

*Long-Range Plan for
St. Thomas More Parish
(Outline)*

2006 - 2010

**Report of the Long-Range Planning Committee
for St. Thomas More Parish
to the Pastoral Advisory Council and Parish Community**

Presented August 2006

Executive Summary of the Report of the St. Thomas More Long-Range Planning Committee

1. Long-range planning committee met at request of the Pastoral Advisory Council
2. Goal set by the Pastoral Advisory Council to propose a set of goals for the next five years,
3. Addressed concerns raised by a Parish Survey conducted in 2005. Concerns focused on
 - a. Communication recommendations:
 - i. Creation of a Communication Coordinator staff position to manage parish communication including website, newsletters and bulletin
 - ii. Mechanisms for improving inter-ministry communication and communication between ministries and the parish community
 - iii. Increased personal contact with parishioners initially through an improved Hospitality Ministry.
 - iv. Use of small group communities as a mechanism for more effective communication.
 - b. Adult faith formation (AFF) recommendations:
 - i. Develop ways to meet various needs of parishioners at various stages of their spiritual development.
 - ii. Continued development of the AFF leadership and catechists through creation of a central Faith Formation leadership group.
 - iii. Improve publicizing AFF programs to increase awareness of programs well in advance of their scheduled time.
 - c. Family-related ministries recommendations:
 - i. Develop leadership in the family-related ministries that is trained in encouraging reflection by teaching parishioners how to reflect.
 - ii. Communicate the message of reflecting together as families, to include creation of a parish-wide “family night” once a week.
4. Pastoral Advisory Council is charged with overseeing the implementation of the goals and objectives of this Report

OVERVIEW:

1. Make-up of LRPC:
 - a. Formed from a cross-section of parish leaders and staff.
 - b. Included representatives from Pastoral Advisory Council, Finance Committee, Stewardship Committee, Liturgical Coordinator, Adult Faith Formation Coordinator, Nursery administrator, Religious Education administrator, Parish Secretary
2. Methodology
 - a. Facilitated discussion aimed at exploring a range of solutions for parish concerns.
 - b. Committee categorized the solutions and formulated focused, achievable goals, as presented in this Report.
 - c. Used Parish Mission Statement as a foundation
3. Responsibilities of the Pastoral Advisory Council
 - a. Receive report and facilitate implementation of the goals expressed herein over the next five years.
 - b. Periodically review report and formulate agendas to achieve both the short and long term goals.
 - c. The Council will have flexibility to modify the timetable for achieving the goals or the goals themselves
 - d. Council acknowledges that the goals expressed in this report are highly desirable and will strive to implement them, if practically possible.

PART I: COMMUNICATIONS:

1. Introduction:

- a. Three areas of concern in parish survey:
 - i. Ministries
 - ii. Website / Bulletin / Newsletter
 - iii. Hospitality / Small Faith Communities.
- b. Key to implementing goals is the creation of a paid staff position responsible for communication coordination.

2. Communication Coordinator (Staff)

- a. Focal point for facilitating all parish communications, including those between ministries and communication from staff/ministries to the parish community and vice versa.
- b. Charge with re-visioning the modes of communication within the parish (e.g., website, Bulletin and newsletters). Two goals:
 - i. Common theme (look and feel)
 - ii. Simplify access to information and clarify the message.

Website / Bulletin / Newsletter / Phone System

1. Website Enhancement and Re-Visioning

- a. Form a website team to identify requirements for the website.
- b. Team should include members of technology committee as well as other parishioners or local businesses that specialize in web-based communications who can advise as to areas that could be modified to enhance the parish's web-based communication.
- c. Question to be addressed: "what, as a parish, do we want the website to be able to do?" Following are suggestions made by LRPC:
 - i. Contact information: parish staff, ministries, parish directory (with appropriate protections)
 - ii. Schedule of events
 - iii. Registration for Parish and Ministry Events and Classes
 - iv. Room reservations (with appropriate controls in place)

- v. Enhanced scheduling for liturgical ministers
- vi. Adding or updating parishioner records (with appropriate protections)
- vii. Submitting changes to automatic contributions
- viii. Email or Board groups with specific interest areas or issues

2. Phone System with Pre-recorded Information:

- a. Not envisioned to be used for cold calls or for very specific, one-time information or as a phone answering system but as a mechanism for parishioners to get routine information.
- b. The Communication Coordinator is advised to form a team to determine the information to be provided and feasibility
- c. If implemented, committee recommends providing method for parishioners to have easy access to the phone number and extensions. Suggestions include a refrigerator magnet, a bulletin insert, or a listing near the front of the parish directory.

3. Avoid Information Overload

- a. Committee believes that independent modes of communication which are not centrally controlled results in information overload that has the effect of parishioners missing or ignoring important information.
- b. Consolidate Bulletin inserts, RE newsletter, Faith Formation newsletter, Stewardship newsletter, and Seasonal newsletters into one information source that can be communicated in a number of ways, but with the same information.
- c. Continually monitor the information presented in the Bulletin and determine more effective ways of presenting that information.

Ministries

1. Re-vision Stewardship Commission to build community between ministry leaders. Building community with the ministry leaders will reduce the generation of ministry “silos.”
2. Place Stewardship Commission under the purview of a Ministry Coordinator who may be a parish staff member
3. Provide training for Ministry Leaders to include spiritual development as well as practical tools for their ministry

4. Group ministries into categories based on the mission of the parish.
 - a. Actual groupings should be determined by the Stewardship Commission.
 - b. Common ministries can work together on activities that cross ministry boundaries
 - c. Get ministry leaders together a few times a year to share ideas. Ministry leaders can then disseminate the cooperation message to members of their ministries.

5. Coordinate information regarding Ministry Activities
 - a. Place a large sign or board in front of church to highlight upcoming parish events (similar to a restaurant's "Today's Specials" board).
 - b. Have similar ministries coordinate information booth after Masses – to supplement current ministry registration activities (such as the Ministry Fair)
 - c. Stewardship Commission or Ministry Coordinator should work closely with Communications Coordinator to develop communications modes that will effectively enhance communications between ministries and the parish community

Hospitality / Small Groups

1. Train a core of Hospitality Ministers to answer questions or direct questioners to a person who may have the answer.
 - a. These ministers would be identifiable by a badge or button (e.g., imprinted with "Ask Me").
 - b. To be effective these ministers should be conspicuous and available both before and after Mass, both inside and outside of the church.
 - c. Presider can tell congregation to go to these ministers if they need any help or information.
 - d. These ministers could go to coffee and doughnuts area after Mass to help introduce newcomers to parishioners to make them feel more welcome.

2. During an appropriate time within the Mass, the presider should invite new people to stand and be welcomed. There could also be a personal invitation from the pulpit to coffee and doughnuts after Mass.

3. Be open to the needs of Hispanic Members. Approach active Hispanic members of the parish and ask if they can identify any specific needs that are not currently being met.

4. Small Group Communities - Size of the parish community can be a hindrance to effectively bring new members of the parish into the community.
 - a. Alleviate this issue by dividing the parish (e.g. by geography or by common interests) into small group communities that can meet in the homes of parishioners.
 - b. Implementation details (such as choosing small group coordinators) is left to the Pastoral Council.
 - c. Can be accomplished by having a family in each neighborhood open their home to socialize with other local parishioners, and perhaps have ministry leaders come to speak about their ministry. Bible study and discussion groups could also be started, if there was a demand. Each local group could develop according to the needs of the people attending.

PART II: ADULT FAITH FORMATION:

1. Introduction:
 - a. Survey indicated need for several types of Adult Faith Formation
 - b. Since the survey, significant strides have been made in this area
 - i. Training of a core team of catechists
 - ii. Development of several programs
 - iii. Because of this, committee focus was on program development as well as how to attract parishioners to the various programs that may be offered.

2. Two times when people are typically ready to explore AFF opportunities:
 - a. When some aspect of a person's faith is being challenged in some way
 - b. When a person feels a need to know or explore some aspect of their faith or the Church.

3. AFF Program requirements:
 - a. Capable of addressing both of above stages
 - b. Recognize that not everyone enters a particular stage at the same time of their life.
 - c. Flexible enough to recognize current events-type issues (spiritual, clerical or secular) of interest or concern
 - d. In short, curriculum should be in place that is capable of "feeding parishioners when they are ready to be fed."
 - e. Requires both a broad range of topics targeted at many levels of spiritual development and a trained group of people ready to teach those programs.
 - f. Publicity of available curriculum choices should be included in various public communications modes presented within the parish, including homilies, the website, the Bulletin, and the information board introduced above

4. AFF Program Content:
 - a. Basic or fundamental programs that explore basic "Why, How and What" of the Church and scripture
 - b. Current-events related programs (e.g. what the church says about cloning, AIDS, etc.) to aid parishioners in making informed decisions about real-life issues
 - c. Fundamental topics should be repeated on a regular basis
 - d. Program content examples:
 - i. Topics related to their primary interactions with the Church and the parish (e.g. The Mass, Eucharist, etc.)
 - ii. liturgies, or "liturgy-like" programs (e.g., novenas, missions, feast day celebrations, etc.)

- iii. Overarching year-long programs based on existing or proposed themes (e.g. Year of the Eucharist, Year of Reconciliation, etc.)

5. Mechanism for Program Development and Publicity

- a. Hold AFF sessions that take advantage of people already being on campus:
 - i. Sunday mornings
 - ii. During RE or Life teen sessions
- b. Incorporate teaching within the context of the Mass itself, such as through specifically-targeted homilies
- c. Create lectionary-based programs for small groups that can be done remotely but could be “advertised” within the weekend Masses as well as using other parish modes of communication
- d. AFF programs do not need to be formal “teaching” programs. Other faith formation opportunities can be provided for parishioners to come together during the week to experience faith through communal prayer, weekday liturgies and other types of prayer gatherings including Bible Study.

6. Structure to provide AFF Opportunities:

- a. Form a central AFF leadership group tasked with the following missions. (NOTE: Currently under leadership of John Osman – recommendation is that John head this up if not already in place):
 - i. Program development
 - ii. Catechist development
- b. Program development should include materials to facilitate catechist presenting those materials as well as mechanism for evaluation / feedback.
- c. AFF leadership group collaborate with STM Communications Coordinator in presenting timely information about programs
- d. As AFF programs expand and responsibilities of the AFF Coordinator grow, consider creation of a paid staff position

PART III: FAMILY-RELATED MINISTRIES:

1. Introduction:

- a. STM currently offers many family-related activities targeted at parents, couples, children, and togetherness
- b. Concern is that we offer so much that time together as families is being sacrificed.

2. Building / Strengthening Families:

- a. Family-related ministries should emphasize that activities should be done as a family and reflect on effect of activity on family relationships.
- b. Encourage a “less is more” message with respect to the busyness of today’s families. Focus on spending more time together as a family
- c. The parish should foster an environment conducive to family time by scheduling a “family night” once a week.
 - i. Suggestion that Pastor encourage staff to schedule activities and programs so that one night a week is free to families to spend time together and no activities are scheduled to take place on campus that evening.
 - ii. Should be planned and promoted so that parishioners are aware of the importance of family togetherness. This effort will take considerable effort in planning, cooperation and publicity and will likely take three to five years to fully implement.
 - iii. The Communication Coordinator should be involved in ensuring that the presence of these programs is effectively introduced to the parish.
- d. Pastoral Advisory Council should foster an environment in which organization of other activities targeted at family togetherness and reflection is encouraged:
 - i. Family retreats for staff and ministries
 - ii. Emphasize school-related opportunities offered by STM – pre-school and Holy Family Catholic School

3. Leadership Development:

- a. Develop leadership programs that emphasize the parish’s message related to families. Perhaps use a similar method as is used for training of AFF catechists.

- b. Necessary to proper program development is a central organizer/leader. Pastoral council, Pastor and Finance Council should consider creating a position (either staff or volunteer) with responsibility for developing family-related ministry leadership programs (NOTE: could be combined with ministry coordinator position discussed earlier)
- c. Examples of topics/skills to be included in leadership programs are:
 - i. Establish structure for family-related ministries that includes prayer, scripture, reflection and sharing
 - ii. Emphasize prayer and reflection within the context of family-related ministries
 - iii. Discuss how to get people to slow down and adopt a “less is more” philosophy
 - iv. Teach family-related ministry leaders how to discern the next generation of leaders in those ministries
- d. Family-related Ministries Coordinator should consider effective mechanisms to spreading the message to the parish and should work with the Communications Coordinator:
 - i. Move from “action” to “reflection”
 - ii. Consider sponsoring evenings of reflection
 - iii. Communicate the purpose of each family-related ministry

PART IV: CONCLUSIONS:

1. The Pastoral Advisory Council, ministries and committees implicated by this report are encouraged to cooperate and coordinate in the implementation of these suggestions.
2. Pastoral Advisory Council should review the status of the implementation of these goals on a periodic basis, not to exceed annually.
3. The Pastoral Advisory Council should develop criteria by which to evaluate the success and status of the implementation of the goals
4. The Committee suggests that a new Long-Range Planning Committee be formed in or about 2011 to undertake an appropriate process to develop a new set of long-range goals and objectives for the parish.

Members of Long Range Planning Committee

- Pat Aldridge
- Jim Casey
- Q Johnson
- Frank Kelly
- Cynthia Klaer-Jordan
- Steve Kliman
- Carolyn Kostelecky
- Beth Kuhn
- Debra Lohrstorfer
- Cheryl “Max” Maxwell
- Kelli Merchant
- John Osman
- Alex Rodriguez
- Don Rosenberg
- Gene Saienga
- Mary Wilkie
- Jon Geld (Organizer)
- Pat Stankus (Facilitator and Organizer)
- Msgr. Elmer Holtman (Pastor and Organizer)