

**REPORT OF THE
AD HOC STRATEGIC PLANNING COMMITTEE
SUBMITTED TO
THE PARISH COUNCIL OF
ST. VINCENT DE PAUL CHURCH**

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General Overview and Basics of the Strategic Plan

In September 2013, the Parish Council set an ambitious goal to develop a three-year strategic plan during its 2013-2014 term. At each step on this journey, the participants have prayed for the Holy Spirit's guidance as written in the prayer used before every session of the Second Vatican Council. Their goal was to craft a plan that:

- is mission-derived, data-driven and yet prayerfully discerned;
- is flexible and adaptive;
- will outline where we want to be in our key focus areas within three years; and
- will leave implementation to the expertise and creativity of our committees and staff.

As for the future, your task is not to foresee but to enable it.

—Antoine de Saint-Exupéry

The Pastoral Staff and Parish Council have offered oversight and provided evaluation along the way and will continue to do so as the process unfolds, moving into implementation.

Our community has worked together over six months to gather and generate the necessary data by way of committee self-evaluations, examinations of our finances and facility needs, parishioner input regarding our strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats, capped by a mission survey that delved into the spiritual journeys of parishioners. All of this was compiled into a background document for the Ad Hoc Strategic Planning Committee, which was appointed by the Parish Council with a threefold charge to:

- specify critical areas that need focused attention in the next three to five years;
- develop a thin, flexible set of objectives for those areas; and
- identify measures to evaluate progress in these areas and consider ways the plan may be adapted to evolving circumstances.

Best organizational practices are consistent with Gospel values.

—*Co-Workers in the Vineyard of the Lord*, USCCB

The Ad Hoc Committee has created a draft of the plan to submit to the community for comment and eventually to the Parish Council for approval. The development of creative approaches and innovative programs to bring to life this plan rests with the community of St. Vincent, its people, pastoral staff, committees and working groups.

Basics of the Strategic Plan

Part I. EVANGELIZATION AND STEWARDSHIP OF THE COMMUNITY

Key Focus Area #1:

Community Growth Through Outreach and Engagement in Mission

Objective 1: Design an effective evangelization and outreach strategy that uses sound marketing methods and a multimedia approach, including social marketing.

Objective 2: Establish an intentional, structured, efficient way to consistently engage *newcomers* who choose to visit our community.

Objective 3: Because the lifeblood of this community is lay leadership and active parishioner participation, establish an intentional, structured, efficient way of understanding the interests and talents of *newly registered parishioners* in order to invite them to engage more deeply with the community.

Objective 4: Adapt our traditional programs, and eventually our ministry approaches, to the life circumstances of our *currently registered parishioners* to engage all in lay leadership and active participation in community life.

Key Focus Area #2:

Realize the Mission of the Community Through Revitalizing Our Committees

Objective 1: Develop a heightened sense of parishioner ownership and commitment that leads to more involvement in the management and administration of the community's programs and committee—something particularly important given the limited number of our salaried staff.

Key Focus Area #3:

Ensure that the Parish Vision Energizes the Faith Formation of the Community

Objective 1: Examine, evaluate and re-envision the religious education of children and youth in light of our parish vision and mission.

Objective 2: Expand the faith formation programs of children and youth to encompass the entire family.

Objective 3: Together as a community, find innovative ways to promote faith formation as a lifelong process and provide offerings to enrich faith across the entire life cycle.

Part II. STEWARDSHIP OF COMMUNITY RESOURCES

Key Focus Area #1:

Financial Accounting and Transparency

Objective 1: Provide our community with a method for budget planning that outlines more clearly how our income is to be spent, what needs prioritization and where expenses might be better anticipated and contained.

Objective 2: Develop a better method for reporting variations between actual and budgeted expenses so that the Finance Committee and Parish Council can evaluate them and make course corrections in an open and transparent manner.

Objective 3: Distribute an annual parish report that meets the standards set forth by the National Leadership Roundtable for Church Management (NLRCM). [Parish Council President]

Key Focus Area #2:

Personnel and Volunteer Policies and Procedures

Objective 1: Canvass the parish community to find members with the expertise to establish an Ad Hoc Committee that would propose human resource procedures, based on NLRCM standards and best practices, for approval by the pastor.

Objective 2: Knowing there is a core component of the faith that must be understood and taught through formal methods, provide required staff development and teacher formation and enrichment.

Objective 3: Review the administrative needs of the parish and establish accurate staff job descriptions that correlate, to the extent possible, with those needs.

Objective 4: Conduct annual goal-setting meetings with staff with subsequent semiannual performance reviews. [Pastor and Pastoral Associate]

Objective 5: Develop a proposal to Parish Council for consultation on what the future staff configuration should be so future recruitment can continue to be well thought out and intentional in light of our mission. [Pastor and Pastoral Associate]

Key Focus Area #3:

Maintenance and Restoration of the Facility

Objective 1: Align the responsibilities and activities of the Pastor, staff, and Facility Committee to evaluate, plan and budget for the repair and restoration of property.

Objective 2: Establish and follow a maintenance schedule for facility upkeep as well as establish and maintain a repository of product specifications and warranties.

Objective 3: Establish an Ad Hoc Committee to identify all the issues, the involved parties, our mission, our resources, and our options in preparation for a community discernment of the park's future. [Parish Council]

STRATEGIC PLAN: SUPPORTING DOCUMENT

Table of Contents

Introduction

Our Future Parish Leadership.....	2
Purpose.....	3
What We Need From Strategic Planning.....	3
How We Approached Strategic Planning.....	3
Steps in Developing the Strategic Plan.....	4

The Strategic Plan

Part I: Evangelization and Stewardship of the Community.....	4
Key Focus Area #1: Community Growth Through Outreach and Engagement in Mission.....	4
Key Focus Area #2: Realize the Mission of the Community Through Revitalizing Our Committees	7
Key Focus Area#3: Ensure that the Parish Vision Energizes the Faith Formation of the Community.....	8
Part II: Stewardship of our Community Resources	
Key Focus Area #1: Financial Accounting and Transparency.....	10
Key Focus Area #2: Personnel and Volunteer Policies and Procedures.....	12
Key Focus Area #3: Maintenance and Restoration of the Facility.....	14
The Issue of Our Church Park.....	14
Implementation of this Strategic Plan.....	15
Next Steps.....	16

Introduction

At the forefront of all the deliberations and discussions of the Ad Hoc Strategic Planning Committee was who we are as a community and who we aspire to be. Our mission calls us to be thoughtful, discerning Catholic Christians, active participants in worship, and committed servants to each other, our neighborhood, and the world. Our vision is to become a people visibly transformed by Word and Sacrament to Serve.

We are an intentional parish—a *commuter church*—and we regularly draw people from a 40 mile radius because they experience something here that is not found at more local parish churches. Therefore our primary objective has been to develop a plan that would preserve the integrity of our parish family, with its empowerment of the laity, its collegiality, and its deep sense of community, while creating a plan that would enable growth.

And yet, while we are an *intentional* community, we are not a *virtual* community. As Pope Francis tells us, “The parish is the presence of the Church *in a given territory*, an environment for hearing God’s word, for growth in the Christian life, for dialogue, proclamation, charitable outreach, worship and celebration.” St. Vincent has been and must continue to be an anchor institution in Jonestown, alive and active in the promotion of the life and health of this, our neighborhood. Our goal cannot be to become a pretty, little, self-enclosed, historical enclave where we ignore our brothers and sisters on our way to church. It is our mission to communicate life to others, and as Pope Francis states, “...here we discover a profound law of reality: that life is attained and matures in the measure that is offered up in order to give life to others.”

What we have tried to become at St. Vincent over the years is now the same vision and mission of church we hear from Pope Francis. Our church is to be welcoming, to be merciful, and to be servant-bearers of the Gospel. What the Pope is calling the Church to be has been ever present in our committee’s discernment and is threaded throughout this plan. We pray that this plan will inspire the same hope within our community that we on this planning team have experienced. God is in this. God is all we have. God gives us what we need.

The Lord has loved us first and therefore we can move forward, boldly take the initiative, go out to others, seek those who have fallen away, stand at the crossroads and welcome the outcast.

—Pope Francis

Our Future Parish Leadership

We suspect that no fully established Archdiocesan parish serving the complete spectrum of ages—from cradle to grave—could say they do this with only two full-time staff. We do. We have been blessed with a full-time Pastor who for more than 40 years has shared his love of liturgy, his knowledge of the Scriptures, and his passion for social justice. Three years ago, we added a full-time Pastoral Associate. The other six part-time staff member's hours account for only the equivalent of an additional 2.125 full-time positions.

Challenges exist to be overcome! Let us be realists, but without losing our joy, our boldness, and our hope-filled commitment.

—Pope Francis
The Joy of the Gospel

We have addressed our mission and the management of our parish through the principles of collegiality and subsidiarity; that is, with our salaried staff and our volunteer committee structure working together. We are a small parish, with limited resources and substantial travel and distance barriers, but we make it work.

During the data collection for strategic planning, the question of our future, our integrity as a parish community, and our future leadership was a repeated theme in all the consultations with parishioners. The Strategic Planning Committee notes that parishioners have considerable anxiety on these issues but also that for almost 15 years our Pastor and Parish Councils have been working on this question of our future leadership. Given our size and the number of available

Archdiocesan priests, one path that we have pursued was to ask that a Pastoral Life Director might be appointed when our Pastor should resign. With that in mind, we recruited a Pastoral Associate with ministry and administrative credentials that would allow him to move into that role. The Archbishop has reviewed our efforts, and we are in a holding pattern for the present.

A strategic plan has actionable items, direction, and movement. Within that framework, we cannot address the issue of future leadership. In essence, the purpose of the strategic plan is to strengthen the parish in both community and resources so that whatever our leadership structure may be in the future, we will remain a vibrant parish.

Purpose

The charge given to this Ad Hoc Strategic Planning Committee was threefold:

- specify critical areas that need focused attention in the next three to five years;
- develop a thin, flexible set of objectives for those areas; and
- identify measures to evaluate progress in these areas and consider ways the plan may be adapted to evolving circumstances.

The Ad Hoc Committee has created a plan to submit to the community for comment and eventually to the Parish Council for approval. The development of creative approaches and innovative programs to bring to life this plan rests with the community of St. Vincent, its people, pastoral staff, committees and working groups.

We must keep in mind, however, that we are constantly being called to grow.

—Pope Francis
The Joy of the Gospel

What We Need From Strategic Planning

We need a plan that:

- is mission-derived, data-driven and yet prayerfully discerned;
- is flexible and adaptive;
- will outline where we want to be in our key focus areas within three years' time; and
- will leave implementation to the expertise and creativity of our committees and staff.

The Pastoral Staff and Parish Council have offered oversight and provided evaluation along the way and will continue to as the process continues to unfold, moving into implementation.

How We Approached Strategic Planning

We have employed the strategic planning methods proposed by the National Leadership Roundtable on Church Management (NLRCM). Planning begins with clarity of mission. (It was helpful that we went through the process of re-visioning our mission statement in 2010.) With that in mind, we attempted to fully understand our current reality: What is emerging, peaking, declining and disappearing from our reality? We asked our committees to undergo self-evaluation. We examined parish resources (income, expenses, and trends in donations) and evaluated the need for upgrades, maintenance and security in our facilities and campus. We studied trends in our worship attendance, membership and engagement in ministry and mission. We asked parishioners to discern and report on our strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and

threats. All of this was compiled and delivered to the members of the Ad Hoc Strategic Planning Committee appointed by the Council.

Steps in Developing the Strategic Plan

To identify the key focus areas, each member of the Ad Hoc Strategic Planning Committee reviewed more than 60 pages of documents and generated a personal list of focus areas. Using nominal group process (NGP), a type of focus group procedure, we first brainstormed, placing all ideas on the table; pile-sorted similar ideas into categories; and then individually assigned a priority value to the items. The value of NGP is that everyone's opinion is equally included in the final product without strong personalities disproportionately influencing the outcome.

With the key focus areas identified and ordered, we circulated a draft and met for a second time to discuss it. From this discussion it became apparent that the key focus areas fell into two major categories: *Evangelization* to include Outreach, Engagement, Faith Formation, and Service and *Stewardship* to include beginning the application of NLRCM's best practices to the areas of finance, staffing, and facility management. Each area includes some commentary on the committee's thinking to give context to the choice of the focus area, and many include a few possible ideas that were discussed.

Part I. EVANGELIZATION AND STEWARDSHIP OF THE COMMUNITY

Key Focus Area #1:

Community Growth Through Outreach and Engagement in Mission

Objective 1: Evangelization Through Outreach

Design an effective evangelization and outreach strategy that uses sound marketing methods and a multimedia approach, including social marketing.

We take the Scriptures seriously, we actively celebrate the Sacraments, and we offer ourselves in service. We know who we are, but in many cases we have been ineffective in communicating that to others. Fr. Lawrence noted that because of shifting demographics, all the Catholic churches in the central city have become intentional communities. And he offered a conceptual model of their nature: a conservative-liberal axis intersecting an emotional-intellectual axis. St. Vincent falls in liberal-intellectual quadrant formed in that graph. But St. Vincent is more. It has always had a strong calling to serve the poor, now clearly echoing throughout the world in the words of Pope Francis. This emphasis is resonating with many who may now find a community here with us.

To whom should our message go? In social marketing, populations can be defined by three Ns: nominal groups, neighborhoods, and networks. Nominal groups might include (young) single

professionals, families with children, and empty nesters returning to the city. Neighborhoods could include the area south and southeast of St. Vincent (Albemarle Square, Harbor East, Federal Hill, Fells Point, Butchers Hill and Canton). Networks could include the LGBT groups, volunteer groups like JVC, the arts community, student unions at nearby universities, medical/hospital communities and other social and support groups.

This is why attention to outreach must be an overarching goal of every committee and group, so that the message of who we are and what we offer accurately reflects the nuances of our community.

Suggested Metrics:

- Increase attendance by 10-20% in three years
- Increase parish registrations by 10-20% in three years

Objective 2: Evangelization Through Engagement of Newcomers

Establish an intentional, structured, efficient way to consistently engage *newcomers* who choose to visit our community.

Welcoming is a valued characteristic of our church community. The 9:30 Mass community has established traditions in its hospitality ministries, its welcoming ritual before Mass and invitation to fellowship in the Undercroft. Even so, the link between feeling welcome and being engaged by name into community life has not been effectively forged. At the other Masses, we have paid little to no attention to creating welcoming ministries or traditions. Even at the 9:30 Mass, there is no one place where people can congregate and have questions answered.

Idea 1: Set up and staff an information booth in the Gathering Space.

Idea 2: Produce a short video/slide show for information booth and/or website.

Idea 3: Provide pew cards with contacts for more information.

Objective 3: Evangelization Through Engagement of New Parishioners

Because the lifeblood of this community is lay leadership and active parishioner participation, establish an intentional, structured, efficient way of understanding the interests and talents of *newly registered parishioners* in order to invite them to engage more deeply with the community.

Although our parish registration form lists the many ways new parishioners might become involved, there has been no systematic way of linking them to the people who could invite them

to participate or give them specifics of how to get involved. New parishioners may not understand service options, be reluctant to commit and have no method for learning more.

Idea 1: Personal follow up by phone could occur within two weeks of registration to answer questions or make connections to relevant people.

Idea 2: Selected parishioners could invite new parishioners to coffee.

Idea 3: New parishioners could receive a welcoming basket with selected St V publications, history booklet, and CD about community life.

Objective 4: Evangelization Through Engagement of Current Parishioners

Adapt our traditional programs, and eventually our ministry approaches, to the life circumstances of our *currently registered parishioners* to engage all in lay leadership and active participation in community life.

What became apparent in the feedback from parishioners was how time and distance affected participation in the life of the community beyond Sunday Mass. Traveling to St. V after work for an evening program is a barrier to people who are leading increasingly busy, hectic lives.

Idea 1: Offer more program opportunities on Sunday mornings immediately after the 9:30 Mass, particularly on Faith, Fun, and Fellowship Sundays when parents must wait for their children to complete their classes. These Sunday morning programs may also be attractive to parishioners who live at a distance.

Idea 2: Identify and invite parishioners within geographic clusters to meet. The meetings could be facilitated by a one-time, geographically-based Dinners for Eight effort. The clusters could be convened for St. Vincent programs that are conducted locally.

Idea 3: Invest in the technology that allows individuals or groups who cannot travel to the church to benefit from the programs we offer here or to support widely dispersed special interest study groups like the Monday evening Scripture Study group.

Idea 4: Extend the geographic clusters ministries into *mutual pastoral care*: welcoming babies, supporting the sick, and carpooling.

Everyone can share
in some way in the
life of the Church;
everyone can be
part of the
community.

—Pope Francis
*The Joy of the
Gospel*

Suggested Metrics:

- Increase parish registrations by 10-20% in three years

- Increase in numbers participating in events, programs, and service (must reconstruct baseline numbers from FY 14)
- Four vital and functioning local or special interest group clusters by FY 16

Key Focus Area #2:

Realize the Mission of the Community Through Revitalizing Our Committees

Objective: Revitalization of Our Committees

Develop a heightened sense of parishioner ownership and commitment that leads to more involvement in the management and administration of the community’s programs and committee—something particularly important given the limited number of salaried staff.

With the limited size of our salaried staff, our parish community is built upon the work of volunteers in the committees and groups that support its mission. Many of these committees are managed by a dwindling number of parishioners. Few committees have recruited new members in recent years. Newly registered parishioners are not well integrated into committees. In addition, there has developed a culture of repetition without evaluation—one in which innovation and change have sometimes been resisted. St. Vincent has been slowly moving from being a parish eliciting the talents of all its members into a community with fewer producers and more consumers its programs and offerings.

We need to embrace our vision of *being visibly transformed* by our experience of Word and Sacrament to serve each other, our neighborhood, and our world.

Evangelization aims at the process of growth which entails taking seriously each person and God’s plan for his or her life. All of us need to grow in Christ.
 —Pope Francis
The Joy of the Gospel

Idea 1: Convene all current committee membership to examine attitudes and practices in order to understand the need for change and embrace new ideas.

Idea 2: Conduct a Time, Talent, and Treasure Stewardship Campaign.

Idea 3: Canvass committees, groups, and ministries for volunteer opportunities with corresponding time commitment to increase volunteering. (This idea was offered at the January Town Meeting and has been implemented.)

Suggested Metrics:

- Sustained increase in committee, group, and

ministry membership. By 2017, new committee membership would have increased by 25% and half of all committee members would have served on the committee for less than five years.

Key Focus Area #3:

Ensure that the Parish Vision Energizes the Faith Formation of the Community

Objective 1: Reevaluate Religious Education for Children and Youth

Examine, evaluate and re-envision the religious education of children and youth in light of our parish vision and mission.

When we consider the work parents and teachers put into our current faith formation programs, we realize we must also ensure that their efforts achieve our goals as shaped by our mission. Do our programs instill in our children a love of our rich tradition, help them develop a vibrant faith with spiritual depth and understand and practice the centrality of Christian service? Because there is a core component of the faith that must be taught through formal methods, we must provide staff development and teacher formation and enrichment to ensure our staff and teachers are equipped to make the connection from the teachings of our faith tradition to the practice of it. (See Part II, #2, Obj. 2).

Idea 1: Assemble the education expertise we have in the community to examine the metrics of our program: enrollment, attendance, and parental involvement and satisfaction.

Idea 2: Think “outside the box” in offering experiences that deepen spirituality and clarify values. Not all faith formation is classroom-based.

Suggested Metrics:

- We need to establish baseline data on enrollment as a function of registrations, attendance, and parental involvement and satisfaction in order to set valid goals.

As it is the parents who have given life to their children, on them lies the gravest obligation of educating their family. They must therefore be recognized as being primarily and principally responsible for their education.

—Vatican II, *Declaration on Christian Education*

Objective 2: Faith Formation of the Family Unit

Expand the religious education programs of children and youth to encompass the entire family.

We need to consider the kind of support we extend to families in this primary responsibility. The spring 2013 focus group with parents revealed some unmet needs, particularly in the area of skill-based enrichment, social and service needs. In response, the Parish Council established the Family Life Subcommittee, which is trying to launch a peer ministry among parents.

Idea 1: Publicize the efforts of the Family Life Subcommittee and its goals.

Idea 2: Work toward using this subcommittee as a major source for consultation and enhancement of the religious education offerings for children.

Idea 3: For two partner households, publicize the efforts of the Married Couples Group in improving communication skills and exploring marriage spirituality.

Suggested Metrics:

- Double family participation in Family Life Subcommittee from current core families by end of 2015.
- Establish formal consultation procedures between Family Life Subcommittee and religious education program director(s) rather than ad hoc conversations by the end of 2015.

Objective 3: Make Faith Formation a Lifelong Process

Together as a community, find innovative ways to promote faith formation as a lifelong process and provide offerings to enrich faith across the entire life cycle.

As we surveyed our community, we asked to what degree members depended on St V for nurturing their spiritual journey. We found that no average score by any characteristic (age group, Mass community, regularity of attendance) ranked higher than 7.3 of 10, with the overall average being 6.8. The Lenten Liturgy survey indicated that many were critical of some of our traditional services. For years, we have offered a number of options for education and faith formation, such as lecture and film series, book discussions, and annual retreats. However, there was not always a unifying theme; nor were there clear objectives for these offerings, adequate publicity, or broad-based evaluation.

Admittedly, we suffer from the lack of a director of religious education. We also suffer from our commuter-parish reality as well. It is important to expand efforts to use newer technologies to

become a presence in the daily lives of our parishioners (e.g., the daily snippets from *The Joy of the Gospel* on Facebook).

Idea 1: Continue programs based on supportive evaluation data rather than automatically continuing with no insight into their effectiveness.

Idea 2: Consider tailoring programs to the needs of specific age groups.

Idea 3: Expand church-based programs to the geographic clusters through newer technology (e.g. webinars).

Idea 4: Expand church-based programs to the homebound (whether through illness, disability, or the need for childcare) through the website.

Suggested Metrics:

- Need to identify measurement strategies for electronic participation.

Part II. STEWARDSHIP OF COMMUNITY RESOURCES

There are three key focus areas in the category of the Stewardship of our Community Resources that require attention in the next three years: financial accounting and transparency, personnel and volunteer policies and procedures, and facility management and restoration. The first two of these will draw upon the “Catholic Standards for Excellence,” (see box on the next page) an initiative of the NLRCM, in the development of policies and procedures.

Key Focus Area #1:

Financial Accounting and Transparency

Objective 1: Provide our community with a method for budget planning that outlines more clearly how our income is to be spent, what needs prioritization and where expenses might be better anticipated and contained.

Objective 2: Develop a better method for reporting variations between actual and budgeted expenses so that the Finance Committee and Parish Council can evaluate them and make course corrections in an open and transparent manner.

Objective 3: Distribute an annual parish report that meets the standards set forth by the National Leadership Roundtable for Church Management. [Parish Council President]

There is a complicated and reciprocal relationship between finances and growth: we cannot do well in one without doing well in the other. Conversely, to fall short in one means we fall short in the other. Yet we cannot presume that parishioners will offer support without the expectation that the parish will use the time, talent, and treasure entrusted to its care well.

The 1993 U.S. Bishops' Pastoral Letter on Stewardship notes that accountability is a fundamental concept linked to our Christian understanding of stewardship. Better communication to our parishioners of how money is spent and with what priorities it is allocated will help forge that link between accountability and stewardship.

The design of our current budget supports the *status quo* without attention to growth and the evolving programmatic, educational, and service needs of our parish. And, the current budget reporting format makes tracking and evaluating variations between actual and budgeted expenses in each mission area difficult.

NLRCM's Catholic Standards for Excellence

1. Standard: *A parish should operate in accordance with an annual budget that has been approved by the Pastor, the Parish Council, and the Finance Committee.*

2. Standard: *A parish should create and maintain financial reports on a timely basis that accurately reflect the financial activity of the organization. Internal financial statements should be prepared no less frequently than quarterly, should be provided to the Finance Committee and should identify and explain any material variation between actual and budgeted revenues and expenses.*

3. Standard: *A parish should prepare, and make available annually to the faithful and the public, information about the parish's mission, ministry program activities, and basic financial data. Basic financial data should include, at a minimum, a summary statement of activities and a summary statement of the financial position. The report should also identify the names of the parish corporate board, finance committee, parish council, and management staff.*

Key Focus Area #2:

Personnel and Volunteer Policies and Procedures

Personnel Policies

Objective 1: Canvass the parish to establish an Ad Hoc Committee to review NLRCM standards and best practices.

Objective 2: Knowing there is a need, teach through formal methods, practical application and enrichment.

A parish's relationship to its ministerial personnel—both clergy and lay, paid and volunteer—is fundamental to achieving its mission. The role and responsibility of the Pastor is defined in canon law, but parish human resource policies should address both clergy and laity, paid staff and volunteers. They should be fair, establish clear expectations and provide for meaningful, effective performance review.

In 2011 the Parish Council attempted to establish accurate job descriptions for parish staff, with annual goals and performance evaluations, but was only partially successful. In our current administrative model, the traditional lines between employer and employee can become blurred, and job descriptions do not accurately depict reality. Today, the world demands that the church be transparent and accountable. The USCCB document, *Co-*

3. Standard: *With respect to volunteers, the parish's policies and procedures should also address initial assessment and screening, assignment to and training for appropriate work responsibilities, ongoing supervision and evaluation, personal development, and opportunities for advancement.*

4. Standard: *Employees should be provided a copy of all policies and procedures and acknowledge their receipt in writing.*

5. Standard: *A parish should have written job descriptions for each employee that clearly identify roles and responsibilities.*

6. Standard: *Parishes should have a system in place for regular written evaluation of employees by their respective supervisors; these evaluations should take place at least annually.*

paid staff and volunteers who have significant independent decision making authority regarding the resources of the parish. The policy should identify the types of conduct or transactions that raise conflict of interest concerns, set forth procedures for disclosure of actual or potential conflicts, and provide for review of individual transactions by uninvolved members of one of the parish advisory councils.

2. Standard: *A parish should have written personnel policies and procedures, based on policies established by the diocese and after consultation with the parish council, governing the work and actions of clergy, employees and volunteers of the parish. In addition to covering the basic elements of the employment relationship (e.g. working conditions, employee compensation and benefits, vacation and sick leave), the policies should address employee evaluation, supervision, hiring and firing, nondiscrimination, succession planning, grievance procedures, harassment, employee growth and development, confidentiality of employee (lay and clergy), parishioner and organization records and information. Personnel policies must specify how the Charter for the Protection of Children and Youth will be implemented.*

Workers in the Vineyard of the Lord, articulates six different areas of a good program: recruitment and selection; orientation and support; evaluation and feedback; compensation; and transition and termination. We must strive to better integrate these principles into our procedures.

Of our six salaried staff, only two are not at or near retirement age. It will be important as staff leave our employment that we intentionally recruit new staff that will fit our current reality and will best serve the parish community. We also need human resource policies based on best practices in place.

Employee Performance Evaluation

Objective 3: Review the administrative needs of the parish and establish accurate staff job descriptions that correlate, to the extent possible, with those needs.

Objective 4: Conduct annual goal-setting meetings with staff with subsequent semiannual or annual performance reviews. [Pastor and Pastoral Associate]

Plan for a Mission-Driven Reconfiguration of Staff

Objective 5: Develop a proposal to Parish Council for consultation on what the future staff configuration should be so future recruitment can continue to be well thought out and intentional in light of our mission. [Pastor and Pastoral Associate]

Key Focus Area #3:

Maintenance and Restoration of the Facility

Maintenance and Restoration of Facilities

Objective 1: Align the responsibilities and activities of the Pastor, Staff, and Facility Committee to evaluate, plan and budget for the repair and restoration of property.

Objective 2: Establish and follow a maintenance schedule for facility upkeep as well as establish and maintain a repository of product specifications and warranties.

Built in 1841, St. Vincent's has undergone a major renovation every 50 years of its life as a parish church. The last renovation, initiated in the 1992, was finished in 2014 with the installation of the baptismal font. We suspended this prolonged effort several times to fund more pressing needs: the rectory renovation, the restoration of the steeple, and the replacement of the

air conditioning system. Meanwhile, some of routine repairs and maintenance have gone unfunded.

Our approach to facility management has been at times uncoordinated; the Pastor, the Council's Facilities Committee, the now disbanded Art and Architecture Committee and the Superintendent have all functioned somewhat independently. In 2013, the parish reorganized the Facilities Committee. Drawing on community expertise in facilities management, this committee can now consult on and coordinate the planning and prioritization of projects.

The Issue of Our Church Park

Objective: Establish an Ad Hoc Committee to identify all the issues, our mission, our resources, and our options in preparation for a church park's future. [Parish Council]

The Church, as the agent of evangelization, is more than an organic and hierarchical institution; she is first and foremost a people advancing on its pilgrim way towards God.

—Pope Francis
The Joy of the Gospel

We need to clarify our objectives in our church park in light of our service ministry, our social witness, our resources, our responsibilities, and our security needs

Our management of the park adjoining our church has been a source of division within our community. In 2006-07, there was a series of Town Meetings on what the objectives of our mission in the park were. In 2008, we closed the park for renovation and reopened under rules that had to be enforced through the combined efforts of the Downtown Partnership of Baltimore and our own volunteers. Adherence to these rules slowly eroded and in summer 2013 the Council tried to re-establish control. The condition of the park, the disorder of the crowds on Sunday morning, the effect of this on our growth and security were all concerns raised in parishioner surveys. The community remains divided. Addressing the complex issues involved in the park, its management, and our mission there was beyond the scope of this Strategic Planning Team.

Implementation of This Strategic Plan

We note that our current organizational structure is defined by our mission (Liturgy, Education and Enrichment, Social Action Committees) and by the need to support that mission (Finance, Facilities, and Communications and Outreach Committees). But our committees need reinvigoration—new members, new ideas, a new sense of mission. This reinvigoration will not happen in the committees themselves but must come from a new sense of ownership in our larger

community, a commitment to a time, talent, and treasure stewardship: to give our heart to what we value.

Therefore, we encourage the Parish Council to avoid simply assigning critical areas to the most appropriate committee for development and implementation for these reasons:

It may be hard for an egg to turn into a bird: it would be a jolly sight harder for it to learn to fly while remaining an egg. We are like eggs at present. And you cannot go on indefinitely being just an ordinary, decent egg. We must be hatched or go bad.
—C. S. Lewis

- Some of the critical areas represent complex realities that will best be served by establishing subcommittees or ad hoc groups to address in focused, creative ways. (This has happened already with the newly formed Family Life Subcommittee.)
- Some critical areas, while based in one committee, must be *addressed throughout our entire organization*. This is particularly true for outreach: the nature and work of every committee, and group—indeed every parishioner—is involved in inviting others into the community. Therefore the “silo” mentality often observed in committees must be addressed.

St. Vincent has thrived because in the past a young cohort was encouraged to find creative ways of building community, worshipping meaningfully, and meeting perceived needs for education and enrichment. Many of these programs continue to this day but are supported by a dwindling number of these same people, now no longer a young cohort. New parishioners have not been effectively integrated into their ranks. Some who have joined have had their ideas stifled by the weight of established practices and programs, which are not being effectively evaluated. Many parishioners have slipped into the mentality of simply being consumers of programs rather than understanding our Baptismal call to be ministers to each other: a call that stimulated the flowering of St. Vincent. The parish community needs inspiration to start a new flowering. It is our time.

And finally in Einstein’s words, “The significant problems that we face today cannot be solved at the same level of thinking that we were at when we created them.” Parishioners repeatedly noted the need for us to be open to change. Doing that may be messy. It will require us to evaluate long held practices and cherished notions that may no longer serve the larger community.

Next Steps

- This strategic plan is not prescriptive: the objectives outlined in the plan are presented for consideration and not automatic implementation. The choice on how to proceed will be at the discretion of the parish leadership.
- The people of the community, committees, and groups—in old configurations and new—need to prayerfully consider and creatively develop the types of programs and strategies that will put flesh on this plan.
- Each major component of the focus areas needs an advocate to move its objectives forward, to identify and vet ideas, to evaluate and weigh options, and propose a course of action to realize the overall objectives.
- For some areas suggested metrics have been proposed; others will need evaluation measures that are tailored to the critical area's programmatic response.
- The Parish Council will need to work closely with the advocate group to assess the plan's implementation and its validity in light of our evolving reality.