

St. Mary of the Assumption



Pastoral Plan

A Letter from the Pastor

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

It is with great joy that I write to you this day. As you know, His Eminence Cardinal O'Malley has designated St. Mary of the Assumption Parish as a "Stand Alone" Collaborative. This simply means that St. Mary's will not be joined with another parish community. To that end, His Eminence has asked that each parish collaborative put forth a Pastoral Plan that highlights programming that will facilitate in strengthening the parish. I would like to reiterate what I stated in my most recent letter regarding our Grand Annual Appeal:

*"During any annual Presidential State of the Union Address, every president takes great pride and honor in saying: 'The state of our Union is strong!' This is not a presidential address; however, I must say without hesitation that: **the state of our Parish is strong!** St. Mary's stands on a strong spiritual and financial foundation that allows existing programs to grow and new programs to develop."*

While supporting the existing programs at the parish, we have targeted six areas in which we would like to develop in order to fulfill the mandate by Christ: *Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.* The areas of concentration are:

- A. Young Families Outreach and Support
- B. Community Outreach and Charitable Works
- C. Faith Formation
- D. Senior Outreach
- E. Vocations with a focus on the Sacrament of Marriage
- F. Parish Debt Reduction and Long-Term Fiscal Sustainability

The Pastoral Plan that has been developed by members of the Clergy and Parish Staffs, representatives from the Parish Finance Council and Pastoral Council, along with several parishioners is contained in these pages. We are confident that with the help of God's Grace and the protection of our dear Blessed Mother, this Pastoral Program will strengthen and advance the great work already being done here at St. Mary's. Please know of our sincere gratitude and love for all who have supported the parish both spiritually and financially in the past years.

I pray that what we do together provides a strong foundation for the future. Be assured of my prayers for you and kindly remember the Pastoral Planning Team and me in your prayers.

With warmest best wishes, I remain

Sincerely Yours in Christ,

(Rev.) Wayne L. Belschner
Pastor

The Collaborative Pastoral Plan Process

St Mary of the Assumption has been blessed with a strong foundation to build on. As a standalone collaborative we will immediately initiate a Pastoral Plan that focuses on outreach opportunities.

When people come to St Mary's they are struck with how busy it is. People often comment, what's going on here?

At first glance, our doors, both to the church and chapel, are open all day, seven days a week. Our parishioners are engaged and active in the many ministries we support. You'll always find a group of teens working around the parish, and people visit our St. Joseph Perpetual Adoration Chapel day and night.

In short, St Mary's is a busy parish. But what about the people who aren't here? After reflecting on where we are and where we know there is work to be done, the Pastoral Planning Committee recommends that for this next chapter in our parish journey we turn our focus outward.

- A. Young Families Outreach and Support
- B. Community Outreach and Charitable Works
- C. Faith Formation
- D. Senior Outreach
- E. Vocations with a focus on the Sacrament of Marriage
- F. Parish Debt Reduction and Long-Term Fiscal Sustainability

The Collaborative Plan Writing Team:

Fr. Wayne L. Belschner, Pastor
 Fr. Dominic Ngo, Parochial Vicar
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 Maria Brown, Pastoral Team DIM Coordinator
 Michael Lembo, Finance Council Member
 Kathy Reda, Parish Pastoral Council Member

Pastoral Plan Goal Areas

Young Family Outreach

To develop a program that connects young families in the parish and provide opportunities for them to gather spiritually, recreationally, and socially. Also, we will seek to provide resources for young families to strengthen them in today's culture. The goal of forming a young family ministry is targeted for implementation by July 30, 2023.

Community Outreach/Charitable Works

To help our parish community fulfill our calling to serve our brothers and sisters, we seek to implement a monthly community based charitable works program that benefits our brothers and sisters in financial, physical, emotional, and spiritual matters. The goal of this outreach is targeted for implementation by August 30, 2023.

Faith Formation

Create and implement a comprehensive Faith Formation Program that integrates catechesis and prayer. To ensure that all levels of Faith Formation are comprehensive and shows continuity from one year to the next. The goal of a comprehensive plan is targeted for implementation by September 30, 2023.

Senior Outreach Ministry

St. Mary would like to build off of the Senior Program that has been in place. We seek to offer more programs for our seniors that are spiritual, social, and informative. The goal is to connect seniors with resources that are both helpful and necessary for their well-being. The goal of expanding our senior program is targeted for implementation by October 30, 2023.

Vocations

St. Mary's has been rich in vocations. In the past two years, three sons of St. Mary's have been ordained to the priesthood. Two more are currently in the seminary. We would, however, focus attention on the Sacrament of Marriage. With the family under attack, we would like to develop a marriage program, grounded in our faith tradition that will foster a deeper love and understanding of the sacramentality of marriage and its importance. The goal of a marriage program is targeted for implementation by November 30, 2023.

Debt Reduction and Long-Term Fiscal Sustainability

With the assistance of the Parish Finance Council, we would like to explore opportunities that will help in lower the present parish debt. We seek innovative ways of reducing the debt and paying off the debt ahead of the proposed Archdiocesan schedule. Also, we would seek programming that will ensure a solid fiscal base so as to provide further parishioners with a sustainable parish. The goal of debt reduction and long-term sustainability is targeted for implementation by December 30, 2023.

GOAL AREA

DEVELOPING A COMPREHENSIVE YOUNG FAMILIES PROGRAM

Milestone 1: {Monthly Gatherings}

- A. Coordinate monthly gatherings for families and newlyweds to connect with each other and form relationships as they grow in their vocations as husbands, wives, fathers, and mothers.
- B. Social gatherings allow for families to relax and enjoy a provided meal as a community. Coordinate meal preparation.
- C. Organize activities so children have an opportunity to play in a safe place with other children.
- D. Advertise these gatherings via email, bulletin, and website. A comprehensive database will be constructed.

Milestone 2: {Monthly Service Project}

- A. Foster a heart of service among the families by providing opportunities to serve God in giving back to the parish and the greater community.
- B. Reach out to the already established ministries at the parish such as the Knights of Columbus, Saint Vincent DePaul Society, Religious Formation, etc. and see how we can assist.
- C. Be informed of what the town of Dedham is in search of and assist in their programming (ex: placing American flags next to the headstones of military men and women at Brookdale).
- D. Help families in the parish that may need assistance with yard work or other home projects.

Milestone 3: {Children's Library}

- A. Build a children's library that offers appropriate reading content for children of all ages.
- B. Seek donations from the parish community for books and other materials.
- C. Schedule library Catholic story times for families to attend.
- D. Coordinate and maintain a catalogue of the books.

Milestone 4: {Family Spiritual Programming}

- A. Provide opportunities specific for husbands, wives, and the entire family to grow in the faith.
- B. Begin a *Mom's Bible Study* for Saturday mornings at 10am in Mary Hall or outside (weather permitting).
- C. Begin a *Dad's Book Club* for Saturday mornings at 7:00am in the Rectory or outside (weather permitting).
- D. A Family Holy "Hour" to expose children to Eucharistic Adoration in a relaxed environment with other families.

GOAL: To connect young families and provide outlets for them to gather both spiritually and socially.

GOAL AREA

DEVELOPING A COMMUNITY BASED CHARITABLE WORKS PROGRAM

Milestone 1: {Monthly Collection Ideas}

- A. Foster collaboration with Dedham Food Pantry for items needed for families.
- B. Obtain a list of needed items and seek the help of parishioners on a monthly basis to secure needed items.
- C. Use the weekly bulletin to inform the parishioners of the specific item needed for each month.
- D. For holidays, organize food baskets for distribution.

Milestone 2: {Volunteer Corp to Organize Collection}

- A. Invite and encourage a committed group of volunteers.
- B. Engage high school teens in the Confirmation Program to help as part of their service commitment.
- C. Work into the LifeTeen curriculum a service component regarding the Monthly Collections.
- D. Work with the Young Adult community to have them offer one Saturday morning a month to assist in the program.

Milestone 3: {Volunteer Corp to Assist at Dedham Food Pantry}

- A. Organize parish food drives to help elderly housing centers supplied by Dedham Food Pantry.
- B. Organize a core of volunteers who would commit weekly to assist at the Dedham Food Pantry.
- C. Seek volunteers to help with the Dedham *Meals on Wheels* Program.
- D. Organize a social to thank the volunteers and introduce them to others in the parish who are assisting.

Milestone 4: {Quarterly Presentation from Dedham Food Pantry Representative}

- A. Provide a speaker to educate the parishioners about all the services offered by the Dedham Food pantry.
- B. Have a speaker program to inform the parishioners of the needs and the statistics of those helped and/or in need.
- C. Insert into the Prayers of the Faithful at Mass a prayer for volunteers.
- D. Organize a tour of the Dedham Food Pantry which will allow parishioners to see the work being done in the community.

GOAL: To heighten the parish's responsibility to fulfill the Corporal Works of Mercy with a focus on providing and supporting the work of the Dedham Food Pantry.

GOAL AREA

DEVELOPING A COMPREHENSIVE FAITH FORMATION PROGRAM

Milestone 1: {Religious Education K-5}

- A. Utilize age-appropriate curriculum that introduces children to God as Father and His relationship to humanity over time.
- B. Instruct and review essential prayers each class period such as the Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory Be, etc.
- C. Educate and expose children to different forms of prayer such as Rosary, Chaplet, and Devotions to Saints. Teach children to pray in the context of the Sacraments by providing opportunities for Mass and Confession throughout the Religious Ed. Program.
- D. Work with EDGE Director to help upcoming sixth graders transition to the EDGE Program.

Milestone 2: {Religious Education 6-8 ~ EDGE}

- A. Invite more guest speakers, especially priests, to come and speak on the power of the Sacraments.
- B. Increase Mass and Confession times throughout the EDGE Program.
- C. Develop a deeper understanding of who Christ is via lessons and media platforms.
- D. Work with ROC Coordinator to help upcoming freshmen transition to the ROC Program.

Milestone 3: {Religious Education 9-10 ~ ROC}

- A. Work with EDGE Director to help facilitate the transition from EDGE to ROC
- B. Place special emphasis on the importance of the Mass and Confession
- C. Have speakers from the EDGE Program and the ROC Program overlap in content and presentations.
- D. Develop a deeper understand on who the Holy Spirit is via lessons and media platforms.

Milestone 4: {Young Adults}

- A. Promote the Young Adult Program more effectively such as via social media.
- B. Introduce service projects that are rooted in the Corporal Works of Mercy.
- C. Provide more outlets for them to gather socially.
- D. Explore the feasibility of having a Young Adult Mass.

Milestone 5: {Middle Age Adults}

- A. Formulate a survey to target those 45-65 years old to discern what they desire.
- B. Foster small group programming for spiritual enrichment such as Exodus 90, FIAT 90, and the Advent and Lenten Challenges.
- C. Provide more outlets for this age group to gather socially such as a wine tasting.
- D. Explore the feasibility of having a speaker series with notable Boston Catholics such as Peter Kreeft, Arthur Brooks, the Cardinal, etc.

GOAL: To formulate a faith-based program that is both comprehensive and continuous. Each year of formation will build on the previous year. This will ensure a continuity in the religious education and faith formation of all in the parish and an assurance that the faith is communicated effectively and integrally.

GOAL AREA

DEVELOPING A COMPREHENSIVE SENIOR PROGRAM

Milestone 1: {Database of Seniors and Homebound}

- A. Further compile and maintain a Database of Seniors and Homebound in the Parish.
- B. Periodically update the database based on relocation and/or death.
- C. Maintain a separate Database for Homebound/Sick receiving communion at home.
- D. Coordinate information on Database with the Parish Administrative Assistant.

Milestone 2: {Outreach Writing Campaign}

- A. Gather volunteers monthly/periodically to write letters for special occasions and/or to let homebound parishioners know they are thought of and not forgotten (Friend to Friend Ministry)
- B. Post bulletin notices to notify Friend to Friend volunteers of date and time for each session.
- C. Predetermined volunteers write bereavement letters on a monthly basis to all the identified contacts of decedents whose funeral masses were celebrated at St Mary's (Compassionate Links Ministry).
- D. Maintain and adjust list of volunteers who are responsible for obtaining contact information for the bereaved from the Parish Administrative Assistant/funeral records.

Milestone 3: {In-Person Senior Programming}

- A. Senior Luncheons (monthly)
- B. Knitting Group (weekly)
- C. Senior Exercise Classes (twice weekly)
- D. Special Events such as movie matinees, speaker series, book clubs (quarterly)

Milestone 4: {Volunteer Corp to Assist Meals on Wheels}

- A. Compile a list of individuals available to regularly or periodically assist Seniors with meals.
- B. Connect those in need of assistance with volunteers.
- C. Respond to requests and/or reach out to Seniors identified as needing assistance with rides, visits or special tasks.
- D. Get parishioners involved with distributing meals via the Meals on Wheels Program.

GOAL: Our seniors are the very foundation of our parish family. The programs we will provide will both benefit them as well as communicate our gratitude for all they have and continue to do for the parish family.

GOAL AREA

DEVELOPING A SACRAMENTAL MARRIAGE VOCATION'S PROGRAM

Milestone 1: {Catholic Dating & Courtship}

- A. Invite single Catholics to an informal gathering on dating within a Catholic framework – how to meet your spouse; proper dating options; how to avoid potential pitfalls/temptations.
- B. Invite engaging speakers to address the young adults on topics such as chastity and modesty.
- C. Invite parents of teens to learn about ways to discuss sexual morality/chastity with their teenagers/young adults.
- D. Provide opportunities for young men and women to meet socially in a Catholic setting

Milestone 2: {Marriage Preparation Program}

- A. Provide a comprehensive program to engaged couples that covers both the sacramental and practical elements of a Catholic Marriage.
- B. Provide information and further resources on topics covered: Marriage as Sacrament; Marriage as Vocation; living the Catholic faith in the home (domestic church); communication skills; financial strategies for newly married couples.
- C. Follow up with invitations to join the parish community – parish events for newly married couples.
- D. Engage couple to be married at St. Mary's to participate in the Marriage Prep Program offered here.

Milestone 3: {Couple's Mentoring Program}

- A. Identify couples who manifest a joy in their vocation and help train them to be mentors to younger couples.
- B. Pair engaged couples with married couples within the parish community; meet monthly in a relaxed setting to share questions/concerns about married life, strategies for living a happy and faith-filled Catholic marriage.
- C. Newly married couples and mentor couples attend Mass and parish events together to promote community and reinforce sacramentality of married life.
- D. Provide a social setting for the couples to meet and greet.

Milestone 4: {Anniversary Celebrations 10th, 25th & 50th}

- A. Offer Mass intentions for couples in the parish who are celebrating milestone wedding anniversaries – 10 years/25 years/50 years/etc.
- B. Host annual reception after Sunday Mass for those celebrating milestone anniversaries.
- C. Post congratulations in parish bulletin for couples celebrating milestone anniversaries – perhaps include quotes from the couples on what practices, lifestyle choices etc. contribute to the longevity of fulfilling Catholic marriages.
- D. Reach out to those who have recently lost a spouse and have couples visit with them.

GOAL: With the Institution of Marriage under assault, we will equip the young men and women of the parish with tools to navigate the dating and courtship phases of their lives. Also, by introducing mentoring couples and celebrating Marriage Anniversaries, we will provide new couple's with solid examples of marital love and life.

GOAL AREA

DEVELOPING DEBT REDUCTION & LONG-TERM FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY PROGRAM

Milestone 1: {Debt Reduction Initiative}

- A. Continue to make regularly scheduled principal and interest payments per terms with Archdiocese, holder of the 20-year note (3.75% APR).
 - a. Original value: \$839,216 as of Oct 2017
 - b. Current balance: \$725,524 as of May 2023
 - c. Monthly payment schedule:
 - i. 10/19 thru 9/25: \$4,000/mo. (\approx 10% of monthly collections currently @ \$10K/wk)
 - ii. 10/25 thru 8/37: \$5,675/mo. (\approx 14% of monthly collections currently @ \$10K/wk)
 - iii. 9/2037: remaining balance
- B. Look for opportunities to pay down principal faster through:
 - a. Focused donations
 - b. Allocating portions of windfall contributions (e.g. contributions from estates)
 - c. Dedicate portions of any asset sales to the debt, e.g. sale of excess land
 - d. Leasing property to schools, roof top(s) for solar, other opportunities that may present themselves
 - e. Investing in renewable resources with short return on investment and long-term payback, e.g. solar panels to cut long term electrical costs

Milestone 2: {Financial Sustainability}

- A. Stabilize/Normalize contribution cashflow
 - a. Promote wider adoption of electronic contributions through automated monthly contributions
 - b. Offer in pew electronic contributions (QR code scanning)
 - c. Explore other methods of collecting donations in easier manner
- B. Promote investigation of employer matching contribution programs as St Mary's is a registered 501(c)3, nonprofit.
 - a. Ask parishioners to check if employers will match some percentage of their regular and/or grand annual donations
 - b. Set up a program/process to assist parishioners with the administrative aspects
- C. Seek focused contributions for major capital improvement projects
 - a. For example, refurbishing of pews through a pew memorial designation program

Milestone 3: {Grand Annual Appeal Linkage to Capital Projects}

- A. Continue to identify major programs to be funded through the Grand Annual collection
 - a. For example, fiscal 2023 the Grand Annual is funding the Church boiler replacement,
 - b. Solicit parish wide input for potential projects and prioritization

Milestone 4: {Strategic Long-Term Planning}

- A. A five-year rolling plan for major initiatives will be established for large expenditures. This should lessen need for major fundraising efforts and keep finances more predictable.
 - a. If some major effort arises, e.g. major repair or refurbishing needed, like painting, it should be budgeted over several years and done once funds are identified and collected.
 - b. Long term, an emergency fund and/or credit line should be set up to soften impact from any major issues needing immediate attention

GOAL: To reduce the debt and provide a solid financial base for the parish. By doing so, we will alleviate the financial burdens that can distract from the spiritual responsibilities of the parish.

Conclusion

While these goals and corresponding timelines may seem ambitious, we already have the solid framework in place to take on new initiatives and implement them rapidly. As a parish, we are always poised for the next call-to-action. We are a faithful, prayerful, and organized parish, ready to answer Christ's call to *"Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit."*

