

# **The Parish Community of St. Joseph Pastoral Strategic Plan**



Parish Community of St. Joseph logo:  
We who enter the COMMUNITY of Christ through the water of BAPTISM are inspired by His  
WORD, nourished in the EUCHARIST, and called to spread the Good News to the world!

**Adopted September 20, 2003**

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### INTRODUCTION

Why should a Church undertake a Pastoral Strategic Planning process? Certainly a church like other institutions wants to be *effective* in what it does. To be effective, and fulfill its mission, then the Church must have a vision in addition to its beliefs and traditions. It is not simply enough, however, to say “we have a vision statement”; we must dedicate our energies and resources to accomplishing that vision statement, we must actively live that vision statement, and we must have a plan to uphold that vision statement. In a Pastoral Strategic Planning process we dream about the future, the vision and then develop a plan with strategies to accomplish that vision. The final written document then is not a static view of the Church today, but a vision of how the Church should be in five years. More importantly the Pastoral Strategic Plan shows us how we will achieve the vision. The process we went through to write the plan brings us all closer together, working as a team toward common goals and raising awareness of critical issues. Through communication and open forums, it creates better control over annual operations and establishes the ability to adapt to changes in demographics and growth. Ultimately, our Pastoral Strategic Plan will set the stage for our parish to rise to a new level of faith, understanding, sharing and communication.

In the Catholic Church and our faith, there are certain beliefs and truths. One of those truths is that Jesus is God’s greatest gift to us all! What is the value of that incredible gift? There is not enough gold and silver, not enough diamonds and rubies, not enough American dollars and Euro currency, not enough material wealth to equal the value of our salvation through Christ’s death on the Cross. If we understand how priceless that gift is, then there is no question what we must do and how we must live our lives. We share our time, talent and treasure so that the Greatest Gift, Jesus, may be given to those who do not know Him. This is how a disciple of Christ lives and this is what Christian stewardship tells us to do.

In the 1990s our Parish made a faithful and prayerful commitment to stewardship. We all become Disciples at our Baptism. Our Stewardship flows from being Disciples. Many of us are like the first Disciples. We have heard the call, but are uncertain where to go and what to do. Even those who lived with Jesus were unsure how to live or respond until they received the Holy Spirit with Mary at Pentecost. Filled with the Spirit, they were so joyful. They had a new, clearer understanding and what they had been given moved them to a level of activity they had never known before. In a very real way, our mission of living as Disciples of Christ is an extension of the mission of the first Disciples. We are to constantly ask ourselves, “Am I using what God has given me to help build the Kingdom here and now? Am I aware of God calling me to serve? Have I been changed by the experience of serving? Where am I being called to serve next?” The entire Pastoral Strategic Plan is set within the context of encouraging our parishioners as Disciples to respond to their gifts as good Stewards.

This Pastoral Strategic Plan is rooted in stewardship as a Christian way of life. There are four goals in this plan. They focus us as Disciples on building a stronger parish family, strengthening our faith, sharing our gifts, helping those in need, and communicating the Good News about God and the good news about the people of St. Joseph Parish. These goals are stewardship in action. The goals are ambitious and visionary, but certainly attainable through prayer, faith, and consistent implementation of the strategies outlined in the plan.

## BACKGROUND

As we move forward with the implementation of the Pastoral Strategic Plan, it is appropriate for us to reflect back on where we have come from, who we were before the plan was started. It is with this historical perspective then that the potential impact of the Pastoral Strategic Plan can be better understood. To be certain, in 2003 the St. Joseph Parish community is privileged in many respects. The Church has a dynamic, spiritual pastor who has demonstrated true faith and leadership over the past 20 years as he has overseen a staff of full-time and part-time people. There are approximately 1,390 registered parish families with 675 children enrolled in the religious education program. St. Joseph is a Vatican II stewardship parish and encourages Time, Talent and Treasure. We have nearly 60 ministries with more than 400 families participating. The parish is fortunate to have significant real estate assets. The property located in Millstone consists of three (3) buildings: the old church, the rectory and the adult education meeting room on approximately one-half (½) acre. The primary parcel of real estate located at 34 Yorktown Road, Millstone Borough consists of approximately 37 acres and is home to the parish center and a beautiful new church. There is approximately 19 acres of open, usable undeveloped land. The parish has been fiscally sound although it does have a significant mortgage obligation (over \$1.4 million). The parish is currently facing some challenges, most specifically inadequate space for the existing programs and ministries. Looking to the future, there is a tremendous potential for growth in population and more active participation from parishioners. Understanding the current situation at the parish, how then can we best prepare for and manage the anticipated growth and still meet the needs of the parish family? These are questions we asked ourselves as we undertook the planning process.

## METHODOLOGY

In 2002, faced with continued growth as a faith community, our parish pastoral council struggled to define a path for itself and the parish community to follow. The council knew that it was important to understand the needs of our parishioners and how we could meet those needs. It became clear to the council that a strategic planning process could identify goals and strategies for the parish. The pastoral council made a bold move and disbanded itself while laying the groundwork for a Pastoral Strategic Plan. In late September 2002 the Parish hired Ruotolo Associates to help guide us through the strategic planning process. Eight committees with a total of 53 members were assembled and began meeting in January 2003. The committees were charged with delving into various aspects of parish life and the community. They represented: communications, facilities, faith formation, finance, liturgy and spirituality, ministries, real estate, and stewardship.

One of the first tasks in the planning process was to review the parish vision statement, to gather information about the parish, to identify the resources available, and to understand the current needs of the community. As part of this “fact-finding” phase, the parish issued a survey to all its parishioners. The next step in the process was to identify strengths and challenges facing the parish and to understand the critical issues. On April 5, 2003 a Pastoral Strategic Planning retreat was held. After Mass and prayers for the Lord’s guidance, the committees began to outline our goals and priorities as a faith community. The outcome of the retreat was a list of four main goals and many objectives in support of those goals. The committees then spent the next five months working on strategies that would help the parish realize its goals.

Over the past year we undertook a strategic planning process. It has been challenging and rewarding, but its implementation remains critical to the plan's success. Moving forward, its implementation will help us focus our vision and priorities. It will empower us to make full use of our time, talent and resources.

PASTORAL STRATEGIC PLANNING COMMITTEES (Organizational chart of committee structure found in the Appendix.)

We sincerely thank all those who willingly gave their time, valued opinions and ideas during the planning process. The thoughtful insights and prayers from staff and all volunteers in this process are a reflection of your dedication to St. Joseph Parish and the community we serves, but ultimately it is a testament to your strong faith in Jesus Christ.

We acknowledge your commitment and appreciate your work on the Pastoral Strategic Plan:

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## OUTLINE OF THE PLAN

The Pastoral Strategic Plan is organized into a vision statement, goals, objectives and strategies. As a Church, our goals must be based on our faith. We must be rooted in scripture and therefore, a passage from the Bible supports each goal and gives us direction.

- **GOALS** – Goals are general outcome statements. What do we want St. Joseph's to look like in 5 years? The vision statement is really the ultimate goal for the church. We identified four goals that further articulate what is stated in the vision.
  - Goal #1 - Foster a vibrant faith community that is central to parishioners' lives
  - Goal #2 - Strengthen and celebrate faith and provide witness to Christ in everyday life
  - Goal #3 - Outreach and minister to the community's needs
  - Goal #4 - Improve communications and education/understanding of the faith community
  
- **OBJECTIVES** – Each goal usually has two or more objectives. Objectives are more precise and measurable and help to define the goals.
  
- **STRATEGIES** – Each objective has two or more strategies. Strategies tell us specifically what the church/parishioners/staff will do in order to achieve the objective. What activities will we do? What actions will we take?

## VISION STATEMENT

*To prayerfully continue to Build a community that PROCLAIMS the Gospel, CELEBRATES the Eucharist, and SHARES our gifts.*

## THE PLAN

### **Goal #1 - Foster a vibrant faith community that is central to parishioners' lives**

*So you are no longer aliens or foreign visitors; you are fellow-citizens with the holy people of God and part of God's household. You are built upon the foundations of the apostles and prophets, and Christ Jesus himself is the cornerstone. Every structure knit together in him grows into a holy temple in the Lord; and you too, in him, are being built up into a dwelling-place of God in the Spirit. Eph 2:19-22*

- Build parishioners' comfort level in their role as stewards
  - Review the current stewardship program and outline a yearlong stewardship effort
  - Identify stewardship successes in the bulletin, on the website, etc.
  
- Identify and provide for the emerging needs of parishioners' spiritual growth
  - Form a spirituality committee
  - Continue focus on the Emmaus retreat
  - Encourage participation in other retreats available in other parishes and Dioceses
  - Provide links on website to retreat houses
  - Develop bulletin inserts or have brochures available about retreats
  - Encourage participation in Partners in Ministry
  - Encourage participation in individual spiritual direction
  - Invite other homilists during particular feast days (Franciscans, Carmelites)
  - Provide opportunities for parishioners to buy spiritual books/tapes/videos/make pilgrimages
  - Establish a library ministry
  - Provide reviews/recommendations on books/tapes/videos
  
- Provide adult and child educational opportunities to involve parishioners
  - Continue Advent Night, RCIA
  - Continue Vacation Bible School

- Provide formation for all sacraments
  - Offer mentoring for engaged couples and newly married
  - Offer seminar/get-together for young families after first child has been baptized; invite them with a speaker on family life, spirituality within the family, etc.
- Extend the meaning of sacraments beyond their celebration
  - Educate about the sacraments in the bulletin and homilies
  - Send “anniversary” or congratulation cards after sacraments – for example, first wedding anniversary, baptism, etc.
- Build parishioners’ comfort level in their role as evangelizers
  - Define what evangelization means for the St. Joseph community
  - Create an evangelization committee
  - Institute an evangelization education program
  - Institute evangelization in new parishioner orientation
  - Expand library to include materials on evangelization
  - Conduct open forums after Masses
  - Develop a communication piece to use when evangelizing to others
- Empower each parishioner to actively invite others to join with them in celebration and participation in our life in Jesus Christ
  - Bring a friend to church Sunday
- Have full, active, conscious participation in liturgical celebrations
  - Form a liturgy committee
  - Educate about points of the liturgy: e.g. why no procession/alleluia during Lent
  - Communicate through homilies and bulletin
  - Expand family liturgies: more participation among kids in CCD; recruit more volunteers
  - Conduct a “walk through of the Mass”
  - Videotape/Powerpoint a Mass and provide commentary and explanation
- Provide opportunities for people to create bonds that will bring them closer together
  - Provide nursery and daycare during activities
  - Compile parish directory of services to include babysitters, pet caregivers, etc.
  - Hold orientation for new parishioners
  - Establish Welcome committee and provide personal contact between new parishioners and ministry coordinators to promote active participation

Recognize guests or visitors of the parish and ask them to sign a welcome book  
Recognize new parishioners at Mass by offering a family blessing  
Offer a (New) house blessing  
Open a Coffee House  
Extend the support network for single, custodial parents

- Encourage young adults to become a vibrant presence within parish community
  - Work with other parishes to do combined programming
  - Offer opportunities to gather outside of Mass such as Theology on Tap
  - Recruit for teaching Religious Ed
  - Conduct surveys for teenagers and young adults to determine their needs, etc.
  
- Celebrate as a community
  - Remember our patron St. Joseph with special Mass, flowers, pilgrimage, etc.
  - Recognize our strengths
  - Continue annual picnic and other events like appreciation night
  - Recognize birthdays, anniversaries, graduations, weddings, etc. in bulletins, newsletters, etc.
  - Provide pictures on bulletin boards (communions, baptisms, obits, etc.)
  - Publish a special St. Joseph's calendar with dates highlighted that are special to the parish and community
  
- Review organizational structure
  - Review personnel and current job descriptions
  - Execute the Pastoral Strategic Plan
  - Integrate parish functions and coordinate work of the various committees
  - Coordinate operational strategies in a master plan
  
- Re-establish a Pastoral Council
  - Investigate different models and committee structures
  - Develop a model and committee structure specific to the needs at St. Joseph
  
- Increase revenue in order to support the needs identified through the Pastoral Strategic Plan
  - Conduct yearly fee structure review for services provided (CCD classes, etc.)
  - Explore alternative methods to collect donations (EFT, etc.)
  - Conduct a feasibility study for possible capital campaign
  - Implement a capital campaign strategy to meet financial needs until the parish reaches full participation in stewardship of treasure

Develop program for bequests and trust giving  
Develop ongoing memorial opportunities  
Develop a financial plan to support the Pastoral Strategic Plan of the parish  
Encourage parishioners' understanding of all aspects of stewardship of treasure

- Promote asset utilization by converting assets into revenue producers
  - Sell Christmas cards with Church as backdrop
  - Rent out Parish Center for events such as receptions, etc.
  - Explore feasibility of a day care facility
- Reduce expenses and adopt strategies that provide cost savings
  - Increase use of debt reduction envelopes until parish reaches full participation in stewardship of treasure
  - Implement debt reduction plan
  - Establish a program to encourage in-kind donations of goods and services
- Create master plan to optimize the utilization of parish assets (including facilities and land) to support short and long term needs of the community
  - Conduct a space utilization assessment
  - Outline necessary repairs and maintenance schedule for existing buildings
  - Investigate ways to provide immediate additional space for classes, meetings and activities
  - Assess options for renovation of parish hall to include new kitchen design and equipment; replace HVAC
  - Explore feasibility of building a gym and more class space to address long-term growth of parish, (educational needs, increased ministries and larger youth ministry program)
  - Evaluate options for use of the land such as building a cemetery/scatter garden

## Goal #2 - Strengthen and celebrate faith

*For where two or three meet in my name, I am there among them. Matt 18:20*

- Energize parishioners to bring their spirituality into their everyday lives
  - As a Stewardship parish, provide adult faith formation opportunities for parishioners to learn about their faith outside of Mass (goal of 2 hours per week for education)
  - Provide a book of readings to cover the liturgical cycle that provides opportunity for questions, introspection, prayer and greater understanding about scripture
  - Offer a journal workshop that shows people how to use a journal and understand how God has worked in their lives
  - Help parishioners to understand how to reach a Christian balance in their lives
- Increase awareness of God actively working in the lives of parishioners and the community
  - Implement the new ministry Called By Name
  - Prayer chain/prayer requests
  - Have a thanksgiving book
- Provide opportunities for different forms and experiences of prayer and devotions
  - Develop spiritual/scriptural quote of the week
  - Provide reviews/recommendations especially on library books
  - Offer explanations about the different forms of spirituality, recommended readings, websites
- Develop opportunities for parishioners to actively evangelize
  - Add list of ministries to the bulletin
  - Develop short-term ministry responsibilities as well as longer-term commitments
  - Encourage vocations to lives dedicated to ministry in all its dimensions
- Provide the environment and programs for the children and youth of the parish that supports the parents' ministry to raise their children to make Christ central to their lives
  - Implement the Rainbow program as a special ministry for children experiencing loss
  - Continue to meet diocesan standards for CCD classes (pull home classes back, more time)
  - Establish a Faith Formation Committee to recruit, train and assist teachers in planning their curriculum

Plan special events for all classes (by grade or by class time) such as movies or games. This would give us more uniformity in presenting special topics such as the rosary, Stations of the Cross, Advent, etc.

Plan special events for students and their families (work toward our objective of encouraging bonds through social activities)

Work with high school students to increase their involvement with the younger kids (e.g. Rainbow program)

Organize service opportunities within the program for 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> graders

- Provide for all seekers whether they are already of the faith or looking to enter into the faith and promote adult faith formation through experience, reflection and prayer as a central task in a catechetical exercise
  - Review current RCIA program and make changes to meet new diocesan requirements
  
- Provide better understanding of the foundations of our liturgy
  - Draw attention to statues – “Saint of the Month”
  - Provide book/reading material on St. Joseph and other “Saints of the Month”
  - Facilitate discussions about liturgies to deepen understanding and appreciation of celebration
  - Make it easier to participate in music at Mass; use song leaders, etc.
  
- Continuously provide both ministry and volunteer opportunities
  - Establish position of Coordinator of Ministries
  - Establish a ministry council/committee
  - Conduct periodic evaluation of ministries to ascertain continuing need
  - Develop new ministries as needed
  - Coordinate with stewardship renewal to establish a CCD “recruiting fair” where current catechists talk to people after all the masses to answer questions and explain the program
  - Have a CCD teacher speak after the masses about teaching religious education.
  - Create a CCD substitute list of teachers
  - Compile a resource for CCD teachers so they know what is available
  - Establish a more formal means of “evaluation” of CCD teachers
  - Send a personal invitation to every parishioner to participate every year
  - Recognize yearly the volunteer efforts of the parishioners
  - Serve as a network to link parishioners with volunteer opportunities in the community in order to encourage parishioners to volunteer in the local towns (volunteer fair)
  
- Provide a structure and education to ensure growth within ministries
  - Develop a process to transition from one ministry to another
  - Provide training

Develop a process for leadership succession  
Provide training and certification for CCD teachers

### **Goal #3 - Outreach and minister to the local and global community's needs**

*Then the upright will say to him in reply, "Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink? When did we see you a stranger and make you welcome, lacking clothes and clothe you? When did we find you sick or in prison and go to see you? And the King will answer, "In truth I tell you, in so far as you did this to one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did it to me."  
Matt 25:37-40*

➤ **Develop involvement in local, diocesan, national and global initiatives**

**Local Strategies**

- Encourage participation in ongoing initiatives such as blood drives, work with homeless, etc.
- Expand youth activities
- Partner with local community groups and serve as their resource
- Place link on the Hillsborough Township web page
- Establish a partnership with social services
- Add links to St. Joseph's website to other related services such as Catholic Charities

**Diocesan Strategies**

- Partner with another faith community when a larger volunteer base is needed for activities (Interfaith Hospitality Network for the Homeless)
- Provide support/disseminate information on diocesan programs (e.g. Pro-life Mass at the cathedral in Metuchen, multicultural days, spiritual sessions, etc.)

**National Strategies**

- Identify on a regular basis ways in which the parish can support national initiatives
- Encourage ministries with national affiliations to use all resources at their disposal
- Encourage participation in national secular charities and organizations (Red Cross, food banks, Habitat for Humanity)
- Encourage the parish to sponsor a child in the Fresh Air Fund Summer camp
- Consider ongoing sponsorship of a Fresh Air Fund camper once (s)he returns home
- Continue to support activities of Social Concerns

**Global Strategies**

- Identify on a regular basis ways in which the parish can support global initiatives
- Encourage the support of an individual child in a Third World country

Consider “adopting” another parish in a Third World country  
Expand support of Catholic missionaries, clergy and lay (e.g. Fr. Ray Leonard)  
Continue to support activities of Social Concerns (e.g. Sponsorship in Nigeria)

- Understand needs of the local community
  - Assess on a regular basis local demographics and changes in the population that would affect types of outreach provided
  - Continue to survey parishioners to understand their needs and interests
  - Conduct parish census to update information on households

## **Goal #4 - Improve communications throughout the community**

*But how can they call to him for help if they have not believed? And how can they believe if they have not heard the message? And how can they hear if the message is not proclaimed? And how can the message be proclaimed if the messengers are not sent out? As the scripture says, "How wonderful is the coming of messengers who bring good news!" Rom 10:14-15*

- Coordinate communications efforts so they are more effective
  - Hire a staff member dedicated to overseeing communications
  - Develop a communications plan
  - Establish a permanent communications committee
  - Provide for a communications/marketing budget
  
- Create awareness of what St. Joe's has to offer
  - Set an annual production schedule for the parish newsletters
  - Semi-annually hold an open town hall meeting between the Sunday masses
  - Disseminate programs that stimulate parishioner involvement
  - Create database of parishioners' email addresses and then use email to communicate with them
  - Send out Lenten and Advent mailings with seasonal activities
  - Review content, lay-out and design of bulletin
  - Review content, lay-out and design of website
  - Conduct direct mail for CCD and financial/budget information
  - Streamline announcements during Mass
  - Coordinate calendar of parish activities and ministries
  - Review use of bulletin boards
  - Explore use of Real Call direct messaging
  - Explore electronic messaging options
  
- Attract new parishioners
  - Develop brochure and materials
  - Provide area realtors/hotels/welcome wagon with mass schedules and information
  
- Strengthen the presence of church by reaching out to local residents
  - Write press releases/photos to local newspapers

Use local radio  
Use local cable channel  
Develop a way to broadcast weekly Masses and sermons

