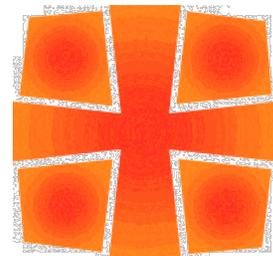

***Strategic Plan for
Saint Luke Parish, Westport***

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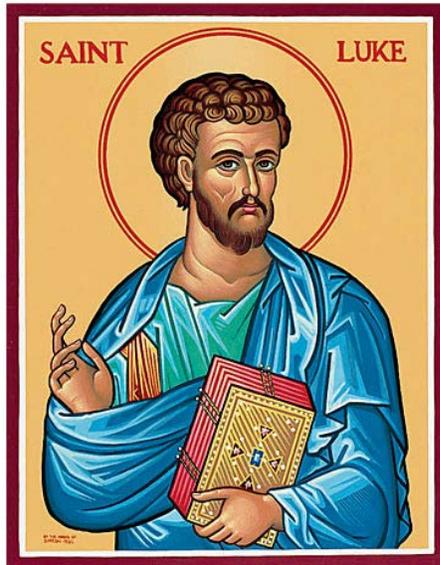
Submitted:
19 NOVEMBER 2016

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Introduction and Overview

In the spirit of our Patron, Saint Luke, our Parish Mission is...



- *To be a welcoming and hospitable community to all,*
- *To enrich the hearts, minds and lives of those who seek to grow as disciples of Jesus Christ in the Roman Catholic tradition,*
- *To be faithful in prayer, in spiritual renewal, in stewardship and in compassionate outreach.*

After much discussion, prayer, contemplation and discernment we, the members of the Saint Luke Parish Strategic Planning Taskforce, have come to the understanding that our desire is to focus our strategic plan on two pastoral challenges (**Evangelization** and **Family Life**) and one temporality (**Community Life**).

We believe that these three dimensions are the critical foundations of vibrant Roman Catholic parish life.

The prime directive given us by Jesus is to live, share, and spread the good news of His message, which we see as the purpose and the outcome of Evangelization.

As Mary and Joseph showed us, the strongest basis for faith is to be found in a spiritually grounded and loving family.

As Saint Paul reminds us in his many letters, we further recognize that the Roman Catholic Church is founded upon communities of believers who have in common not only their faith but also the temporal commonalities of culture, fellowship, and mutual support. After the family, the parish can and should be the most valuable and supportive community of which Catholics in Westport and Fairfield County can be a part.

As we see it, it is not enough to be a welcoming community... because welcoming is about leaving the door open for those who take the initiative to enter.

In 2017, Saint Luke parish will celebrate the 60th anniversary of its founding. What better way to celebrate than to embrace as our own the vigorous faith, vision and community spirit of those who have gone before us.

It is the vision, goal, and purpose of our strategic plan to continue building a parish community to which those who seek the companionship of believers in a loving God are drawn to find a place where they are never alone; where they are understood, accepted, and supported and where they are encouraged in their faith and enveloped in loving fellowship.

With this initiative, we wish to demonstrate to one and all, current and future parishioners alike, that here, you are never alone. God is with you, Jesus is with you, we all are with you whatever your trials, challenges, joys or sorrows as a Roman Catholic in Westport, Fairfield County, and the Bridgeport Diocese.

Submitted by the Parish Strategic Planning Task Force

Parish: SAINT LUKE Westport

Pastor: Monsignor Andrew G. Varga

Date: 30 September 2016

Members:	Leadership Position:
1) JOHN KRUBSKI	Synod Delegate; PAC Member
2) JUDY TORSKA	Synod Delegate; Parish Secretary
3) JEFF FORD	PAC Chairperson; Liturgical Ministry
4) SR. MAUREEN FLEMING	Pastoral Outreach Ministries
5) JACQUELINE FRUSCIANTE	Coordinator of Religious Formation
6) DEB TONER	Youth Minister
7) JENNIFER COFFMAN	PAC Member; Moms' Faith Sharing
8) ED BAGNULO	Trustee, Liturgical Ministry
9) CHRIS GREER	Men's Fellowship Group
10) MISSEY MOE-COOK	Liturgical Ministry
11) FRANK COSTELLO	Liturgical Ministry, Communication
12) MAX MORAN	Liturgical Ministry, Communication
13) CHAD CELINI	PAC Youth Rep
14) JULIANA HOPPER	PAC Youth Rep

Signature of the Pastor:



Pastoral Challenge: Evangelization

Rationale for Choosing Evangelization:

The primary task of the Church is the proclamation of the Gospel.

We believe that this proclamation happens most effectively when the Gospel *meets people* where they are in their daily lives and struggles, in places where they seek meaning, purpose, and reassurance that they are not alone in their journey of life and faith.

The “good news” to be shared is that Saint Luke offers a rich tapestry of opportunities and circumstances where this *meeting* can be facilitated and then nurtured.

Having reflected at length on the parish’s past successes and failures, we have come to understand that top-down initiatives have a very low initial success rate and even lower odds of sustainability over the long haul. It has become clear to us that what we need to elevate the relevance and vitality of the parish is a **bottom-up** approach to revising, evolving, and even replacing what we do here as a parish to increase the probability – if not the certainty – of success.

While we appreciate and value “outbound” communications going “to” the people of Christ in Westport (and others), we concurrently understand the necessity for initiating and facilitating greater “inbound” connections and communications between and among our parish members and staff as well as other relevant communities of interest with whom we live side by side here in Westport

Statement of the Goal to be achieved:

To drive a fundamental and comprehensive improvement in providing information to and receiving information from our parishioner community. We seek as well to facilitate deeper intra-parishioner connections and dialog.

Action Step #1 to achieve the Evangelization Goal:

Communication 2.0 – A Digital Age Initiative

We will develop a state-of-the art communications platform to augment, and in some cases to replace, the outmoded information distribution and exchange mechanisms with which we currently communicate with the members of the parish.

One person (current staff member, new part-time hire or volunteer) will be designated for the responsibility of improving our digital communications platform. The first assigned task will be to work with the pastor to define further the particular needs to be addressed. In particular, we will explore ways to have at least one Mass as well as other select events live streamed via the Internet. Additional communications initiatives will be identified and prioritized.

Summary Information for Action Step #1:

Timeline for completion: 31 January 2017

Responsible person/Task Force: Pastor, Max Moran, Frank Costello

Diocesan Office assisting (if any): John Grosso

Projected Costs (if any): [TBD]

Action Step #2 to achieve the Evangelization Goal:

Church Champions

We will work to create future successes in parish life by identifying and supporting program **champions** with the passion, drive, and commitment required to make such initiatives successful. Rather than lighting new fires, we are actively choosing to discover and support people who are willing to take on and champion a “cause” which they and we feel will be relevant and valuable to others in the parish – thereby “betting” on people over programs.

Summary Information for Action Step #2:

Timeline for completion: 31 January 2017

Responsible person/Task Force: Pastoral Advisory Council

Diocesan Office assisting (if any): n/a

Projected Costs (if any): [TBD] Minimal

Action Step #3 to achieve the Evangelization Goal:

Conversations in Faith

Recognizing that evangelization is the product of example and dialog, we propose to offer the venue and the means in which such conversations in faith take place “naturally.”

We have had significant success in creating intimate moments of Evangelization through our “**Home Gatherings in Faith,**” where participants break bread and share spiritual journeys in small groups. We will continue to nourish the spirit in such intimate settings, as these are the foundations upon which our Church was created and grew.

While all of our Gatherings to date have had adult hosts and participants, we will create a variant which will recognize and affirm the faith of our **young people** as a vital part of our faith community in the here and now. The young have much to teach us and we want to ensure them opportunities to do so. We will work toward having Home Gatherings at which our young people will enter fully into the hosting

and faith-sharing along with their parents. In this way, we hope to tap into the dynamism and vitality of our young people to reinvigorate and elevate our adult appreciation of our own faith.

Finally, we propose to initiate a series of broad-audience, interactive-town-hall **Parish Community-wide conversations in faith** so that we can better connect to one another, to our faith, and to a more actionable understanding of what it means to be a Roman Catholic in the Westport community and in the increasingly secularizing world at large.

Summary Information for Action Step #3:

Timeline for completion: Ongoing

Responsible person/Task Force: John Krubski, Chad Celini, Juliana Hopper, Deb Toner, Jennifer Coffman

Diocesan Office assisting (if any): n/a

Projected Costs (if any): n/a

Pastoral Challenge: Family Life

Rationale for Choosing Family Life:

The core of the Church is the parish. The core of the parish is the family as the “domestic Church..” Maintaining and improving the positive dynamic of the parish and the Church are inexorably connected with maintaining and improving the positive dynamic of the Roman Catholic families of Westport and Fairfield County.

Secular pressures and demands on family life in Fairfield County, and particularly in affluent towns such as Westport, increasingly force families to choose between participation in secular events, activities, and programs at the expense of maintaining and evolving the spiritual core of the family.

Mothers (whether working moms or stay-at-home moms) in young families bear a particular burden and play a pivotal role in holding together the spiritual heart of a Catholic family.

Due to social and economic pressures and demands, coupled with frequent absences and unavailability, many men in our lower-Fairfield County parishes face significant challenges in nurturing their spiritual lives. In every society, men are and have been the essential but often silent component of family life in general and of family spiritual life in particular. Through conversations and inquiry, we have discerned a strong yearning within them for growth in knowledge of our faith and in their personal lives.

The parish is the natural potential countervailing force that can offer responses to such secular demands for every family member.

Statement of the Goal to be achieved:

To provide a more fertile environment for supporting and evolving the spiritual core of our parish families.

We see this evolving in two ways:

- By increasing opportunities for whole-family participation in spiritual community activities and initiatives
- By recognizing that each member of a Catholic family needs support and encouragement for their respective roles in the family.

Action Step #1 to achieve Family Life Goal:

Support Group Outreach to Young Women and Their Families

We will work to provide women in this demographic with opportunities for sharing and support not only in their roles as mothers but also as primary guiding lights for the spiritual life of their children and their spouses. Opportunities will include prayer, reflection, discussions of video presentations and other such activities as the participants may choose.

Summary Information for Action Step #1:

Timeline for completion: Ongoing

Responsible person/Task Force: Jennifer Coffman

Diocesan Office assisting (if any): Office of Family Formation

Projected Costs (if any): [TBD] Minimal

Action Step #2 to achieve Family Life Goal:

Support Group Outreach to Men

We will create opportunities for an active Men's Fellowship Group in the parish. We will work, not only to help fathers play a more active role in their family's faith journeys but also, to have the support of men who are experiencing and dealing with a unique perspective on their own spiritual maintenance and growth.

Summary Information for Action Step #2:

Timeline for completion: Ongoing

Responsible person/Task Force: Chris Greer

Diocesan Office assisting (if any): Office of Family Formation

Projected Costs (if any): [TBD] Minimal

Action Step #3 to achieve Family Life Goal:

Share the Family Faith

With the growing awareness of non-traditional household models, families in our time face pressures and challenges that were unimaginable a few decades ago. This is very likely even more pressing a reality when it comes to the Roman Catholic family.

Nothing is more powerful than example and connection. Consequently, a key initiative of our strategic plan is to generate and increase the power of role modeling by affording our parish families opportunities to interact with one another in particularly impactful ways – one-on-one, in groups, at the most intimate levels possible.

We recognize the need for new intergenerational faith bonding activities alongside traditional models that focus on **Mother/Daughter, Mother/Son, Father/Daughter, Father/Son** and so forth. We believe that parents have as much to learn from as to teach their children about life and about faith in the Roman Catholic community.

Summary Information for Action Step #3:

Timeline for completion: Ongoing

Responsible person/Task Force: Pastoral Advisory Council, Jennifer Coffman, Chris Greer

Diocesan Office assisting (if any): Office of Family Services

Projected Costs (if any): Minimal

Temporality: Community Life

Rationale for Choosing Community Life:

The New Testament Letters – especially in the Acts of the Apostles – are rich with references to the life of the Christian community. We recognize that the heart of this life was found in the gathering of people, primarily as the assembly for worship. Just as important, however, was their working together to assure the care of their members, especially the needy and the most vulnerable.

We recognize and affirm such gathering together around the Mass and the Sacraments, as well as our shared spirituality, culture, values, and needs as a critical mandate for the Church and for the parish in our present day. The underlying principle of such community-building is recognition, validation, and participation in one another's hopes, dreams, joys, and sorrows. This will be especially true in reaching out to individuals and families who are facing challenges with divorce and remarriage, LGBT questions and other contemporary "hot button" issues.

This initiative will, in our opinion, require building a supportive structure around affiliation groups which we can help to coalesce. We believe it will be more productive to invite those who have become or feel disconnected to create and guide efforts to reconnect with the Church rather than OUR creating programs *TO* which we "invite" participation.

While we are a community of Roman Catholics in Westport, we simultaneously recognize that we cannot evolve and improve Saint Luke Parish without engaging with, cooperating with, and dialoging with the greater community within which we live. We must also connect with common-interest communities, both spiritual and temporal, inside and outside the parish, whose interests intersect with our own.

Statement of the Goal to be achieved:

To make it possible for everyone who engages with our parish to feel that - **Here you are not alone...**; that Saint Luke Parish is not only a place of sanctuary and solace but also a space among others in which you can thrive in the company of non-judgmental Catholics who seek to understand you, accept you and embrace you in your faith journey.

To provide a safe and compassionate place of belonging for anyone seeking the company of loving, supportive, empathetic others as expressed in the Mission Statement at the beginning of this document.

Action Step #1 to achieve Community Life Goal:

Outreach and Open Doors to the Disconnected.

We will seek to develop ways to connect with those who have become disengaged from the active practice of their faith, particularly those Catholics who were former members of Saint Luke but have now chosen to belong and worship elsewhere.

Summary Information for Action Step #1:

Timeline for completion: Ongoing

Responsible person/Task Force: Pastoral Advisory Council

Diocesan Office assisting (if any): [TBD]

Projected Costs (if any): [TBD] Minimal

Action Step #2 to achieve Community Life Goal:

Support Groups around issues deemed most important to the Saint Luke Parish Community

We cannot help to improve community life until we help improve the lives of the community. Between-Jobs, Divorced, Adult Singles, Widows/Widowers, etc. These are all “sub-communities” of the parish to whom we propose to dedicate both attention and resources.

These groups may take the form of self-facilitated or champion-led. In either event, those sub-communities which our parishioners feel might be most relevant at any point in time will be given the support and the tools to help ensure their success.

Summary Information for Action Step #2:

Timeline for completion: Ongoing

Responsible person/Task Force: Pastoral Council

Diocesan Office assisting (if any): [TBD]

Projected Costs (if any): [TBD] Minimal

Action Step #3 to achieve Community Life Goal:

While we are a community of Roman Catholics in Westport, we simultaneously recognize that we cannot evolve and improve Saint Luke Parish without engaging with, cooperating with, and dialoging with the greater community within which we live and with common-interest communities both inside and outside the parish (both spiritual and temporal) whose interests intersect those of our own.

The purpose of this initiative is to involve ourselves more actively in the wider Westport community but also to involve the wider Westport community in our lives and interests as Roman Catholics.

Summary Information for Action Step #3:

Timeline for completion: Ongoing

Responsible person/Task Force: Parish Representative to the Westport-Weston Interfaith Council

Diocesan Office assisting (if any): Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs

Projected Costs (if any): n/a

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Final Thoughts

We recognize that this strategic plan may at first appear to be overly ambitious or overly-comprehensive. Because those of us involved in this planning process share an extensive combined experience with similar initiatives in the past – along with a solid understanding of why such initiatives tend to succeed or fail either in the parish or in our real-world professional lives – we are committed to setting up a situation which we believe will ultimately provide the most fertile ground for overall success.

Some of our proposed tasks are likely to succeed better than others and others possibly not at all. That is precisely the reason why we are proposing to implement multiple possibilities to drive the highest possible level of success in the three chosen challenge areas – Evangelization, Family Life, and Community.

To this comprehensive plan, we will be adding the processes of responsible stewardship, adaptation, and evolution.

As we roll out the individual initiatives, our intention is to regularly monitor and reevaluate to see which of our “little lights” prove to be the most productive and will adjust focus and resources accordingly.

This is the ultimate strategic element of the plan – an element that is bound to create a living initiative rather than a shelved and forgotten plan document.

The most important and vital element of our strategic plan is to focus on identifying and supporting individual champions for each initiative. We see that as the prime directive for the first six months of the plan’s execution.

The Members of the Saint Luke Parish Strategic Planning Task Force

19 November 2016