
St. Stephen the Martyr

2019 - 2024 Pastoral Plan

June 1, 2019



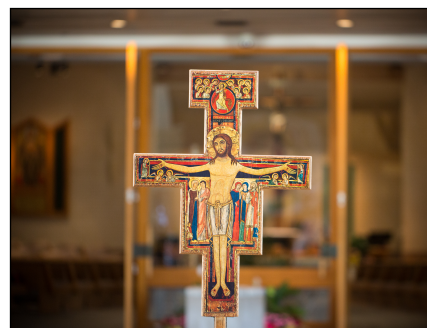
St. Stephen the Martyr
CATHOLIC CHURCH
Encounter, Know, Proclaim

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Executive Summary

St. Stephen the Martyr Catholic Church was founded in 1989 and serves over 13,000 parishioners. Responding to the call by Archbishop George J. Lucas in late 2017 for parishes to renew their commitment to pastoral planning she embarked on an 18-month process to re-envision the future of the parish. Anchored in the rich evangelical tradition of the Church and flowing from the pastoral vision of the Archdiocese of Omaha a new mission statement was created for the parish: St. Stephen the Martyr Catholic Church is a community for all people to encounter Christ, know Christ, and proclaim Christ. Through the lens of this mission statement, an analysis of the parish was completed, along the seven dimensions of parish life, so that we could better understand how well we were living out our mission. This analysis included several opportunities for parishioners to provide their feedback through a variety of mechanisms.



This analysis led to the creation of a vision statement for each dimension of parish life. These vision statements, if realized, would ensure that St. Stephen the Martyr parish was truly living out its mission.

1. Community - To be a welcoming community of faith where all may grow as disciples of Christ who love and serve God and neighbor.
2. Worship - Provide a consistent level of excellence in the liturgical experience that enables all to glorify God and grow in holiness.
3. Leadership - To model Christ-centered leadership by developing as disciples, establishing a culture of unity and collaboration, recognizing and engaging the gifts of all, while providing clear direction.
4. Formation - To invite and equip all to become disciples through unified catechetical formation.
5. Stewardship - Create a culture that leads all to an increased understanding and appreciation of the blessings that the Lord has bestowed and a greater desire to share those blessings.
6. Social Justice - To embrace Catholic teaching to support outreach ministries for all who are in need of love, compassion and the mercy of God.
7. Evangelization - Provide opportunities for all to encounter Christ so they are inspired to proclaim Him.

A series of goals and objectives were crafted for each dimension covering a five year period. If all of the goals and objectives are accomplished then the vision will have become reality. The main goals are listed below.

Community

1. Work with all ministries, staff and volunteer, leadership to develop a program to recruit, retain, and recognize parish volunteers.
2. Work with all parish ministries to develop a New Member program.
3. Identify and research current parish ministries to determine current and future need and support.
4. Provide outreach through Scripture based 7 Corporal and Spiritual Works of Mercy.
5. Develop a culture of inclusion where all are heard and feel involved.
6. Initiate a plan for a St. Stephen's Unite Day.

Worship

1. To provide parishioners with ongoing catechesis regarding worship and liturgy as a means to increase full, active, conscious, participation.
2. Employ technology to reach a broader audience.
3. Utilize liturgically appropriate music to aid in drawing hearts to a deeper encounter with Christ.
4. Offer and document training to all Liturgy volunteers.
5. Identify the current and future needs of Sanctuary.
6. Coordinate Mass and Reconciliation times with surrounding parishes.

Leadership

1. The Leadership Team will develop a personal growth plan around discipleship.
2. Establish a culture of collaboration.
3. Offer parish-wide Formation Day.
4. Design and Implement a Parish Business Management, Operations, and Accountability structure that manages the daily operational aspects of the parish, which is led by lay personnel and parishioners, allowing our priests to focus greater attention on faith and liturgy matters of the Parish.

Formation

1. Formation Leadership Team will collaborate and provide staff development on all existing Faith Formation programs.
2. Formation Leadership Team will develop a Faith Formation communication strategy.
3. Formation Leadership Team will create a Faith Formation Participation baseline.
4. Formation Leadership Team will identify areas of improvement and implement a unified plan.
5. Increase participation in Formation programs by 50% collectively.

Stewardship

1. Design a multi-year, strategic development and stewardship plan that will generate the funds necessary to advance the parish mission.
2. Establish and cultivate donor relationships.
3. Identify the key income programs (e.g., stewardship, planned giving, etc.), special events, and fundraising events necessary to deliver the current budget, and the multi-year development and stewardship financial plans mentioned above.
4. Determine the necessary capital campaigns needed to support the multi-year facilities plan mentioned below in conjunction with the Finance Council.
5. Form a Development and Stewardship Advisory Committee.

Social Justice

1. Review current services within the community to evaluate need, reduce duplication to ensure consistent and measurable benchmarks.
2. Work with Communications staff and program volunteers to inform parishioners of community needs.
3. Transform parish-wide groups and individuals to deliver services to others in need.

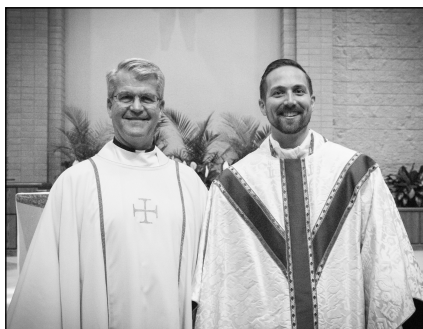
Evangelization

1. Implement a New Evangelization of staff and engaged parishioners.
2. Leverage technology to extend our New Evangelization efforts beyond the parish walls.
3. Launch evangelization activities targeted towards fallen away Catholics as well as nonbelievers.
4. Transform St. Stephen to a parish focussed on proclaiming Christ.

This plan is not intended to be a static document: to simply capture a moment in the history of St. Stephen the Martyr parish. Rather, it will be living document. Under the guidance of the Pastoral Council the plan will be reviewed quarterly to ensure goals and objectives are being met. Additionally, the plan will be updated on an annual basis. Completed goals and objectives or those that are no longer relevant will be removed and new goals and objectives added. This will ensure that strategic planning remains an area of continued focus in the management and operation of St. Stephen the Martyr parish.

Introduction

St. Stephen the Martyr Catholic Church is a parish of the Archdiocese Of Omaha located in South West Omaha. The parish was founded in 1989 and currently has over 13,000 registered parishioners making it one of the largest parishes in the Midwest.



Last year, over 150 children received First Holy Communion at St. Stephen the Martyr, over 200 children were confirmed and 14 weddings performed. Our 5-day parish school educates over 700 children and our religious education program serves over 800 children. St. Stephen the Martyr parish has a vibrant adult faith formation program as well and numerous opportunities for members to get involved both within the parish as well as in the broader Omaha community.

Plan Background

In late 2016, Archbishop George Lucas introduced a new vision for the Archdiocese of Omaha, One Church, Encountering Jesus, Equipping Disciples, Living Mercy. As a part of the implementation of that vision, he invited all parishes to renew their focus on pastoral planning. To facilitate that effort, in the Fall of 2017 the Archdiocese brought in Fr. James Mallon, author of Divine Renovation, to host a workshop in Norfolk with the priests and lay leaders of the parishes of the Archdiocese of Omaha. St. Stephen the Martyr, under the direction of the Pastoral Council, formed a Pastoral Planning Subcommittee to attend the conference and begin the work of developing a new pastoral plan for St. Stephen the Martyr Parish. It took over a year to develop the plan laid out in this document. Along the way, the team had the opportunity to solicit input from countless parishioners and staff members as the team worked through a series of phases in developing this plan.

At the same time as this plan was being developed, Archbishop Lucas challenged pastors and parish leaders to reenvision parish life: specifically the management and operational structure of the parish. In the face of a reduced number of priests available for parish assignment, the need to shift the daily operational aspects of the parish to the lay staff has become apparent. This will free up the priest to be available to

attend to the spiritual life and needs of the parishioners, the parish, and the larger community served by the parish.

This plan is intended to be a living document that is carried forward and updated on a regular basis. More will be said about that in the closing remarks. Ultimately, the successful implementation of this plan will take the combined effort of all of the people of St. Stephen the Martyr parish. This plan is not intended to guide the actions of just our priests or the staff or the parish. Rather, all of us should look to it as we discern how we can better live out our Baptismal mandate to carry Jesus into the world.

Our Mission

In order to develop the plan, the Pastoral Planning team determined that first, a new mission statement needed to be developed for the parish. Through its history, St. Stephen the Martyr has had a few different mission statements and at the time this planning process was started, there was some confusion as to what the current mission statement of the parish was. After attending the workshop in Norfolk, the Pastoral Planning Subcommittee met several times over many weeks as it worked through the development of a new mission statement. A few key pieces of information were at the forefront of the minds of the committee members as they wrestled with this mission statement. First was the mission of the Universal Catholic Church encapsulated in the Great Commission found in the Gospel of Matthew, “Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you.” (28:19-20) Second, was the previously mentioned new vision outlined for the Archdiocese of Omaha: One Church, Encountering Jesus, Equipping Disciples, Living Mercy. Lastly was the story of the Disciples on the Road to Emmaus found in Chapter 24 of the Gospel of Luke. In this story, Jesus journeys with the Disciples as they move from a lack of understanding to possessing an evangelical fervor.

The Pastoral Planning Subcommittee believed it was important that the new mission statement for St. Stephen the Martyr parish was clearly in harmony with Archbishop Lucas’s vision for the Archdiocese, as well as the larger mission of the Church. With that goal in mind the committee prayerfully reflected upon these three pieces of information and formed the new mission statement of St. Stephen the Martyr parish:

St. Stephen the Martyr Catholic Church is a community for all people to encounter Christ, know Christ, and proclaim Christ.

This mission statement was formally presented to the parish in December 2017. A thorough explanation of the Mission Statement can be found in Appendix A. It is important that everyone understands the motivation and the themes at the heart of this mission statement because it serves as the foundation upon which the rest of this plan rests.

The Voice of Our Parishioners

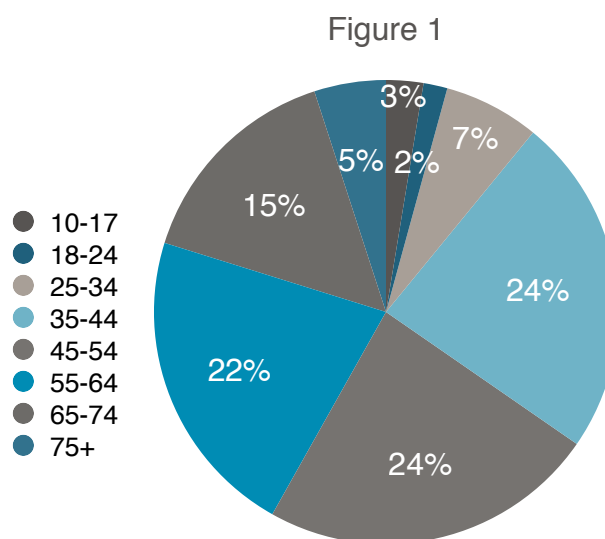
Once the mission statement was developed, the Pastoral Planning Subcommittee determined that it needed to hear from the parishioners of St. Stephen the Martyr. To start this process, a series of seven listening sessions, six with the adults of the parish and one with the youth, were held during January and February of 2018. These listening sessions pivoted around three key questions. First, what is St. Stephen the Martyr doing well that has allowed you to Encounter, Know, and Proclaim Christ? Second, what could St. Stephen the Martyr improve upon to better allow you to Encounter, Know, & Proclaim Christ? Lastly, what would you like to see us accomplish in the next 2 to 3 years? Participants were provided with an opportunity to share their thoughts on these questions in writing as well as through small and large group discussion. These sessions provided the pastoral planning subcommittee with an enormous amount of valuable data and clear themes emerged. A couple of the most common themes are listed below.

- ◆ What is the parish doing well
 - ◆ Parish is welcoming
 - ◆ Positive impression of priests
- ◆ What could the parish improve upon
 - ◆ Communication
 - ◆ More opportunity for outreach
 - ◆ Parish and school unification
- ◆ What would you like to see us accomplish
 - ◆ Youth and young adult outreach
 - ◆ Space needs to be addressed

Survey Results

The listening sessions were followed up by a survey. This survey took the themes that emerged through the listening sessions and presented those themes in a series of forty-eight questions divided along the seven dimensions of parish life: Community, Worship, Leadership, Formation, Stewardship, Social Justice, and Evangelization.

The survey received 540 responses, broken out by age range in Figure 1. The respondents represent a fairly engaged cross-section of the parish population based upon



their reported mass attendance; evidenced in Figure 2, 93% of survey respondents attend Mass at least weekly.

Of note in the survey was the strong support for some level of remodeling and expansion of the Church. Figure 3 shows that over 50% of survey respondents either Agree or Strongly Agree that remodeling the Church will be needed in the coming years. If you consider those who were neutral that

number climbs to over 75%.

Figure 3

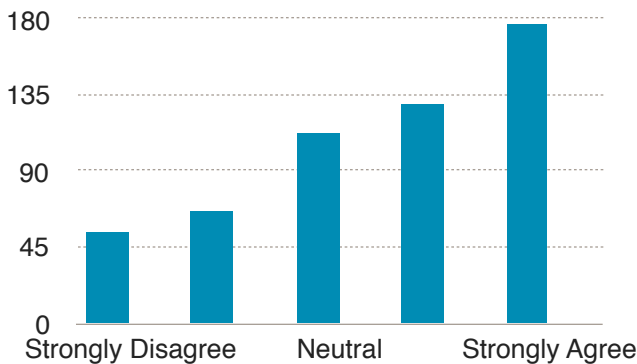
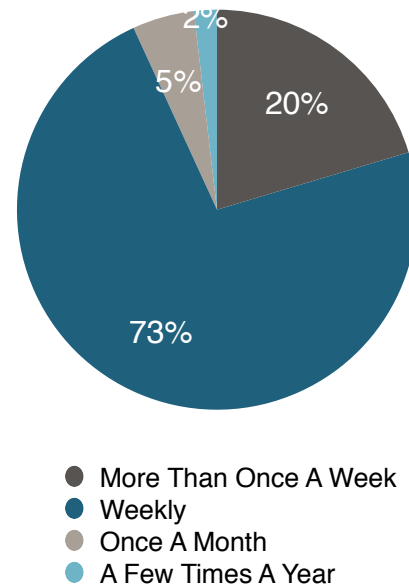


Figure 2



The survey clearly validated two of the biggest themes heard throughout the listening sessions. First, there is a strong desire for greater unification between the 5-Day School and RE Programs (Figure 4). The question asked if you thought the collaboration between the program was strong. Only 25% of respondents either Agreed or Strongly Agreed with that statement. Additionally, there was a strong desire for greater clarity in providing everyone with a faith formation pathway (Figure 5). Under 40% of

Figure 4

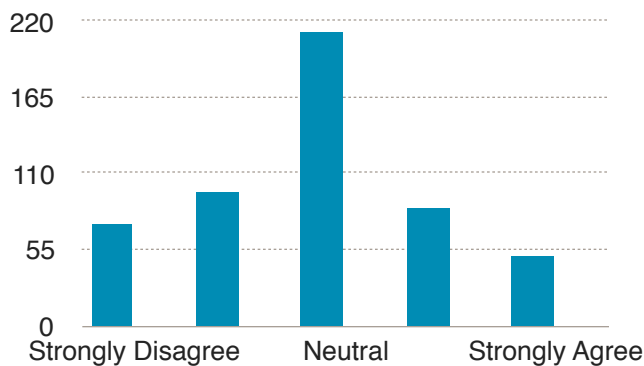
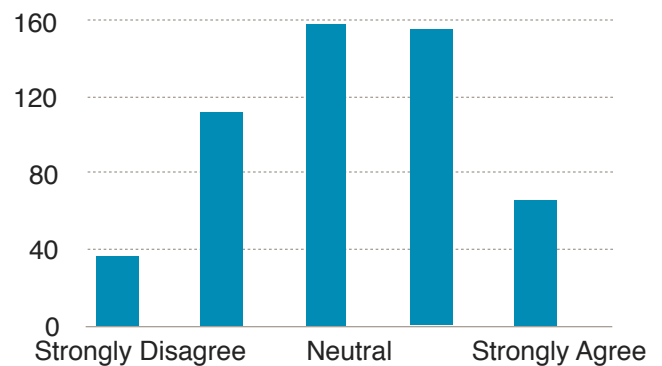


Figure 5



respondents indicated that they either Agreed or Strongly Agreed that the faith formation pathway was understandable.

The survey also provided a qualitative section where parishioners were able to express their thoughts on the current state of the parish. This data was invaluable in helping to develop the focus of this plan. There were several themes expressed in this section of the survey, a few of which are highlighted here. First, there is a clear desire to improve the experience of the Mass. Second, there is a strong desire for a clear faith formation program across the entire family spectrum: children, young families, and older adults. Third, more needs to be done to minister to our young adult population. Lastly, through all of the comments there was a clear passion for St. Stephen the Martyr Parish and a strong desire to make St. Stephen the Martyr the best parish it can be -- the parish that God wants it to be.

State of the Parish

All of the data were analyzed by the Pastoral Planning Team and a SWOT analysis was completed for each of the seven dimensions. This analysis listed St. Stephen the Martyr Parish's strengths and weaknesses along with the opportunities and threats she faces across each of the seven dimensions of parish life.

A SWOT can be viewed in a negative light, as it can focus on those things that are wrong within an organization. However, the intention of this SWOT was two-fold. First, to organize the data that was presented to the Pastoral Planning Subcommittee through the data gathering efforts. Second, to provide a baseline: a launching point upon which a future vision for St. Stephen the Martyr Parish could be established. The SWOT analysis was not used to judge the effectiveness of any area or individual within the parish. Below is a highlight of some of the key data contained in the SWOT organized by dimension.

Community	
Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Welcoming community.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Opportunities for young adults.Providing adequate opportunities for families with small children
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Incorporation of new ideas of what it means to be church.Help parishioners discern their role in the parish.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Overall level of busyness.

Worship	
Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Priests - both reverence for the Mass as well as their homilies. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of visual beauty in the Church. No tabernacle in the church.
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strong support for remodeling including moving the tabernacle back into the main church. Improved accessibility in the Church, especially to the ambo, for those with physical limitations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ability to attend Mass elsewhere. Decreasing number of priests.

Leadership	
Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Open and frequent communication. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Culture that encourages gossip and cliques. Insufficient collaboration across all areas of parish and school.
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Transparency related to parish financial position. Increase collaboration across all groups. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Apathy as it relates to changes being effected at St. Stephen.

Formation	
Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ample opportunities to deepen faith across all age ranges. Welcoming to individuals of all faith backgrounds across all programs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Siloed nature of the formation programs at St. Stephen.
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strong support for a more unified approach regarding faith formation across all age ranges. Greater communication regarding all of the programs and opportunities available. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Time commitments. Lack of family support for those in formation.

Stewardship	
Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Many volunteer opportunities are available in the parish for anyone wanting to get involved. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not a clear picture of the parish financials throughout the year. Can be challenging to get involved.
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Be more transparent with financials throughout the year. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Volunteers who attempt to get involved and are turned away will take their talents elsewhere.

Social Justice	
Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Opportunities for community outreach. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Poor communication regarding the number of outreach opportunities that exist.
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Targeted effort to get more retirees involved. Program to educate parishioners about social justice issues. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Perceived higher level of engagement by other Catholic and Protestant churches.

Evangelization	
Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strong focus by both archdiocesan and parish leadership on evangelization. Core group of extremely engaged parishioners that can be leveraged to launch a New Evangelization effort. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Parochial mindset making it difficult to see the larger community. Insufficient opportunities provided to share faith outside of the parish.
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Large number of nominally engaged parishioners that can be targeted with a New Evangelization effort. Parishioners requesting additional and varied opportunities for further catechesis. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Numerous Protestant denomination specifically targeting nominally engaged Catholics for conversion. Shifting mindset and expectation of Millennials and generation Z-ers as it relates to religion and authority. Changing mentality as it relates to the importance of religion in one's life.

Vision for the Future

Once all of the data gathered through the listening sessions and survey was analyzed, the next phase of the planning process called for the development of a vision statement for each dimension of parish life. At this point in the process, the work shifted from the Pastoral Planning Subcommittee to the larger pastoral council. Together, the council developed vision statements for each dimension of parish life.

These statements were to accomplish five objectives. First, they should allow St. Stephen to maximize its strengths. In other words, not lose those things that have made us successful. Second, they should allow us to address our weakness. Third, the vision should put St. Stephen in a position to capitalize on the opportunities before it. Fourth, the vision should neutralize any threats. Finally, the vision should paint a clear picture of the parish that St. Stephen the Martyr desires to be in the next five years. If all of these vision statements are successfully implemented St. Stephen the Martyr parish will be well positioned to live out its mission to be a community for all people to encounter Christ, know Christ, and proclaim Christ.

Community

To be a welcoming community of faith where all may grow as disciples of Christ who love and serve God and neighbor.

Worship

Provide a consistent level of excellence in the liturgical experience that enables all to glorify God and grow in holiness.

Leadership

To model Christ-centered leadership by developing as disciples, establishing a culture of unity and collaboration, recognizing and engaging the gifts of all, while providing clear direction.

Formation

To invite and equip all to become disciples through unified catechetical formation.

Stewardship

Create a culture that leads all to an increased understanding and appreciation of the blessings that the Lord has bestowed and a greater desire to share those blessings.

Social Justice

To embrace Catholic teaching to support outreach ministries for all who are in need of love, compassion and the mercy of God.

Evangelization

Provide opportunities for all to encounter Christ so they are inspired to proclaim Him.

Goals And Objectives

After completing the vision statements, the next phase of the process was to develop goals for each dimension. At the heart of these goals is the desire to realize the vision for each dimension. In other words, if the goals are realized then the vision should become a reality. Each goal is accompanied by a series of objectives breaking down the goal into smaller milestones.



Community

1. Work with all ministries, staff and volunteer, leadership to develop a program to recruit, retain, and recognize parish volunteers by January 2021.
 - 1.1. Initiate a Parish Volunteer Program based upon a talents database as well as the Catholic Spiritual Gifts Inventory to better identify individual gifts or charisms to enable all to be powerful channels of God's love and redeeming presence in our world by March 2020.
 - 1.2. Train leadership staff and volunteers in the program to take and score the inventory as well as create a strategy to record and utilize in parish programs by July 2020.
2. Work with all parish ministries to develop a New Member program by January 2020.
 - 2.1. Initiate an orientation process; including phone calls, personal visits, and face to face gatherings by July 2019.

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- 2.2. Identify current active parishioners to mentor/welcome new parishioners - by September 2019.
 3. Identify and research current parish ministries to determine current and future need and support by January 2022.
 - 3.1. Meet with appropriate groups and points of contact to document their goals and process to achieve by July 2020.
 - 3.2. Review current ministries that are mission based and to evaluate current need as well as possible growth for involvement by January 2021.
 - 3.3. Work with Communications staff to inform parishioners of current ministries to encourage involvement by January 2022.
 4. Provide outreach through Scripture based 7 Corporal and Spiritual Works of Mercy by January 2024.
 - 4.1. Work with other ministries to continually provide guidance and encouragement to help others apply knowledge learned thru Scripture (ongoing).
 - 4.2. Model servant behavior and help all to live a life of respect and dignity (ongoing).
 5. Develop a culture of inclusion where all are heard and feel involved by January 2020.
 - 5.1. Create a mechanism to solicit feedback by utilizing all communication avenues. (i.e. written, verbal, computer) by July 2019.
 - 5.2. Respond to all individuals whose contact information is given with appreciation and follow up outcomes as needed by September 2019.
 - 5.3. Share the feedback to appropriate stakeholders by November 2019.
 6. Initiate a plan for a St. Stephen's Unite Day by January 2024.
 - 6.1. Attend the Archdiocese Unite Day and use as a model by June 2019.
 - 6.2. Involve all 7 Dimensions of Parish as well as the School (ongoing).

Worship

1. To provide parishioners with ongoing catechesis regarding worship and liturgy as a means to increase full, active, conscious, participation by January 2020.
 - 1.1. Develop continuing education with regard to worship and liturgy in collaboration with communication and evangelization.
 - 1.2. Foster continuing education including lectures and family faith formation geared across the entire age spectrum of parishioners.
 - 1.3. Provide opportunities for deeper encounter and knowledge of our Lord through para-liturgical and non-liturgical worship.
2. Employ technology to reach a broader audience by January 2020.
 - 2.1. Assess available technology and look at improvements.
 - 2.2. Convey using multiple communication channels, including videos.
 - 2.3. Post to social media, as appropriate.

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3. Utilize liturgically appropriate music to aid in drawing hearts to a deeper encounter with Christ by January 2020.
 - 3.1. Ensure a level of excellence and diversity.
 - 3.2. Blend Catholic traditional music and introduce new Catholic music, as determined.
 - 3.3. Continue education of music ministers through sacred music workshops.
 4. Offer and document training to all Liturgy volunteers by January 2020.
 - 4.1. Schedule in person, refresher courses with hands-on practice.
 - 4.2. Develop and initiate Standard Procedures regarding criteria for continuing education.
 - 4.3. Document all trainings as an individual.
 5. Identify the current and future needs of Sanctuary by January 2021.
 - 5.1. Create a small advisory group to solicit feedback from appropriate stakeholders.
 - 5.2. Create SWOT analysis based upon feedback and communicate with designated personnel.
 6. Coordinate Mass and Reconciliation times with surrounding parishes by January 2022.
 - 6.1. Work with surrounding parishes to develop a Sacramental schedule.
 - 6.2. Cross-promote through each parish's communication channels.

Leadership

1. The Leadership Team will develop a personal growth plan around discipleship by May 2020.
 - 1.1. Develop Framework
 - 1.1.1. Identify common education materials
 - 1.1.2. Develop a common understanding of discipleship
 - 1.1.3. Complete a personal assessment of discipleship
 - 1.1.4. Develop personal growth plan based on assessment
 - 1.2. The Leadership Team's direct reports as well as members of the councils and boards of St. Stephen the Martyr will develop a personal growth plan around discipleship by May 2021.
 - 1.3. Extend discipleship personal growth plan opportunities to ministry heads by May 2022.
 - 1.4. Expand discipleship personal growth plan process to all those in leadership roles by May 2022.
2. Establish a culture of collaboration by May 2024
 - 2.1. Establish a regular retreat for the Leadership Team
 - 2.2. Develop a clear working relationship between the Leadership Team and Pastoral Council by May 2020.
 - 2.3. Establish a collaboration summit of the Pastoral Council, Leadership Team, and Boards for the purpose of yearly planning and relationship development by Fall 2020.
 - 2.4. Establish a retreat/summit for all in leadership roles to pray, collaborate, and build relationship by May 2021.
3. Offer parish-wide Formation Day by May 2024.
4. Design and Implement a Parish Business Management, Operations, and Accountability structure that manages the daily operational aspects of the parish, [including (i) general business operations,

(ii) finance and accounting, (iii) human resources (HR), (iv) development/stewardship, (v) facility management, (vi) Communications, and (vii) information technology (IT)] which is led by lay personnel and parishioners, allowing our priests to focus greater attention on faith and liturgy matters of the parish by June 2020.

4.1. Finance & Accounting

4.1.1. Prepare annual financial budgets and projections that reflect the amounts needed for the advancement of the parish mission from FY 2021 (i.e., current budget) through FY 2025, with annual budgets completed by March 31st of each year, and the multi-year projections completed by June 30 of each year.

4.1.2. Implement a process (in conjunction with the Finance Council) to communicate parish financial performance and condition on a frequent basis, with an emphasis on transparency and clarity

4.2. Design and implement standard HR processes and practices across the parish, including job descriptions, accountability metrics, and annual performance reviews.

4.3. Develop a comprehensive facilities plan and related funding sources to advance the parish mission.

4.3.1. Engage an outside firm to provide the necessary expertise in assessing our multi-year, facilities plan – target final report date of no later than May 2020.

4.3.2. Based on this, prepare a comprehensive, multi-year facilities plan no later than June 2020.

4.3.3. Determine our desired long-term remodel or replacement of our worship space no later than August 2020.

4.4. Develop a comprehensive internal and external communications strategy.

4.5. Develop and implement an IT strategic plan no later than September 2020.

4.5.1. Determine the parish information and communication needs, and implement the necessary hardware, software tools and processes to fulfill those needs.

4.5.2. Evaluate the parishes current database, software, and communication tools, and upgrade them to more modern software tools and processes.

4.5.3. Implement the necessary software tools, skills, and processes to efficiently and effectively track and report on all donations of time, talent, and treasures, and have the information and processes necessary to communicate with parishioners on a timely and effective basis no later than May 2020.

Formation

1. Formation Leadership Team will collaborate and provide staff development on all existing Faith Formation programs by May 2020.

1.1. Utilize survey results to assess existing programs to determine specific areas of growth by February 2020.

1.2. Create one central communication location detailing all existing Adult, School, RE, and

Youth Faith Formation opportunities by February 2020.

- 1.3. Offer 2 staff development opportunities, per year, to unify effort in relation to existing programs by April 2020.
2. Formation Leadership Team will develop a Faith Formation communication strategy by May 2020.
 - 2.1. Consult with Communications Director by February 2020.
 - 2.2. Execute strategy by May 2020.
3. Formation Leadership Team will create a Faith Formation Participation baseline by area by May 2021.
 - 3.1. Create a tool to track participation and success of Faith Formation programs by May 2020.
 - 3.2. Meet twice per year to discuss trends beginning May 2021.
4. Formation Leadership Team will identify areas of improvement and implement a unified plan by May 2022.
 - 4.1. Review data from the previous 2 years.
 - 4.2. Create necessary plan(s) and implement.
5. Increase participation in Formation programs by 50% collectively by May 2024.
 - 5.1. Review each program's growth/decline semi-annually and determine future viability.
 - 5.2. Adjust programs and plans as needed - ongoing.

Stewardship

1. Design a multi-year, strategic development and stewardship plan that will generate the funds necessary to advance the parish mission by December 2019
 - 1.1. Ensure all seven dimensions (Community, Worship, Leadership, Faith Formation, Stewardship, Social Justice, and Evangelization) have the financial, material, and volunteer resources required to advance the Parish Mission, Vision, and Goals.
2. Establish and cultivate donor relationships by June 2021
 - 2.1. Work with the Community and Evangelization committees to promote a culture of stewardship in the parish.
3. Identify the key income programs (e.g., stewardship, planned giving, etc.), special events, and fundraising events necessary to deliver the current budget, and the multi-year development and stewardship financial plans mentioned above by June 2021
 - 3.1. Critically evaluate and determine the right balance between evangelization and community building events, and income producing events.
4. Determine the necessary capital campaigns needed to support the multi-year facilities plan mentioned below in conjunction with the Finance Council by June 2020
 - 4.1. Communicate with the Omaha Archdiocese for approval and recommendation.
 - 4.2. Determine communications necessary for approval and support from parishioners.
5. Form a Development and Stewardship Advisory Committee no later than June, 2019.
 - 5.1. Create a Committee charter and select 6-8 Parishioners capable of assisting in preparing and executing on a multi-year strategic development and stewardship plan.

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- 5.2. Implement a process to periodically report the Committee's activities and progress with the Finance Council and Pastoral Council.

Social Justice

1. Review current services within the community to evaluate need, reduce duplication to ensure consistent and measurable benchmarks by July of 2020.
 - 1.1. Review and document number of people served per program and frequency of delivering services by July 2019.
 - 1.2. Research comparable services within the community by October 2019.
 - 1.3. Develop Standard Operating Procedures for current services, including how to sign up for service hours by March 2020.
2. Work with Communications staff and program volunteers to inform parishioners of community needs by January 2021.
 - 2.1. Educate parishioners of Catholic teachings of Social Justice by July 2019.
 - 2.2. Solicit from parishioners, topics of interest for education by January 2020.
3. Transform parish-wide groups and individuals to deliver services to others in need by January 2022.
 - 3.1. Deliver call to action and invite others to help with projects and ministries by January 2020.
 - 3.2. Creatively and consistently offer varying ways to communicate community needs by January 2021.

Evangelization

1. Implement a New Evangelization of staff and engaged parishioners by Lent 2019.
 - 1.1. Deliver Strengths and Collaboration workshop to key Parish & Ministry leaders by January 2019.
 - 1.2. Establish a baseline budget for Evangelization & Catechesis by January 2019.
 - 1.3. Implement new hospitality ministry by October 2018.
 - 1.4. Launch Martyr Jump Starter program to provide evangelization and catechetical opportunities by January 2019.
 - 1.5. Launch lenten conversion engine program by Lent 2019.
2. Leverage technology to extend our New Evangelization efforts beyond the parish walls by March 2020.
 - 2.1. Launch live streaming of daily mass and weekend mass homilies by September 2019.
 - 2.2. Evaluate and select options for remote participation in faith formation opportunities by March 2020.
3. Launch evangelization activities targeted towards fallen away Catholics as well as nonbelievers by January 2022.
 - 3.1. Integrate an evangelical component to the Parish Festival by August 2019.

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- 3.2. Increase participation in parish outreach opportunities by 50% by January 2022.
 - 3.3. Launch and host two annual parish outreach events by January 2022.
 - 4. Transform St. Stephen to a parish focussed on proclaiming Christ by January 2024.
 - 4.1. Define and launch a clear faith formation pathway by January 2024.
 - 4.2. Infuse parish culture with a discipleship mentality by January 2024.

Concluding Remarks

This plan is intended to do two things. First, this plan provides a foundation upon which active strategic planning can become part of the fabric of St. Stephen. The Pastoral Council, under the direction of our pastor, will be responsible for keeping this document alive. The plan will be monitored throughout the course of the year to ensure goals are being met. In addition, it will be reviewed annually and adjusted. Goals will be removed upon completion or if changing conditions make them obsolete. New goals will be added as well. Finally, periodic surveys will be conducted to continue to receive feedback and information from the parishioners of St. Stephen.

Second, this plan begins to address many of the concerns that were raised by our parishioners during the course of our listening sessions and surveys. It is the sincere hope of the Pastoral Council that you can see how the areas of concern and interest expressed during the listening sessions and survey are being addressed through this plan. Addressing these will take time. The Pastoral Council asks for two things. First and foremost is your prayers for our parish as we begin to implement this plan. Second, is your patience. Mistakes will be made along the way and adjustments will need to occur. Together, we can make the vision for our parish expressed in this plan a reality. Together, we can make St. Stephen the Martyr Catholic Church a community for all people to encounter Christ, know Christ, and proclaim Christ.

God Bless!

Appendix A - Goal Ownership

Community	
Goal	Owner
1	Director of Pastoral Care
2	Director Of Evangelization & Catechesis / Director Of Operations
3	Director of Pastoral Care / Director Of Evangelization & Catechesis
4	Director of Pastoral Care
5	Director of Development / Director Of Operations
6	Director of Pastoral Care / Director Of Evangelization & Catechesis / Director Of Operations / Director of Development
Worship	
Goal	Owner
1	Associate Pastor
2	Associate Pastor
3	Associate Pastor
4	Associate Pastor
5	Associate Pastor
6	Associate Pastor
Leadership	
Goal	Owner
1	Pastor / Director Of Operations
2	Pastor / Director Of Operations
3	Pastor / Director Of Operations / Director Of Evangelization & Catechesis
4	Director Of Operations

Formation	
Goal	Owner
1	Director Of Evangelization & Catechesis / Director Of Religious Education
2	Director Of Evangelization & Catechesis / Director Of Religious Education
3	Director Of Evangelization & Catechesis / Director Of Religious Education
4	Director Of Evangelization & Catechesis / Director Of Religious Education
5	Director Of Evangelization & Catechesis / Director Of Religious Education
Stewardship	
Goal	Owner
1	Director of Development
2	Director of Development
3	Director of Development
4	Director of Development
5	Director of Development
Social Justice	
Goal	Owner
1	Justice/Care Ministry
2	Justice/Care Ministry
3	Justice/Care Ministry
Evangelization	
Goal	Owner
1	Director Of Evangelization & Catechesis
2	Director Of Evangelization & Catechesis
3	Director Of Evangelization & Catechesis
4	Director Of Evangelization & Catechesis

Appendix B - Mission Statement Explanation

St. Stephen the Martyr Catholic Church is a community for all people to encounter Christ, know Christ, and proclaim Christ.

At the heart of the statement is the Road to Emmaus story from the Gospel of Luke:

Now that very day two of them were going to a village seven miles from Jerusalem called Emmaus, and they were conversing about all the things that had occurred. And it happened that while they were conversing and debating, Jesus himself drew near and walked with them, but their eyes were prevented from recognizing him. He asked them, "What are you discussing as you walk along?" They stopped, looking downcast. One of them, named Cleopas, said to him in reply, "Are you the only visitor to Jerusalem who does not know of the things that have taken place there in these days?" And he replied to them, "What sort of things?" They said to him, "The things that happened to Jesus the Nazarene, who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, how our chief priests and rulers both handed him over to a sentence of death and crucified him. But we were hoping that he would be the one to redeem Israel; and besides all this, it is now the third day since this took place. Some women from our group, however, have astounded us: they were at the tomb early in the morning and did not find his body; they came back and reported that they had indeed seen a vision of angels who announced that he was alive. Then some of those with us went to the tomb and found things just as the women had described, but him they did not see." And he said to them, "Oh, how foolish you are! How slow of heart to believe all that the prophets spoke! Was it not necessary that the Messiah should suffer these things and enter into his glory?" Then beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them what referred to him in all the scriptures. As they approached the village to which they were going, he gave the impression that he was going on farther. But they urged him, "Stay with us, for it is nearly evening and the day is almost over." So he went in to stay with them. And it happened that, while he was with them at table, he took bread, said the blessing, broke it, and gave it to them. With that their eyes were opened and they recognized him, but he vanished from their sight. Then they said to each other, "Were not our hearts burning [within us] while he spoke to us on the way and opened the scriptures to us?" So they set out at once and returned to Jerusalem where they found gathered together the eleven and those with them who were saying, "The Lord has truly been raised and has appeared to Simon!" Then the two recounted what had taken place on the way and how he was made known to them in the breaking of the bread.

Within this Gospel passage we see all four of the key movements of our mission statement: encounter, know, proclaim, and all. Let us unpack this mission statement beginning with Encounter. We begin there because this encounter with Christ is vitally important as we turn our gaze towards our call to be an evangelizing people. This encounter is the foundation upon which all evangelization efforts are built. Pope Benedict XVI, in his Apostolic Letter *Ubicumque Et Semper*, tells us, "To proclaim fruitfully the Word of the Gospel one is first asked to have a profound experience of God." We can't help others encounter Christ until we have first encountered him ourselves.

As we reflect deeper on this encounter, let us do so through the lens of the Emmaus story. The story begins with the disciples encountering Christ. There are several dimensions to this encounter that need unpacking. First and foremost, this entire story revolves around an encounter with a person, Jesus Christ. It does not revolve around someone telling the disciples about Christ. It does not revolve around someone teaching the disciples about Christ. It does not revolve around someone sharing with the disciples their experience of Christ. While all of those activities are important and activities we need to engage in, true conversion comes when an individual encounters for themselves, in a really deep and personal way our living Lord Jesus Christ. Pope Benedict captures this beautifully in his encyclical *Deus Caritas Est* when he says, "Being Christian is not the result of an ethical choice or a lofty idea, but the encounter with an event, a person, which gives life a new horizon and a decisive direction." (DCE 1)

The nature of the encounter itself is also equally important. In the story, we see the disciples discouraged, confused, upset, very much broken. Jesus did not wait for them to get their lives together, so to speak, before he engaged them. Rather, Jesus met them right where they were at: in the middle of all of their brokenness. We are called to do the same thing as we bring Jesus into the world. We need to meet people exactly where they are at. In his Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium* Pope Francis focuses our attention on this central pillar of evangelization when he writes, “the Church is not a tollhouse; it is the house of the Father, where there is a place for everyone, with all their problems.” (EG 47)

Finally, Jesus journeys with the disciples as they transition from a state of brokenness steeped in their ignorance surrounding the meaning of the scriptures and the events of Jesus’s life into a deep understanding of the mystery of salvation made most present to them through the breaking of the bread. All of us are on our own journey. As we move forward as a parish and embrace our mission as baptized members of the Body of Christ to go further and evangelize the world, we must always remember that this evangelization effort occurs in the context of one-on-one relationships. In an address to some Italian students, Pope Francis states, “it’s bad walking alone: It’s bad and boring. Walking in community, with friends, with those who love us, that helps us. It helps us to arrive precisely at that goal, that ‘there where’ we’re supposed to arrive.”

To be an evangelizing parish we have to be a parish that encounters Christ and leads others to encounter Christ. Without an encounter with Christ the opportunity to know and proclaim him will never come to pass. To close this reflection let us call to mind the words of Pope Francis as he encourages us to focus on this encounter with Christ, “I invite all Christians, everywhere, at this very moment, to a renewed personal encounter with Jesus Christ, or at least an openness to letting him encounter them; I ask all of you to do this unfailingly each day.” (*Evangelii Gaudium* 3)

The second movement of the parish mission statement is know. What does it mean to know? How do we know? These are two questions that we must answer if we are to truly understand what it means to know Christ.

The word know has several meanings associated with it. As we think about know in the context of our parish mission statement there is one meaning in particular that most encapsulates our usage, “to have developed a relationship with (someone) through meeting and spending time with them.” This definition pivots around two key points. First and foremost is the concept of relationship. To know Jesus Christ means to be in a relationship with Jesus Christ. To be in a relationship with Jesus Christ means that you are connected to Jesus Christ: joined to Him in a very real and tangible way.

In order to build and maintain a connection with Christ, we must embrace the second point of the definition: we have to meet and spend time with Christ. Just as it is not possible to maintain relationships with your family and friends without spending time with them developing that relationship, likewise it is NOT possible for us to build and maintain a relationship with Christ without spending time with Him. We must have that continued, daily encounter with Christ to be in relation.

We cannot live out our mission to be an evangelizing people unless we first have built up our relationship with Christ. In a speech given to the German Bishops in 1992 Pope John Paul II clearly addresses this key pillar of evangelization when he said, “It is necessary to awaken again in believers a full relationship with

Christ, mankind's only Savior. Only from a personal relationship with Jesus can an effective evangelization develop."

How do we meet and spend time with Christ? The primary means through which we spend time with Christ are through Scripture (His word) and through the Eucharist. Let us again turn to the Road to Emmaus story and see just how these means enable us to enter into a deeper relationship with Christ allowing us to truly know Him.

After the disciples encounter Christ on their journey they spend the remainder of their journey with Christ breaking open the scriptures. Christ shows them how the scriptures of the Old Testament foretold of His coming and the events that transpired. While they did not immediately recognize Christ during their journey, once their eyes had been opened they realized how much their hearts were on fire while He was breaking open the word. Our hearts also burn for the Lord as we encounter Him through Scripture. The Council Fathers of Vatican II remind us of this in *Dei Verbum* when they state, "For in the sacred books, the Father who is in heaven meets His children with great love and speaks with them; and the force and power in the word of God is so great that it stands as the support and energy of the Church, the strength of faith for her sons, the food of the soul, the pure and everlasting source of spiritual life."

We know from the story that the disciples did eventually recognize Jesus during the breaking of the bread: during the celebration of the Eucharistic meal. Through the Eucharist, we enter into a very deep and intimate relationship with Christ as we receive Him fully: body, blood, soul, and divinity. The Eucharist nourishes us both physically as well as spiritually, as we enter more deeply into the Paschal mystery. St Ignatius Of Loyola once said, "To withdraw from creatures and repose with Jesus in the Tabernacle is my delight; there I can hide myself and seek rest. There I find a life which I cannot describe, a joy which I cannot make others comprehend, a peace such as is found only under the hospitable roof of our best Friend." In the Eucharist, we get to spend time with the same Jesus that walked this earth and instructed the first disciples two thousand years ago. Through the Eucharist, made present through His Church, He continues to instruct each and every one of us. "From the Eucharist comes strength to live the Christian life and zeal to share that life with others." (John Paul II) If we are separated from the Eucharist we are separated from our very ability to enter into that relationship with Christ: to know Him deeply and go forth and proclaim Him.

"A true missionary, who never ceases to be a disciple, knows that Jesus walks with him, speaks to him, breathes with him, works with him. He senses Jesus alive with him in the midst of the missionary enterprise." (EG 266) May we know that Christ is with us in all we do and may what we do lead us into a deeper relationship with Him as we go forward and proclaim Him to others.

Let us now turn our attention to the third movement: proclaim. What does it mean to proclaim Christ? Why is it not enough simply to encounter Christ and to know Christ, why must we also proclaim him? Let us address the latter question before we turn our attention to the former question.

We must proclaim Christ because Christ himself instructed us to. Before he ascended into Heaven, Christ gave one final set of instructions to his disciples. Known as the Great Commissioning, Christ instructed his disciples to, "Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, until the end of the age." (Matthew 28:19-20) These two sentences contain

the very essence of what we, as Disciples of Christ, are called to be. We are to be a people that proclaims the Gospel Message to all of God's children.

To proclaim Christ is to evangelize. This is the most fundamental activity the Church engages in. In his Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, Pope Paul VI affirms the centrality of evangelization to the Church's identity, "We wish to confirm once more that the task of evangelizing all people constitutes the essential mission of the Church. It is a task and mission which the vast and profound changes of present-day society make all the more urgent. Evangelizing is, in fact, the grace and vocation proper to the Church, her deepest identity. She exists in order to evangelize." Let that last line sink in for a moment, "She exists in order to evangelize." (EN 84) Everything we do as a St. Stephen the Martyr community should be oriented towards building us up as a community of believers, the visible body of Christ, so that we may go forth and proclaim Christ to everyone.

This mandate to evangelize falls upon all of us: not just the ordained ministers of the Church. The Catechism of Catholic Church teaches us that by virtue of our Baptism we participate in Christ's prophetic office and that one way in which we fulfill this prophetic mission is through evangelization (CCC 897-907). In *Evangelii Gaudium*, Pope Francis draws this teaching back to the forefront of our minds, "In virtue of their baptism, all the members of the People of God have become missionary disciples. All the baptized, whatever their position in the Church or their level of instruction in the faith, are agents of evangelization, and it would be insufficient to envisage a plan of evangelization to be carried out by professionals while the rest of the faithful would simply be passive recipients." As a people of Christ, we cannot neglect our Baptismal mandate to evangelize. Let us ask God to send us his spirit so that we may fulfill our Baptismal mandate.

We now turn our attention to the former question: what does it mean to proclaim Christ, to evangelize? The heart of evangelization is the sharing of the Gospel message, the Good News that through Jesus Christ salvation is offered to all. In his encyclical *Redemptoris Missio*, Pope John Paul II draws the connection between sharing the Gospel Message and our evangelical activity, "Evangelization will always contain-as the foundation, center and at the same time the summit of its dynamism-a clear proclamation that, in Jesus Christ...salvation is offered to all people, as a gift of God's grace and mercy. All forms of missionary activity are directed to this proclamation, which reveals and gives access to the mystery hidden for ages and made known in Christ, the mystery which lies at the heart of the Church's mission and life, as the hinge on which all evangelization turns." (RM 44) Our message has to be centered on Christ apart from which there is no Good News to share.

Sharing the Gospel Message begins first with the way in which we live our lives, through witness. This "wordless witness", as Pope Paul VI called it, will stir the hearts of those who observe us leading them to desire an understanding as to why we live this way. However, this witness alone will never be sufficient. At some point in time, we must be prepared to proclaim the Good News: to tell people about the person of Jesus Christ. Pope Paul VI tells us that, "There is no true evangelization if the name, the teaching, the life, the promises, the kingdom and the mystery of Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of God are not proclaimed." We have to be willing to not only live in accordance with the Gospel values but also be prepared to share the Good News of Jesus Christ with whomever the Holy Spirit brings into our lives. As St. Peter tells us we must, "Always be ready to give an explanation to anyone who asks you for a reason for your hope." (1 Peter 3:15)

If all of this seems impossible fear not, for the key to this is found in the last line of the Great Commissioning, “I am with you always, until the end of the age.” We do not go forth and proclaim Christ in the absence of Christ. Just as he is with us when we receive him through his word and through the Eucharist, so also is he with us when we proclaim him. St. John Chrysostom in his Homilies on the Gospel of Matthew wrote, “And because what He had laid upon them was great, therefore to exalt their spirits He adds, And, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. As much as to say, Tell Me not of the difficulty of these things, seeing I am with you, Who can make all things easy.” From the moment of that first encounter with Christ through all of the time we have spent at his feet coming to know him our hearts have been on fire. We are filled with joy, with hope, with love, and just as the Disciples on the Road to Emmaus could not wait until morning, but had to return to Jerusalem immediately to share with all their encounter with the risen Lord, so too are we filled with this evangelical fervor and desire to share Christ with those we encounter. May we go forth from here and proclaim Christ to a fallen world that so desperately needs him.

We now turn to the final movement of our mission statement: all. It is interesting that the most important movement of our mission statement is the one that is also the easiest to overlook. Sandwiched between “community” and “people” and only three letters long, it is very easy to glance over the word not even realizing its presence. Yet it is this very word that our entire mission statement rests upon. St. Stephen the Martyr must be a community for all. To do anything else is to reject the Great Commissioning of Jesus Christ that, by virtue of our Baptism, is our mandate as well. Let us take a moment to unpack the meaning of all as it is used in the context of our parish mission statement.

We will begin our examination of all first by considering the opposite of a community for all which is a parochial community. There are two definitions of parochial that, when considered together, aptly characterize the kind of parish we DO NOT want St. Stephen the Martyr to be. Parochial can mean both “relating to a church parish” as well as “having a limited or narrow outlook.” When we combined these two together we end up with a parish community that looks inward, that is more concerned with things going on within the walls of the church and in the lives of its active members. This is a direct contrast to a parish community that looks outward, that looks at those who have either drifted away from the faith or have never possessed the faith and need to hear the Gospel message. That is not to say that it is wrong to care for our parish community but if our gaze is fixed upon it we begin to become closed off. In his Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*, Pope Francis warns of this when he writes, “Frequently, we act as arbiters of grace rather than its facilitators. But the Church is not a tollhouse; it is the house of the Father, where there is a place for everyone, with all their problems.”

As hard as it may be, as we move forward in living out our new mission statement it is imperative that we turn our gaze outward. We can never forget the proclamation of the Angels as they announced the birth of Jesus to the shepherds tending their flocks, “Do not be afraid; for behold, I proclaim to you good news of great joy that will be for all the people.” (Luke 2:10). The Gospel Message that we have been so blessed to receive is a message truly intended for all of humanity: no one is to be excluded from this message. In his 2011 World Mission Sunday Message Pope Benedict XVI reminds us that the Church, “can never be closed in on herself. She is rooted in specific places in order to go beyond them.” It is never up to us to decide who gets to hear the Good News and who does not: all must be welcome. Let us never forget as well that we do not live out this missionary mandate to be open to all on our own. Pope John Paul II tells us that, “Mission, then, is based not on human abilities but on the power of the risen Lord.” (Redemptoris

Missio 23) We are children of a God who never abandons us in our efforts to bring the message of his Son to the ends of the earth.

This call to open to all and to be missionary to our very core is the bedrock upon which the Church is built. In *Ad Gentes*, the Second Vatican Council's decree on missionary activity, we are told that the very nature of the Church is to be missionary, "since it is from the mission of the Son and the mission of the Holy Spirit that she draws her origin, in accordance with the decree of God the Father." As we examine this missionary mandate it is very easy to pigeonhole missionary activity as proclaiming the Good News to those who have yet to hear it: to have visions of laboring in foreign lands. Resist this temptation for when we do this, we place missionary activity in a silo, we soon forget about it and then ultimately we forget our call to be a community for all. In his encyclical *Redemptoris Missio*, Pope John Paul II provides us with a new paradigm through which we can view our missionary activity that allows us to see how everything we do as a parish is missionary in nature. He accomplishes this by dividing missionary activity into three distinct strata. First, we have what most of us think of when we think of missionary activity: proclaiming Christ to those who don't know him or haven't accepted him. Second, there is the activity of the Church itself as it carries out its pastoral activities in service of those whose faith is strong. Lastly, there is the missionary activity that encompasses those with Christian roots or who perhaps have been Baptized but have fallen away. For those individuals, we need a new evangelization or re-evangelization that draws them back into the life of the Church: the life they were baptized into. We must examine all we do as a parish through this missionary paradigm to ensure that we are always living out our Baptismal mandate and as a result are truly living out the mission of St. Stephen the Martyr.

In his first letter to the Corinthians St. Paul tells us that everything we do must be informed by love. As we consider the missionary nature of the Church and how that compels us to be a community for all, what is truly driving this is love. Love desires the best for another individual. As followers of Christ, it is love that compels us to want everyone to know Jesus just as we know Jesus. It was love for their fellow disciples that propelled the disciples on the Road to Emmaus to race back to Jerusalem and tell the rest of their disciples about their encounter with Jesus. Love compels us to be not only a Church that says it is open to all but a Church that is actively open and figuring out how to engage all. As Pope Francis tells us St. Stephen the Martyr, "must be a place of mercy freely given, where everyone can feel welcomed, loved, forgiven and encouraged to live the good life of the Gospel." (*Evangelii Gaudium*)

Encounter, Know, Proclaim, All: these are the four movements of our parish mission statement that we have examined over these last four weeks. I pray that through this examination, you have not only come to a deeper understanding of our new mission statement but more importantly that you have come to a deeper understanding of the mandate that has been passed onto you through virtue of your Baptism. You are called to carry the Gospel Message to all those who need and long to hear it. You don't need to travel to foreign lands to find individuals in need of the Good News, who need to encounter Jesus Christ. Open your heart to the Holy Spirit and he will show you those people in your place of work, in the community in which you live, sometimes even in your own family who need to come to know Jesus Christ. Then allow that same spirit to work in you as he gives you the courage, even the very words to say as you proclaim Jesus Christ. When we do this we are living out the call of Pope Francis to, "go forth to offer everyone the life of Jesus Christ." (*Evangelii Gaudium*) When we do this we are truly living out the mission statement of St. Stephen the Martyr parish to be a community for all people to encounter Christ, know Christ, and proclaim Christ.

Appendix C - Revision History

Revision	Approval Date	Notes
4232019	4/23/2019	Initial Draft Of Plan
6012019	06/01/2019	Updated goal dates