish and school, the St. Joseph Parish Center, a multi-use family facility, to house the growing number of activities at the parish. Another jewel that Fr. O'Connor left me to complete was to install the pipe organ that the church was architected for but had yet to be rebuilt. I happily took on these two remaining tasks that Fr. Tim handed on to me as I began my ministry at the parish. Like all the pastors, priests, sisters and deacons that preceded me, my primary goal and first love, above all else, is to form disciples of Jesus. Sure, there has been a lot of growth in the physical size of St. Joseph Parish and School, but the real legacy, upon which I have been blessed to build, is the faith of the people at St. Joseph Parish.

The parish community has always been and is designed to be the local manifestation and expression of the Body of Christ. As the Body of Christ, we are called to holiness. Pope Francis has recently written an Apostolic Exhortation, *Gaudete Et Exsultate, On the Call to Holiness*. "Do not be afraid of holiness. It will take away none of your energy, vitality or joy. On the contrary, you will become what the Father had in mind when he created you, and you will be faithful to your deepest self....".

We are baptized disciples of Christ, and Jesus lives, moves and has his being in us, who gather weekly for Mass and are sent as missionary disciples into the world to glorify the Lord by our lives. Taking that responsibility seriously, the Parish Priority Planning Committee, the Pastoral Council and the parish and school leadership, with feedback from the entire parish community, have identified the following path to help direct our vision and action into a plan to help us move forward to our 75th Anniversary. As we set forth this plan, we solemnly acknowledge that many members of the Catholic Church have grown disheartened by the terrible actions of churchmen, priests and bishops alike. This is a crisis of the institution of the Church, but it is not a crisis of Faith. When Jesus asked his disciples whether they wanted to leave him, Peter answered with these words: "Master, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life." This is the reason to be Catholic. It begins with friendship with Jesus Christ and in living that friendship in our lives. Each of us are living parts of our Catholic Faith. We recognize the need to re-evangelize so many former Catholics, who no longer join our ranks each Sunday. But we do so with joy and with hope.

These are exciting times for our parish, and I look forward to a renewed sense of purpose and faith as we journey together for these next five years. Please enjoy the pages that follow. They provide a vision for the future, building upon the great foundation which came before. "Rejoice in the Lord always. I shall say it again: rejoice!"

I love being your pastor.

Fr. Ron Wearsch
Fr. Ron

“They devoted themselves to the teaching of the apostles and to the communal life, to the breaking of the bread and to the prayers. Awe came upon everyone, and many wonders and signs were done through the apostles. All who believed were together and had all things in common.”

Acts of the Apostles 2:42-44

Encounter: Prayer and Formation

“All Christians are invited to a ‘renewed personal encounter with Jesus Christ.’ Christ calls all people to himself in his Body, the Church, through the workings of the Holy Spirit, so that we can enter into a personal relationship with God the Father. ‘In virtue of their baptism, all the members of the People of God have become missionary disciples.’ Reflective reading, lectio divina, and the study of Scripture will aid in deepening the encounter with Christ. The Sunday homily breaks open the Word of God by stirring the hearts of people, deepening our knowledge of the faith, renewing our participation in the Church and her sacraments, and strengthening us for the daily challenges of life.”

(*Living as Missionary Disciples: A Resource for Evangelization*, p. 31)



St. Joseph Parish seeks to grow in faith as a community. We seek for all of our members to have the gift of an encounter with Jesus Christ through weekly Eucharist, Scripture study, prayer, retreats, faith formation and any other method or form that facilitates a loving relationship with Jesus.

Some of the activities to promote this effort include:

- Utilize Formed.org
- Communion Group expansion
- Outdoor Passion Walk
- Deepen engagement in prayer with Scripture
- Men's and Women's Retreat programs
- Build a team of Lay Spiritual Directors
- Parish Discipleship Program
- Ecumenical prayer services in Avon Lake
- Enhance spiritual formation with Ignatian Spirituality



Accompany: Walking with One Another

“In accompanying others, the disciple possesses a love for others and the Church by being welcoming and hospitable. The disciple must be willing to walk with others, share the Good News, and help others grow in their faith and live in solidarity with others.” (*Living as Missionary Disciples: A Resource for Evangelization*, p. 32)



“For as in one body we have many parts, and all the parts do not have the same function, so we, though many, are one body in Christ and individually parts of one another.”

Romans 12:4-5

St. Joseph Parish desires to be a community that welcomes all people and fosters their growth and development in faith at all of its stages. In a special way, we commit to building up the domestic church and to assist parents in their role as the first and best teachers in the ways of faith.

Some of the activities to promote this effort include:

- Create a stronger community among PSR and Day School families
- Opportunities for youth focused on prayer and community
- More opportunities to engage children in the Liturgy
- High School Leadership Team for peer ministry
- Catholic Parenting Enrichment to promote the spirituality of the family where families could discuss different topics pertaining to the raising of children
- Core Team of Adult Leaders for Youth Ministry to assist at sessions, retreats, etc.
- Family Movie Nights for fellowship and discussion
- Family retreat opportunities allowing parents and children to enrich their faith
- Dedicated space for Youth Ministry



“For where
two or three
are gathered
together in my
name, there am
I in the midst of
them.”

Matthew 18:20

Community: Fostering a Culture of Hospitality

“True hospitality extends to all members of the community: new and established parishioners, especially children and youth, young adults, the newly married and parents, the divorced or widowed, immigrants, those seeking assistance, and those who feel alienated from the Church...Disciples find communion in their families, their parish, and relationships with others.” (*Living as Missionary Disciples: A Resource for Evangelization*, p. 32, 33)



St. Joseph Parish seeks to continue to grow as a community where Jesus Christ is encountered in all people. As a community of disciples, we will foster a culture of hospitality where the involved, those who are not involved and those who do not yet know our parish find a welcoming community where faith is ignited and strengthened. In all that we do, we will break down walls that divide us, connect people with one another, and see that in a united community all things are possible through Christ who strengthens us.

Some of the activities to promote this effort include:

- Create community within parish family meals
- Umbrella Crew for rainy Sundays
- Grow the number of youth serving as ushers, acting as greeters, and singing in the choir
- Wedding Anniversary recognition at Mass
- Accompaniment program for newcomers
- Introduction of young adults to one another to build community
- Establish team for both pre- and post-marriage enrichment
- Grow our parish family meal team
- Valet Parking for elderly



Sent: Reaching Out to All

“The commitment to living the Christian life is an essential element of the culture of witness. We witness to the Christian life through living out our respective vocations. As St. Peter tells us, we must ‘always be ready to give an explanation to anyone who asks . . . for a reason for [our] hope’ (1 Pt 3:15). We should be looking for ways to share with others the way we have experienced the salvific love of Jesus Christ. As St. Paul VI said, ‘In the long run, is there any other way of handing on the Gospel than by transmitting to another person one’s personal experience of faith?’ The public profession of one’s faith through works of charity and justice—which promote solidarity, peace, and the stewardship of creation—builds up the Kingdom of God. Social justice and direct missionary opportunities provide powerful encounters with the person of Jesus and his Church.” (*Living as Missionary Disciples: A Resource for Evangelization*, p. 33)

“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, throughout Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”

Acts of the Apostles 1:8



St. Joseph Parish desires to be a community that joyfully shares the saving message of Jesus with all of those around us. We seek to share this message utilizing old and new forms, simple conversations of faith and technology that will share our Gospel message. We will strive to create an environment at the parish where personal invitation is the norm.

Some of the activities to promote this effort include:

- Strengthen relationships with sister organizations, beginning with Blessing House
- City-wide mailings to promote Liturgies and events
- Increase use of social media to share the Gospel and promote events at the parish
- Technology initiative through updated website and mobile app experience
- Share the parish and its unique identity through videos and discussion at parish events
- Transportation Ministry for non-mobile parishioners to and from Mass
- Regular prayer time outside the abortion clinic
- Birthday Card Ministry



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SAINT JOSEPH VISION STATEMENT

*One Family in Christ who encounters Jesus,
accompanies one another, forms community, and
is sent forth to live the Gospel.*

Priority Plan Leadership Team

Fr. Ron Wearsch, James Armour, Kate Ashcraft, Alex Clark, Maureen Goodwin,
Michael Grecol, Kim LaCour, Joseph Kaczka, Patricia Vaccaro

Parish Pastoral Council Members

Michael Collins, Tom Costello, Tony Cox, Mary Kate Glowe, Bill Guinter,
Michael Hathaway, Gene Pruss, Rita Sfiligoj, Alejandro Vanegas