

Pastoral Plan

# Embracing the Great Commission

St. Theresa Catholic Church

**Grounded in Scripture  
Growing in the Spirit  
Reaching out in Love**

August 2016

## I. MISSION STATEMENT

This plan is designed to build upon the existing mission statement for St. Theresa:

***Our mission is to make disciples for the Lord Jesus Christ and, together in ministry for Him, advance the Kingdom of God.***

## II. INTRODUCTION

*You are light for the world. A city set on a mountain cannot be hidden. No one lights a lamp to put it under a bushel; they put it on the lamp-stand where it shines for everyone in the house. In the same way your light must shine in people's sight, so that, seeing your good works, they may give praise to your Father in heaven. Matthew 5:14-16*

In April of 2016, the St. Theresa Pastoral and Finance Councils voted to initiate a process to develop a Pastoral Plan for our parish community as a complement to the Diocesan Pastoral Plan. Pastoral leaders and members of St. Theresa engaged in an intentional process of prayer, reflection, and discussion to identify ways in which the people of our parish might answer the call to fill the hearts and lives of all who encounter Jesus with the *joy* of the Gospel.

The plan in and of itself is a call – a call for our parish to encounter Jesus Christ intentionally, to approach discipleship *intentionally*, and to transform the world in which we live. It is a call for our community, a church hidden in the hills of Northwest Austin, to be the united city on a hill that Christ truly wishes it to be.

## III. PARISH VISION: EMBRACING THE GREAT COMMISSION

*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*

Often referred to as the “Great Commission” Jesus’s words above clearly and unequivocally call our community to its mission. We have no choice but to embrace it.

The vision for the Pastoral Plan, “Embracing the Great Commission” describes the “desired future” of St. Theresa parish. It is the foundation upon which the Pastoral Plan’s goals and initiatives are built.

Simply put, the vision of Embracing the Great Commission recognizes the need for St. Theresa to be a church that consciously and purposefully accepts the mission to spread the Gospel. The research, conversations, and spiritual reflection that led to the development of this plan all pointed to the conclusion that as St. Theresa parish grows and serves the vibrant community that is Austin, Texas, there is a need to meet the opportunities and challenges that our community faces through *intentional* discipleship. As the Diocesan Pastoral Plan emphasizes, our community needs encounters that lead to transformation. Our community needs spiritual growth and development.

Our community, the uniquely talented and amazing parishioners of St. Theresa, is needed in this city and beyond as a servant in ministry and mission.

The vision recognizes three central aspects of intentional discipleship:

- **The Liturgy and Sacraments** – our faithful worship and sacramental life.
- **Faith Formation** – our responsibility to develop the faith of our parishioners.
- **Evangelization** – our call to spread the Gospel.

Also important is the recognition that the components of this vision are carried out, at least in part, within the resources and physical facilities of St. Theresa itself.

### ***WHERE DO WE WANT TO BE?***

A goal of this plan is to help the community of St. Theresa move to a “desired future.” What is this “desired future” for St. Theresa? By the end of the five-year period covered by this plan, the hope is that parishioners might say something like the following:

*St. Theresa is a different place than when we started this plan. In embracing the commission we found that all of our members, young and old, have a deep desire for a lasting relationship with Jesus Christ. We were transformed individually and collectively as we put Jesus at the center of our parish family and in the center of our home.*

*This transformation resulted in ministry our parish has never seen before. We became more collaborative. We moved from a mentality where we focused on our own needs and wants to one of fellowship, community, and partnership. Our family became more supportive of its parts – school, parish, and community. There are more people participating in Mass and in the sacraments. Our parish activities are full and are signs of the vitality of our community. Our youth and young adults are excited about their faith. People of every ethnicity and culture feel welcome in our midst. Our school is excellent, accessible, and enrollment is full.*

*These changes permitted us to reach new levels in mission and ministry. Our parish, our school, our people – they are examples of leadership that others within the community and the Diocese of Austin look to as models of discipleship. We are sharing our faith with all those who need the message of the Gospel. We are the Body of Christ.*

#### IV. TODAY'S OPPORTUNITIES AND ISSUES

*For I know well the plans I have in mind for you—oracle of the LORD—plans for your welfare and not for woe, so as to give you a future of hope. Jeremiah 29:11*

The planning process, led by the Pastoral Council, included many meetings involving prayer, discussion, and discernment. A broad array of leaders within the parish contributed to the development of this plan through multiple listening sessions open to all parishioners, conversations with ministry leaders, a parish survey, meetings with church staff, study of other successful Christian communities in Central Texas, and a review of the parish's current demographics. The directions, ideas, and recommendations expressed in this plan are the result of prayerful and hard work by many people.

We heard consistently that the community of St. Theresa is simply, in one word, special. That we are blessed to have one of the most creative, talented, and intelligent congregations on the planet. That we, like the city we live in, are vibrant and ready for larger challenges. That we are hungry for clear and crisp messaging on how we can encounter Jesus Christ in our daily lives.

We also heard that we are shaped by and must respond to certain challenges affecting our country, state, city, and parish. Accordingly, this plan pays particular attention to:

- How we attend to the realities of families today with diverse life experiences and mounting challenges.
- How we build community, now and in the future.
- How we better people – Catholic and non-Catholic – in our parish.
- How we can lead pastorally in new and different ways.
- How we manage our resources in an economic environment that is expensive for our families and St. Theresa.
- How we respond to changes and challenges in a culturally diverse community and society.

The plan addresses these challenges through the establishment of goals in the following areas: Liturgy and the Sacraments, Faith Formation, Evangelization, and Facilities.

## V. GOALS, INITIATIVES, OBJECTIVES, AND DESIRED OUTCOMES

### GOAL 1: INSPIRING LITURGY AND DEEPENED SACRAMENTAL PARTICIPATION

*While they were eating, Jesus took bread, said the blessing, broke it, and giving it to his disciples said, "Take and eat; this is my body." Then he took a cup, gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you, for this is my blood of the covenant, which will be shed on behalf of many for the forgiveness of sins. Mathew 26:26-28*

St. Theresa already stands apart when it comes to the quality of its Mass experience. Talented staff, servants, and pastors have established St. Theresa's reputation throughout the Diocese of Austin for excellence and beauty in the Mass. Worship is integral to our lives as Christians. When we engage in the prayer and ritual of the Church, we are formed as Church. As the Catechism teaches:

*It is the mystery of Christ that the church proclaims and celebrates in her Liturgy so that the faithful may live from it and bear witness to it in the world: for it is in the Liturgy, especially in the divine sacrifice of the Eucharist, that "the work of our redemption is accomplished." And it is through the liturgy especially that the faithful are enabled to express in their lives and manifest to others the mystery of Christ and the real nature of the true Church. CCC 1068*

We are eternally grateful for the time, effort, and gifts that our music and liturgical ministers share with us each and every time that we gather in worship. We must continue these efforts and expand the use of an already heightened bar of excellence into all aspects of sacramental life.

**Initiative: The Sacraments.** The Latin word *sacramentum* means "a sign of the sacred." Sacraments are ceremonies that point to what is sacred, significant, and important to us. They are special occasions for experiencing God's saving presence.<sup>1</sup> That is what theologians mean when they say that sacraments are simultaneously signs and instruments of God's grace. As such, we must attract, engage, and inspire people to deepen their participation in the sacramental life of the Church – especially Baptism, the Eucharist, Reconciliation, Confirmation, and Marriage – resulting in stronger Christian witnesses.

**Objective 1.1.1:** Consciously and purposefully celebrate all the sacraments.

**Objective 1.1.2:** Develop a culture that honors and encourages all aspects of sacramental life.

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<sup>1</sup> Sacraments are "Powers that come forth" from the Body of Christ, which is ever-living and life-giving. They are actions of the Holy Spirit at work in His Body, the Church. They are "the Masterworks of God" in the new and everlasting covenant. CCC 1116

**Objective 1.1.3:** Thoughtfully honor and respect those who have devoted their lives to our faith.

**Desired Outcomes:**

1. More baptisms, confirmations, and marriages at St. Theresa.
2. Greater participation in the Sacrament of Reconciliation.
3. Celebration when members of our community participate in Holy Orders.
4. Spiritually inspiring and uplifting worship of the Liturgy.

**GOAL 2: IMPLEMENT A CRADLE TO GRAVE  
FAITH FORMATION MODEL**

*He said to them, "Go into the whole world and proclaim the gospel to every creature."*  
Mark 16:15

*The parish is the Eucharistic community and the heart of the liturgical life of Christian families; it is a privileged place for the catechesis of children and parents. CCC 2226*

Our conversations with the community confirmed what increased participation in faith formation activities such as Catalyst, Connections, and Breaking Open the Word were already telling us – we are hungry for deep and rich spiritual development in all stages of life. We also heard that the spiritual development of our youth is of critical importance – not only for their spiritual wellness, but for the wellness of the future Church itself. Accordingly, this plan establishes faith formation initiatives related to Lay Leadership, Youth, Encounters that Lead to Transformation, and Community Building between the Parish and School.

**Initiative 1: Lay Leadership.** The future of our faith and church depends, in large part, on the leadership that we are developing today. We must prepare mothers, fathers, and grandparents emotionally, intellectually, and spiritually, to minister to their children and grandchildren. We must prepare our ministers to be leaders in our community and beyond. We must offer programs that develop, form, nurture, and educate our lay leaders.

**Objective 2.1.1:** Provide comprehensive spiritual formation, leadership, personal, and professional development for lay leaders.

**Desired Outcomes:**

1. The creation or adoption of programs specifically designed to develop lay leaders.
2. Increased participation in faith formation at all age levels.
3. Increased ministry formation.
4. Increased participation in bible studies and adult catechesis.

**Initiative 2: Children, Youth, and Young Adults.** The future of our faith and church also depends, in large part, on the young disciples that we are developing today. Whether they are students at St. Theresa Catholic School, attend our religious education offerings, or are not members

of the St. Theresa community, we must take every opportunity to attract and inspire young people. We must strengthen our offerings and programs for children, youth, and young adults to meet this need.

**Objective 2.1.2:** Create dynamic and vibrant children’s, youth, and young adult programs.

**Desired Outcomes:**

1. Increased participation in religious education.
2. Increased participation in youth and young adult programs.
3. Increased participation in the sacrament of Confirmation.

**Initiative 3: Encounters that Lead to Transformation.** The ministry of Christ Renews His Parish (“CRHP”) has undoubtedly impacted the St. Theresa community in a positive way. That retreat event and ministry consistently creates spiritual encounters that lead to transformation and it promotes renewal in our parish. We must seek additional spiritual formation opportunities that support those who have already attended a CRHP retreat and provide additional and different opportunities for encounters that lead to transformation.

**Objective 2.3.1:** Build and expand upon our existing retreat offerings.

**Desired Outcome:** More parishioners engaged in encounters that lead to transformation.

**Initiative 4: Community Building between the Parish and School.** This year marks the 30<sup>th</sup> year of St. Theresa Catholic School. Since its establishment, the school has provided excellent Catholic education at an affordable price. Our school families are an integral part of our community. We are One Body and we are all called by the Great Commission. We must continue to align our practices at the school and parish and bring youth and families from the school and parish together.

**Objective 2.4.1:** Create opportunities for school and parish family fellowship.

**Objective 2.4.2:** Consistently bring school and parish youth together in service, fellowship, and spiritual development.

**Desired Outcomes:**

1. Relationship building between youth and families of the school and parish.
2. A creative and collaborative school/parish relationship.

### **GOAL 3: CREATE A CULTURE WHERE EVANGELIZATION IS SECOND NATURE**

*Jesus said to Simon, “Do not be afraid; henceforth you will be catching men.” And when they had brought their boats to land, they left everything and followed him. Luke 5:10-11*

Evangelization is the bringing of the Good News of Jesus into every human situation and the effort to convert individuals and society by the divine power of the Gospel. It need not be conducted by experts, but only by sincere witnesses, because at its essence, evangelization is the proclamation of salvation in Jesus Christ and the response of a person in faith, which are both works of the Spirit of God. As the Catechism states:

*It is from God's love for all men that the Church in every age receives both the obligation and the vigor of her missionary dynamism, "for the love of Christ urges us on." Indeed, God "desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth" that is, God wills the salvation of everyone through the knowledge of the truth. Salvation is found in the truth. Those who obey the prompting of the Spirit of truth are already on the way of salvation. But the Church, to whom this truth has been entrusted, must go out to meet their desire, so as to bring them the truth. Because she believes in God's universal plan of salvation, the Church must be missionary. CCC 851*

Throughout the development process for this plan we heard many stories from parishioners who recounted their own experiences of conversion, faith fulfillment, and spiritual development at St. Theresa. We also heard that now, more than ever, our world needs communities of believers dedicated to spreading the Gospel. As such, this plan formally establishes evangelization initiatives in Hospitality, the development of Family Pastoral Strategies, Coordination of Intentional Disciples, and Missional Ministry.

**Initiative 1: Hospitality.** The welcome that people receive upon entering the grounds of St. Theresa, whether it is for Mass, school, catechesis, or even business, says a lot about our faith community. A first impression can be the difference maker in a person's spiritual formation and openness to our faith. Likewise, love and acceptance must continue past initial impressions and be a part of the very fabric of our being. As a family, we must be a welcoming institution and present a welcoming face unceasingly – we are the face of the Church, the face of Christ. Therefore, we must identify and implement approaches that create a culture of hospitality and kindness.

**Objective 3.1.1:** Attract, engage, and inspire people through our hospitality ministry and daily interactions.

**Desired Outcomes:**

1. Increased participation in Mass attendance, particularly among whole nuclear families, youth, and Catholics that may not attend often or are inactive.
2. A higher quality of Sunday experience through hospitality and welcome.
3. Fellowship that extends after Mass and provides opportunities for continued evangelization.

**Initiative 2: Family Pastoral Strategies.** Our demographics, our school, our religious education program, and the communities and neighborhoods that we serve confirm that we are a parish of families. Each member of our Church family must be ministered to, must hear the Gospel, and must

be engaged. Therefore, we must create pastoral strategies that support the family as the Domestic Church; a place of transforming spiritual growth and for forming disciples.

**Objective 3.2.1:** Incorporate and/or further develop church programs and ministries that support the life cycle of marriage and family through the end of life.

**Objection 3.2.2:** Attract, engage, and inspire young people to deepen their relationship with Jesus Christ and knowledge of the teachings of the Church, resulting in stronger participation in parish life and external Christian witness.

**Desired Outcomes:**

1. Increased participation in church programs and ministries that support the Family.
2. Expanded engagement of youth and young adults in parish ministries.

**Initiative 3: Coordination of Intentional Disciples.** Simply put, an Intentional Disciple is someone who has made the conscious commitment to follow Jesus. St. Theresa is a community with hundreds of Intentional Disciples – all of whom have gifts and charisms to share. Our parish office, with a full time staff of only 14 employees, currently serves over 2,500 families and our school. Therefore, we must deploy our Intentional Disciples intelligently and continuously seek new Intentional Disciples.

**Objective 3.3.1:** Better coordinate community members in liturgy, ministries, faith formation, and outreach.

**Desired Outcome:** Increased opportunities for service and more Intentional Disciples.

**Initiative 4: Missional Ministry.** What does “missional” mean? In essence being “missional” describes what happens when we replace “come to us” invitations with a “go to them” life—a life where we as individuals bring the church to the world. It is outreach. This way of relating to those outside the church requires us to be wholly focused on sacrificially living for God and others, and adopting a missionary stance in relation to our culture. It also calls us as community to ask ourselves questions like: To what extent are we reaching out to our community? To what extent is St. Theresa impacting the community with a Christian message that challenges the values of our secular society? Are we actively identifying social justice needs in our local community and beyond, and developing ways to address them? And, to what extent is St. Theresa seeking to prepare our people to effectively care for others in their families, neighborhoods, schools and workplaces – here in Austin, Texas and around the world? If we are truly seeking to “Embrace the Great Commission” we must intentionally reach beyond the community of St. Theresa in service and discipleship.

**Objective: 4.4.1:** Consistently and constantly identify missional opportunities locally and beyond.

**Objective: 4.4.2:** Build upon our existing missional ministries.

**Objective: 4.4.3:** Consistently engage our youth in acts of missional ministry.

**Desired Outcome:** A culture that lives on mission and that embraces the Great Commission.

## **GOAL 4: CONTINUE TO ASSESS OUR FACILITY OPTIONS & PLAN FOR THE FUTURE**

*Entrust your works to the LORD, and your plans will succeed. Proverbs 16:3*

St. Theresa recently experienced a capital campaign that brought Building E onto our campus. That building is providing outstanding service to our community and will for years to come. However, our campus master plan on file with the City of Austin has expired. That means that any future development on our campus will require the approval of a new plan. Such approval will have a monetary cost and the church's finances do not currently support the incurrence of that cost. However, we know – without a doubt – that we have current facility needs and that we will have future facility challenges. For that reason, it is prudent that we thoughtfully plan ahead.

The following are just a few of the facility issues impacting our ministries and mission that were raised in our listening sessions:

- Lack of fully functional and up-to-code kitchens in the Family Center, Jordan Hall, and Building E.
  - We heard that these shortcomings impact the types of gatherings that occur on our campus, limit the capacity of ministries that serve our parish and the community, and hamper the ability of the school to evaluate new contractors for the provision of school lunches.
- Lack of adequate child care facilities for families during Mass.
  - We heard that the space in the Family Center for child care was not designed to care for young children, is too small, and is unwelcoming. Parents do not feel comfortable leaving their small children in the facility during Mass and we lack a dedicated “cry room.”
- Lack of a covered drop-off area for cars during weddings and funerals that take place in inclement weather.
  - We heard that this shortcoming is particularly difficult for our seniors during rainy weather.
- Portable buildings that are reaching the end of their useful lives and lack adequate security.
  - Our portable buildings are now almost 25 years old. Designed and built as temporary structures, their roofs, flooring, and bathrooms will soon need maintenance and/or replacement. As functioning classrooms, without security doors and electronic access, the portables also lack the security that our Education and Building E provide for our school students.

- Lack of space dedicated to youth and young adult formation.
  - We have never designed or developed space to attract and serve our middle-school and high-school-age parishioners.
- The current Family Center does not facilitate fellowship after Mass and is not large enough.
  - We heard that we currently struggle to hold certain events in the Family Center, such as Adoration following the Easter Vigil during the Holy Triduum, Christmas gatherings, weddings and funeral receptions, due to its size and lack of adequate kitchen and bathroom facilities.

We also heard from some that they thought our facility issues are relatively minor and that we can live without the need to make any changes. Additionally, we heard that fixes to the portables and the Family Center are too expensive for our community at this time.

However, while we can--and will have to--continue functioning with our current facility limitations in the short term, we need to engage in prudent facility planning. We need to do so, while asking ourselves: *Do our facilities promote our mission to spread the Gospel in our parish, the school, and the community?* If they are not positively aiding our mission, then we must seek solutions because the mission to bring the Gospel to our world cannot be ignored or delayed.

Our community has changed considerably since the parish was established. Several of the buildings on our campus were built and designed for a parish that was anticipated to consist of only 400 families--not our current level of 2,500. Three of our main buildings--the Family Center, Education Building, and parish Offices--were built prior to the establishment of the School and, thus, were not designed for the additional requirements the school places on our campus and are not able to best meet the needs of organizations using them. And, the last time a master plan for our campus was considered was over 20 years ago. In short, it has been too long since we last undertook that process.

**Initiative: Facility Master Plan.** We need to assess our needs and plan for the future. To best address these needs, given our current financial constraints, a permanent Facilities Commission will be established. That Commission will allow us to tap the talent among us – builders, developers, architects, executives, and leaders – to address our facility issues and begin planning for the future.

**Objective 4.1.1:** Begin the Facility Master Plan development process.

**Desired Outcomes:**

1. A new Master Plan for St. Theresa facilities.
2. The development of creative solutions for existing facility issues.
3. A financial plan for addressing future facility needs.

## VI. STEWARDSHIP

*The LORD God then took the man and settled him in the garden of Eden, to cultivate and care for it.*  
Genesis 2:15

The Pastoral Council spent considerable time debating whether to include specific stewardship goals in this Pastoral Plan. Consistent with the depth and insistent call of the Great Commission, our plan is ambitious. Accomplishing any ambitious plan requires sustaining time, talent, and financial resources. To realistically achieve the goals that we have identified, the parish may need additional staff resources. In fact, our current church staff of 14 is barely adequate, and at times insufficient, to meet the needs of our growing community of over 2,500 families. Thus, achievement of the plan may require parishioners to commit time, talent, and treasure to St. Theresa in ways they may not be currently contemplating.

However, a plea for giving to fund certain improvements or meet certain needs misses the mark. Yes, the parish needs parishioners to give so that, from a practical standpoint, salaries can be paid and necessary services can be provided. But, do we give in order that the Church can raise a certain number of dollars in order to do a certain number of things? Is Christian giving practiced in order to build buildings or retire debt? The answer is no. We give out of love and thankfulness, not out of a sense of duty or obligation or guilt. We give so that we may follow Jesus and that the world may know him as Lord and Savior. It is as simple as that. The ultimate reason for practicing Christian giving is because as Christians we have been entrusted with the Gospel and it is our highest calling to share the Good News with others.

Put differently, stewardship is the offering people make of themselves, that is to say their time, their abilities, their opportunities, and their financial resources in *free* and *thankful* obedience to God. God gives us our existence, and all that goes with it in an act of love and for the sake of love to the end that we shall respond to him as Christ-like children. Our response, our offering is to grow up in him and work with him using the gifts he has given us, so that we may follow Jesus and that the world may know Jesus as Lord and Savior.

Viewed in this meaningful way, the offering of money is anything but the necessary end as it sometimes appears. It becomes instead one of the high points of the liturgy, the point at which God and his people meet gift for gift. In the Gospel of Matthew (chapter 6, verse 21) we read: *“For where your treasure is...there will your heart be also.”* What Jesus did not say is that our treasure would follow our heart. He said just the reverse. He said, in effect, that when you place your treasure in something it is a sure bet that your heart, thoughts, and commitments will follow along.

In today's day and age, we also recognize that financial transparency is a critical component to building trust in stewardship. Accordingly, the parish will continue to issue quarterly reports on the state of our finances. These reports will appear in the bulletin and on the church website.

In sum, we pray that our parish Family will continue to grow in the knowledge that everything comes from God’s loving hand; that we will recognize that for what we are responsible for and for what is entrusted to us; and that we will be gracious and move toward understanding the grace that allows us to honor God with generous lives. Ultimately, it is up to us to accept or reject Jesus Christ. But once we have accepted Jesus it is not up to us to decide whether or not we will be stewards... we become such automatically and immediately.

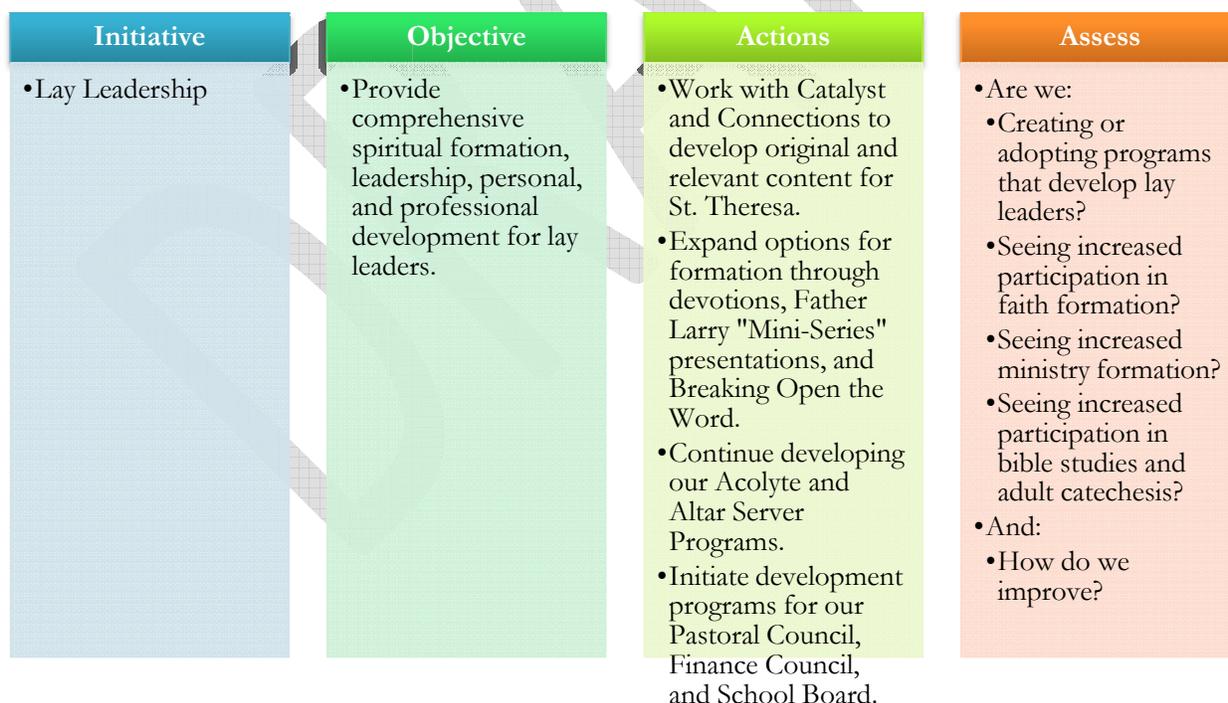
## VII. LIVING THE PLAN

*Do not conform yourselves to this age but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and pleasing and perfect. Romans 12:2*

### How do we put the Pastoral Plan into action?

So, St. Theresa has a draft Pastoral Plan. Great! But, what does that mean? How do we take the plan, translate it into action, and accomplish our goals?

We call the next phase “Living the Plan.” It’s where we deliberately move forward as a Body of Christ with specific actions that seek to accomplish our initiatives, goals, and objectives. You may not have realized it, but we are already starting to “live” certain aspects of the plan. The diagram below provides an illustration (not an exhaustive one) of the process as it applies to one initiative:



As we live the plan and engage in actions designed to accomplish our goals we constantly communicate and assess. We always ask ourselves: “Are our actions embracing the Great Commission?” “Are we grounded in scripture?” “Are we growing in the spirit?” “Are we reaching out in love?”

We will communicate the living of the plan on our website, in the bulletin, on Facebook, and through other social media. We'll continue to conduct annual and targeted parish surveys. And, we ask that you provide feedback. An easy way to provide feedback is through an email to [pastoralcouncil@sttaustin.org](mailto:pastoralcouncil@sttaustin.org).

### **What can I do to be a part of living the Pastoral Plan?**

*So whoever is in Christ is a new creation: the old things have passed away; behold, new things have come.*

2 Corinthians 5:17

1. Pray for our parish, its leaders, our staff, and for the plan. Pray that the Holy Spirit moves our parish into a deeper relationship with Jesus Christ.
2. Take time to thoroughly read the Pastoral Plan, reflect on the scriptures therein, conduct an examination of conscience on issues that challenge you in the plan, and attempt to view the plan as a whole. Read it from beginning to end. Don't just skim it. The format and order are intentional. The document builds on itself.
3. Discuss the plan with friends and fellow parishioners. The plan is a call. It's not meant to be put on a shelf and forgotten. It's not a legal document or contract. It's a vision that is meant to be lived and embraced.
4. Prayerfully ask yourself how you might answer the call of the plan to embrace the Great Commission. Can you discern this by examining where you might dedicate your time to St. Theresa, where your skills and talents might benefit our community, where you might find spiritual growth and knowledge?
5. Make the commitment to do something – at least one thing – new. Attend a bible study that sounds interesting. Finally listen to that friend's insistent request to join them at Connections or Catalyst. Join a parish ministry.
6. If you are approached and asked to help with a particular ministry or action item, don't let the opportunity pass you by. Many intentional disciples are needed to accomplish the mission of the Gospel.
7. Engage with and communicate with our parish leadership. Provide feedback via [pastoralcouncil@sttaustin.org](mailto:pastoralcouncil@sttaustin.org), respond to parish surveys, and attend listening session events when they occur.

**The draft Pastoral Plan will be reviewed and discussed by the Pastoral Council on  
Wednesday, October 12, 2016 and Wednesday November 9, 2016  
at 6:30 p.m. in the Family Center. Please Join Us.**

## VIII. GUIDING PRINCIPLES

In the process of creating this plan many of the guiding principles that were identified in the Diocesan Pastoral Plan were found to be also relevant to St. Theresa. These principles reflect important realities, values, and best practices that must be addressed in any parish.

### **FORMATION AND SPIRITUAL NOURISHMENT**

- The first task of evangelization and catechesis is to connect people with Jesus Christ by nurturing and strengthening their relationship and encounter with Christ lived through the Church Community.
- Christian formation is directed to all people.
- Evangelizing formation nurtures the faith of people in the pews, reaches out to inactive Catholics and extends an invitation to “come and see” to non-Catholics.
- The desired outcome of formation, worship, and discipleship is a lived Christian witness in everyday life that propels us to announce the good news and serve our sisters and brothers on every level of society.

### **COLLABORATIVE TEAMWORK**

- Encounter and transformation take place through ministry built upon a mutually shared vision, collaborative teamwork, and a desire to share resources, knowledge and experiences.
- Leadership formation, including pastoral formation, mentoring, coaching and outreach to new and different people as leaders is an intentional value of St. Theresa parish.
- Sound pastoral practices and guidelines for calling, forming, and sustaining missionary disciples must be embraced and practiced at St. Theresa.

### **INVITATIONAL AND INTENTIONAL OUTREACH**

- Pastoral outreach addresses needs of the people at St. Theresa through their lived experiences, age groups, geographic, and economic realities.
- Pastoral ministry strengthens faith life through an intentional and inclusive invitation to encounter Jesus Christ, participate in parish life through transforming hospitality, relationship building, and effective communication.
- Pastoral outreach must include the poor and those with special needs.

## IX. DEFINITIONS

The following definitions are intended to aid in understanding the context and use of certain terms in this Pastoral Plan.

**Catechesis:** the act of handing on the Word of God intended to inform the faith community and candidates for initiation into the Church about the teachings of Christ, transmitted by the Apostles to the Church. Catechesis also involves the lifelong effort of forming people into witnesses to Christ and opening their hearts to the spiritual transformation given by the Holy Spirit.

**Domestic Church:** Best explained by the Catechism. CCC 1655-1657.

**1655** Christ chose to be born and grow up in the bosom of the holy family of Joseph and Mary. The Church is nothing other than “the family of God.” From the beginning, the core of the Church was often constituted by those who had become believers “together with all [their] household.” When they were converted, they desired that “their whole household” should also be saved. These families who became believers were islands of Christian life in an unbelieving world.

**1656** In our own time, in a world often alien and even hostile to faith, believing families are of primary importance as centers of living, radiant faith. For this reason the Second Vatican Council, using an ancient expression, calls the family the *Ecclesia domestica*. It is in the bosom of the family that parents are “by word and example... the first heralds of the faith with regard to their children. They should encourage them in the vocation which is proper to each child, fostering with special care any religious vocation.”

**1657** It is here that the father of the family, the mother, children, and all members of the family exercise the *priesthood of the baptized* in a privileged way “by the reception of the sacraments, prayer and thanksgiving, the witness of a holy life, and self-denial and active charity.” Thus the home is the first school of Christian life and “a school for human enrichment.” Here one learns endurance and the joy of work, fraternal love, generous - even repeated - forgiveness, and above all divine worship in prayer and the offering of one's life.

**Evangelization:** the bringing of the Good News of Jesus into every human situation and the effort to convert individuals and society by the divine power of the Gospel.

**Intentional Discipleship:** to consciously choose Christ as one's personal Lord and Savior and to commit oneself actively in the life of the church.

**Stewardship:** the systematic, proportionate, sacramental, and sacrificial giving of ourselves to God, through his Church as an act of worship, in obedience to the Word of God and in grateful recognition of his redeeming love, based on the conviction that all we have is a trust from God to be used in his service.