



a pastoral plan for
St. Therese Little Flower Parish
2010 - 2015

PASTORAL AREA: Leadership

Aspiration Statement

We seek to be a parish marked by collegial leadership, where parishioners take personal ownership for its mission and ministries and where there is mutuality and transparency in policy setting and decision making.

Rationale

The model for parish leadership and authority is the leadership and authority of the universal church, which is characterized by the commission from Jesus Christ to be the visible representation of Him as the ever-living Good Shepherd. Thus, parish leaders are called to be servants and apostles, faithful to the gospel. This spirit must guide the way our parish makes decisions, sets policies and moves forward in addressing challenges and creating opportunities for service. There is a strong sense in the parish that Little Flower have a framework for leadership in keeping with this spirit, yet effective in action. This means establishing councils, committees and commissions that give valuable input and support to the pastor in his role as pastoral leader and fellow shepherd within our parish community. Acting together, the pastor and parish leaders can build a strong and grace-filled expression of the Body of Christ.

Objective 1: To establish a parish leadership structure that fosters teamwork, delegates responsibilities and coordinates decision-making among parish groups, committees and organization.

- a. Create an *ad hoc* committee to review the history of leadership in the parish (focusing especially on the evolution of the pastoral council and the call for its re-establishment), review Archdiocesan guidelines pertaining to what the church envisions in a pastoral council, and report its recommendations to the pastor.
- b. Re-establish a Pastoral Council, develop procedures for discerning its members and restore ties to existing commissions.
- c. Establish short-term task forces to address specific needs and action items as they arise.
- d. Explore establishing a Parish Education Commission.

Objective 2: To build a sense of shared leadership with all our commissions and committees.

- a. Create a current and accurate organizational chart for the parish that will include all levels of parish staff and active parish groups, the individuals who are the main contacts.
- b. Consider conducting a Parish Leadership Workshop to develop personal leadership skills among parishioners and to foster positive, appreciative approaches to leadership.

PASTORAL AREA: Faith Formation

Aspiration Statement

We strive to form, nurture and strengthen the Christian faith of all parishioners by providing them opportunities for transformative personal and spiritual growth.

Rationale

The central pastoral activities of the parish, despite its dwindling numbers, continue to be fostering the faith formation of parishioners, especially children, and engaging in transformative communal worship. Our parish offers many successful formation programs and activities, such as a strong RCIA program, sacramental preparation programs, the recent "Why Catholic?" study program, Vacation Bible School for children, etc. In addition, an active Worship Commission helps to prepare for lively weekly Eucharistic celebrations and other seasonal worship events. A strong Parish Life Commission helps parishioners to live out the gospel call to service, in particular, its Madagascar "Twinning Project". Further, a growing minority population in the parish presents new pastoral challenges.

Objective 1: To hand on our Catholic faith tradition to those who follow in our footsteps.

- . Consider ways to vitalize Sunday worship to appeal to teens and their families.
- a. Strengthen the bond between catechumens and sponsors in the RCIA program to foster involvement of new members in parish life.
- b. Catechize the parish on the Liturgy of the Mass, especially in light of the coming changes in the new Roman Missal.
- c. Reaffirm the benefits of restorative grace offered by the Sacrament of Reconciliation, especially during Advent and Lent.
- d. Explore ways to educate parishioners in Catholic social teaching, e.g., with a study of Pope Benedict's *Caritas in Veritate* (*Charity in Truth*). [cf. Neighborhood Outreach plan, Objective 2e.]

Objective 2: To help each other take personal responsibility as Christians to live out our baptismal call.

- a. Foster the formation of additional small groups of parishioners who meet regularly to support their spiritual well-being and faith formation.
- b. Establish an adult faith formation program during the period between the two Sunday morning Masses.
- c. Find ways to expand parish participation in the Madagascar Twinning Project.

Objective 3: To make spiritual transformation an active, vital part of every facet of parish life.

- a. Consider adding an opportunity for faith formation to the monthly Hospitality gatherings.
- b. Investigate the potential for a parish retreat or other spiritual revitalization program.
- c. Strengthen our Bereavement ministry by inviting other people to participate in this valuable and effective service.
- d. Consider initiating efforts at outreach to Hispanic members, e.g., include Spanish verses for some hymns at Masses; celebrate a quarterly Spanish language Mass; erect a shrine to Our Lady of Guadalupe.). [cf. Neighborhood Outreach plan, Objective 2c.]
- e. Incorporate the homebound into prayer ministries.

PASTORAL AREA: Communications

Aspiration Statement

We strive to form a parish community in which all members are informed, inspired and involved. Our community will know and value the good news of our parish story.

Rationale

Effective communications is important in any Catholic parish and is always a challenging prospect. The parish uses many means of communication, including a weekly bulletin, a monthly Newsletter, a website, and the Colerain/Kirby outdoor sign. An annual financial report is published and items of interest are routinely shared with the local press. Still, many would like to see greater transparency in the decision making process at Little Flower. Likewise some feel a need to promote a sense of mutual responsibility in this area. Ways to involve youth in the communication process and foster better communications in all areas of parish life are further challenges.

Objective 1: To promote transparency in decision making.

- a. Create a committee to take ownership of the communications strategy for the parish.
- b. Formulate a communications strategy among all parish organizations.
- c. Facilitate the flow of information from parish groups to the parish community.
- d. Provide parish groups with a template for creating regular activity updates.

Objective 2: To provide consistent and effective internal and external communication.

- e. Continue to use the weekly bulletin, the Focus newsletter, the parish website and Colerain/Kirby Road signage to connect with broader community.
- f. Create a spot on the communications committee for a writer to periodically prepare articles about church groups and their activities.
- g. Update the Colerain/Kirby sign more regularly.
- h. Update the parish website more regularly.
- i. Consider establishing a regular email newsletter to interested parishioners.
- j. Investigate creating a *Facebook* page to better connect youth to parish life.
- k. Link the parish website to other appropriate community websites.
- l. Utilize Our Lady of Grace folder to update Little Flower parishioners on parish event.

PASTORAL AREA: Stewardship

Aspiration Statement

Parishioners take individual responsibility to work together to support and sustain the parish and its mission with what time, talent and treasure they can offer.

Rationale

Good stewardship of the parish is the responsibility of each of its members and this stewardship takes a variety of forms, now identified as “time, talent and treasure”. Little Flower parish is blessed to have dedicated members who give of their time in service to the parish and others in many ways. They give of their labor, skills and talents. No less important, they are generous with their financial contributions to the parish. The parish business manager and finance committee regularly monitor the financial status of the parish and make an annual finance report. The annual parish festival has traditionally brought together the time and talents of the parish and generated needed income. However, there are major challenges facing the stewardship of the parish, including declining membership, a drop in revenues and a downward trend in festival results. Of primary importance is instilling in our parish a true understanding and appreciation for stewardship so that contributions of time, talent and treasure will increase to meet the needs of the parish.

Objective 1: To develop an understanding and value of stewardship.

- a. Provide education to the parish on the meaning of stewardship through the program sponsored by the Archdiocese of Cincinnati.
- b. Provide financial updates to the parish on a more regular and frequent basis.

Objective 2: To raise awareness of the ministerial, financial and space needs of the parish.

- a. Conduct a parish census and communicate the results to the parish, so that they can be related to parish needs.
- b. Perform a comprehensive facilities assessment for parish needs in light of parish planning.
- c. Put weekly collection information in the bulletin along with totals and goals for the month.

Objective 3: To maintain current opportunities for stewardship and broaden participation.

- a. Publish more information about what different groups and committees are doing, what their purposes are, and include contact information.
- b. Examine ways to boost volunteerism in support of parish fundraising activities, such as the parish festival.
- c. Review parish fundraising activities, such as Flower Power, and how they are promoted.
- d. Conduct a parish ministry fair as an opportunity for parishioners to become involved in these activities.
- e. Recognize volunteers and service groups, liturgical ministers, etc. at Masses and other occasions.
- f. Make greater use of personal invitations when help is needed.
- g. Acknowledge and commend the pastor and parish leaders to bring attention to effective leadership.

PASTORAL AREA: Community Building

Aspiration Statement

We seek to be a welcoming parish that creates a sincere and hospitable spirit; where strangers become friends; where people linger and engage with one another in true fellowship; where we support each other in sorrow and joy; and, where we regularly gather for study, service and recreation.

Rationale

Our parish must remain a vibrant community if it is to grow and thrive as a prominent part of the Mt. Airy neighborhood. Our parish offers many community building activities, such as a parish festival that invites all to participate and enjoy, Merry Seniors, Men's Society, Old Timers and hospitality after Mass one Sunday a month. The parish sponsors receptions for those receiving the sacraments (RCIA, First Eucharist and Confirmation) and for all graduates of the parish (8th grade, High School and college). The parish also conducts Soup Suppers and hosts a Fish Fry during Lent. However, the recent loss of Little Flower School has removed a network of support that nurtured a sense of belonging. Additional challenges include the lack of coordination for community building events and finding space for scheduled activities.

Objective 1: To build a spirit of hospitality in all aspects of parish life.

- a. Create a committee to coordinate and oversee community building activities.
- b. Consider enlarging the gathering space in the church to promote welcoming, hospitality and friendship.
- c. Make contact with other parishes without an on-site school to discover new ideas for community building.
- d. Make better use of space in the facility after school hours and on weekends.
- e. Promote youth interest in the parish by involving them in ministries and activities that promote fellowship and concern for others. Such activities could include snow shoveling, raking leaves or other chores.

Objective 2: To provide regular opportunities for fellowship.

- a. Organize a group that would be willing to assist family members with a reception after a funeral, with food and a place to gather.
- b. Consider forming an adult theater group.
- c. Offer blood pressure checks during Hospitality Sunday.
- d. Consider forming a Book Club.
- e. Encourage adult parish members to form groups that teach young people skills such as knitting, crocheting, woodworking, or tutoring.

Objective 3: To develop ways to share our spirit of hospitality with the wider community.

- a. Promote participation in community events such as the Good Friday Way of the Cross and Thanksgiving Prayer Service.
- b. Explore the formation of a Care Network that would enable parishioners to respond to the needs of other members who are experiencing difficulties such as illness or death. Bringing food, sending cards, providing transportation or childcare would be positive ways to show care and concern.). [cf. Neighborhood Outreach plan, Objective 3e(5).]

PASTORAL AREA: Neighborhood Outreach

Aspiration Statement

Responding to the call to be Christ to our neighbors, we embrace the Mt. Airy community. By sharing our gifts we join in its struggles and work toward its progress. We seek to be a haven and foundation in the Mt. Airy Community.

Rationale

As Catholic Christians, we are called to respond with charity and justice to the needs of the poor and oppressed in our midst. Little Flower's primary outreach vehicle is the St. Vincent de Paul Society, which operates a weekly food pantry and a Christmas gift giving program. Little Flower is represented on the Mt. Airy Ministers Association, which addresses community needs. The Mt. Airy Community is invited to participate in our Festival and the annual Madagascar Yard Sale. The changing nature of the Mt. Airy community is documented in an analysis of social needs based on the 2000 census: a large number of families with female head, an increase in renters vs. homeowners, a growing African American population, and the third highest Hispanic population in the city. Unemployment and home foreclosures are current issues facing the community; as are crime and security-related concerns. There is a call by parishioners for a greater response to these needs. The primary challenge is developing an appropriate response. Another challenge is collaborating with other churches in our area and parishes in our pastoral region.

Objective 1: To develop an appropriate parish response to the needs of the Mt. Airy community.

- a. Consider creating a committee to coordinate and oversee Little Flower's Neighborhood Outreach efforts.
- b. Consider incorporating a talents survey into the parish census.
- c. Explore the feasibility of providing the St. Vincent de Paul Society with secure space for a Choice Pantry, which would allow clients to come in and select what they need, like shopping for themselves in a grocery store.
- d. Assess the needs of the Mt. Airy neighborhood – Possible approaches:
 1. Obtain and study a copy of "The Social Areas of Cincinnati: An Analysis of Social Needs" (based on the 2000 Census).
 2. Obtain and study a copy of the most recent St. Margaret Mary Deanery demographic study.
 3. Explore the feasibility of conducting a Neighborhood Needs Assessment, possibly as a joint effort with the Mt. Airy Town Council, Neighborhood Outreach and other groups.

Objective 2: To increase awareness of community needs and our responsibility as Christians to respond.

- a. Explore the feasibility of joining with neighborhood Churches to set a fixed time each week for all to offer prayers for the Mt. Airy community.
- b. Consider ways to feature a local community service agency every 2-3 months and how parish members can get involved.
- c. Consider initiating efforts at Hispanic outreach in our worship, e.g., Spanish verses for some hymns at Masses, a quarterly Mass in Spanish, setting up a shrine to Our Lady of Guadalupe. [cf. Faith Formation and Transformation plan, Objective 3d.]
- d. Encourage making prayers for the neighborhood a regular part of our public prayer, e.g., Offertory petitions.
- e. Explore ways to educate parishioners in Catholic Social Teaching, perhaps beginning with the Pope's latest encyclical *Charity in Truth (Caritas in Veritate)*. [cf. Faith Formation and Transformation plan, Objective 1e.]
- f. Publish more information highlighting current outreach efforts.
- g. Consider providing neighborhood outreach information at the parish festival.

Objective 3: To collaborate with others in the community to perform works of charity and address issues of social justice.

- a. Bring existing successful outreach efforts to Little Flower / Mt. Airy based on the results of a needs assessment. Examples include: WIN (Working In Neighborhoods), foreclosure assistance, help for female heads of households, and assistance for first time homeowners.
- b. Explore the possibility of forming an umbrella social service agency center for Mt. Airy.
- c. Collaborate with community churches and regional parishes to initiate our own outreach efforts.
- d. Embrace the Community Problem Oriented Policing program (CPOP) on the issues of security and safety in the Mt. Airy Community.
- e. Foster collaborative outreach efforts among existing parish groups. For instance:
 1. A Health Fair two or three times a year as a joint effort between the Community Building Committee and the Neighborhood Outreach Committee.
 2. Service Saturdays several times a year involving youth as a joint effort between the Community Building Committee and the Neighborhood Outreach Committee.
 3. A Lenten 40 Days of Service program involving youth as a joint effort between the Community Building Committee and the Neighborhood Outreach Committee.
 4. Arts and Crafts groups for seniors to make items such as scarves, mittens, and blankets for St. Vincent de Paul clients.

5. An expansion of the Care Network to include neighborhood outreach. [cf. Community Building plan, Objective 3b.]
6. Tax help for St. Vincent de Paul clients and low income seniors.
- f. Consider sponsoring a tutoring/mentoring program at Mt. Airy School which might involve the youth of our parish.
- g. Explore the feasibility of building parish service programs in cooperation with local Catholic High Schools.