



St. Mark The Evangelist Catholic Church

# St. Mark Strategic Plan: Vision 2015

02/24/2011

### **Parish Mission Statement**

*We, the Catholic community of St. Mark the Evangelist, are a diverse parish united in the Body of Christ. As followers of Christ, under guidance of the Holy Spirit, we are called to worship together, to serve one another, to grow in faith, and to further the presence of God in the world.*

### **Clergy**

Fr. Clifford G. Smith, Pastor • Fr. Jack Hopka, Parochial Vicar  
• Fr. Lauro Gonzalez, M.N.M, Parochial Vicar

Deacon Sid Little • Deacon Ed Putonti • Deacon Juan Jorge Hernandez

### **Pastoral Council**

Fr. Clifford Smith, Pastor • Deacon Gregg Kahrs, Parish Manager  
Tom O'Connor, Chair • Will Alt • Timothy Bauer • Douglas Cargo • Veronica Cargo • Julius Chambers  
• Tami Danielak • Marilu Hernandez • Berk Jackson • Rick Ouellette • Jackie Schwitter • Jovita Soria  
• Rafael Villalobos

## Letter from Fr. Clifford Smith

Dear Parishioners,

The Pastoral Council has just finished work on the development of a Strategic Plan for our parish called **Vision 2015** – and we are presenting it to you.

As St. Mark continues to grow, we need to make sure that we are using all of our resources in the best possible way. This plan will help us to focus and direct our resources more effectively today. It will also establish goals for the future.

A team of parishioners, members of the Parish Council and staff of St. Mark have worked this past year to put this plan together. Part of any planning process is gathering information from everyone involved at St. Mark – you, other parishioners, the staff, the priests, the deacons, teachers, volunteers – everyone. Several venues were used to gather this information, including personal interviews with staff and clergy and members of the different councils at St. Mark.

The following areas are the focus of the Pastoral Plan: Community Life, Communications, Liturgy and Spirituality, Evangelization, Faith Formation, Youth and Young Adult Life; and Social Services.

In the following pages, you will find the outcome of this work, which will benefit our parish.

Thank you for helping us plan the path St. Mark will take as we move toward 2015.

Yours in Christ,

Fr. Clifford G. Smith

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## Strategic Plan: Vision 2015

### I. INTRODUCTION AND HISTORY

St. Mark the Evangelist Catholic Church of Plano, Texas, today is a large parish of the Catholic Diocese of Dallas. At the time of its formation in 1966, there were 325 families in the church. Plano had only about 8,000 persons living within the city at that time. Plano's population was primarily affiliated with the Southern Baptist and United Methodist churches. Today, however, the city of Plano has an estimated population of about 275,000 persons.

As Plano began to grow in the 1970's, 1980's and 1990's, primarily from persons moving from all portions of the United States and Central and South America, as a result of the job markets in Dallas and other suburban cities, growth occurred at St. Mark's as well.

In 1964, Sunday Mass was first held in a Plano community center served by the Paulist Fathers from St. Paul the Apostle Parish in Richardson, Texas. Due to the increase in response, space was leased in a nearby public elementary school for Mass, Church services, and faith formation classes. In 1965, the Diocese of Dallas purchased 10 acres at the intersection of Highway 544 (15th Street) and Alma Drive in Plano, Texas. The new church facility was completed in September 1968.

In 1976, St. Mark the Evangelist Parish was the only Catholic community in Plano. It grew so rapidly that three additional parishes were established in the area. In 1978, plans for a permanent church and rectory for St. Mark began. The new church building was dedicated on January 18, 1981. The former church was remodeled to provide classrooms for faith formation and a new Catholic elementary school.

By 1988, the parish campus grew to include the present sanctuary, an enlarged activity building that includes a Cafetorium, two gymnasiums, and a two-story multi-office building which is the present pastoral center. Several houses on a neighboring street were also purchased over the years for future expansion. A new purchase, in 2010, was a former bank building across the street from the main campus which will house the church offices, ministries, and social gathering spaces.

St. Mark the Evangelist Catholic Community has grown from 325 families in 1966 to over 7,000 households of faith. Our programs for faith formation for children serve 1,500. The St. Mark Catholic School (kindergarten through eighth grade) has also grown to its present size of over 650 students and 45 faculty members. The St. Mark Preschool serves 140 three and four year old children. The St. Mark Child Development Center provides daily care for 120 children and over 50 children in the after-school program. An impressive number of ministries and

organization serve the needs of the St. Mark parishioners on a ongoing basis. A large number of volunteers offer their time and talents to keep St. Mark the Evangelist vital and active.

Over the years, St. Mark the Evangelist has welcomed parishioners of many diverse backgrounds and cultures all of whom enrich our community. We are blessed with a large Spanish-speaking community and offer three of our Sunday liturgies in Spanish. Additionally, we have a significant membership of a Filipino Community. St. Mark parish enjoys the participation of members from many cities outside of Plano. At any Mass at St. Mark, you will find a diverse Body of Christ, bringing many gifts to the whole community.

The **Strategic Plan: Vision 2015** is a guide or 'blueprint' for St. Marks to respond more effectively to the spiritual, educational and social needs of our community.

By having identified parishioner wants, needs, and suggestions, through surveys, interviews, and staff consultation, we hope to respond more effectively by developing this plan.

In the year of 2014 another Parish survey and plan should be prepared, building on the successes of this plan.

## II. COUNCILS

St. Mark's currently has three operating parish councils in support of the parish. The three councils are: Pastoral Council, Finance Council and Stewardship Council.

**The Pastoral Council** is a representative consultative group of parishioners to the Pastor. This body will lead the parish to plan for the future.

**The Finance Council** reviews the parish financial reports for expenses and income. The finance council advises the Pastor and Parish Manager regarding budgets, major expenditures, and other financial matters.

**The Stewardship Council** focuses on spirituality and educates about and promotes stewardship of time, talent, and treasure. It coordinates the ongoing parish process involved in the implementation of stewardship.

## III. COMMISSIONS

At St. Mark, the roughly one hundred ministries and organizations of the parish are divided into five commissions (Community, Faith Formation, Family and Adult Ministry, Service, and Worship & Liturgy). This serves to bring all ministry players to the table. As they gather, ideas are shared, events are publicized, and support is offered. The commission structure is designed to enable integration (being with one another), collaboration (working with one

another) and communication (listening to one another). Commissions provide an effective means for Fr Cliff to share his vision with all the ministries of the parish and for them to support the mission of St Mark.

Although the commission structure is highly organizational and serves a pragmatic function, the heart of the structure is spiritual. The commission structure is rooted in the Biblical ideal of the local church in order to foster the nurturing and growth of the Body of Christ as it is found in the parish church. Notwithstanding its Biblical basis, the commission structure is a model that we apply to our contemporary situation and dynamics. The commissions provide a structure in which our many ministries can function in terms of what it means to be church - one body, many members - and achieve the unchanging aspects of the New Testament ideal.

**The Community Commission** consists of ministries that promote social interaction and build fellowship as a core focus of their activities, in some cases by providing service to the parish community.

**The Faith Formation Commission** assists the pastor in developing and coordinating all parish activities relating to catechesis and faith formation for young and old alike.

**The Family and Adult Ministry (FAM) Commission** oversees ministries for singles, married and remarried couples, families throughout the life cycle, and widowed and divorced members of our community.

**The Service Commission** consists of those ministries which promote the social mission of the Church through direct service and ecumenical involvement. This commission is concerned not only with the good of parish members but also extends to those in need beyond parish boundaries.

**The Worship & Liturgy Commission:** supports the clergy in furthering full and active participation in the parish's liturgical, sacramental and prayer life. Ultimately, this commission structure is an integral part of implementing all facets of the Vision 2015 Strategic Plan.

**IV. STRATEGIC AREAS:**

After careful evaluation of parish needs, the planning committee determined 7 main areas of focus for the Vision 2015 Plan. Each of these areas will comprise of an introductory statement, goals and specific strategies to address them. These areas are: Faith Formation, Communications, Community Life, Evangelization, Spirituality and Liturgy, Youth and Young Adults and Social Services.

At the end of this plan, we are acknowledging the resources needed to achieve this Vision 2015 plan and establishing strategies to address these resources.

## 1. FAITH FORMATION / EDUCATION

*“They devoted themselves to the teaching of the apostles and to the communal life, to the breaking of the bread and to the prayers.”  
(Acts 2:42)*

### **Purpose:**

To provide increased opportunities for the members of the parish to deepen their Faith in Christ, understanding of our Catholic beliefs, centered on the mission of the Church.

### **Goal 1:**

Provide adequate formation to our parishioners, with a continued process of formation that lasts throughout the life of the parishioner.

### **Strategies:**

- The office of Faith Formation to serve as a clearing house to all activities from church organizations that touch Faith Formation, in an effort to avoid duplication and make sure teachings are of appropriate quality.
- Continue the informal Faith Formation teaching that Fr. Does from the Pulpit, as well as other classroom-based formation for adult parishioners, as allowed by established guidelines.
- Provide more opportunities for study of scripture, Catechism, Catholic teachings, encyclicals, apologetics, and lives of the saints.
- Continually evaluate our formal Faith Formation Programs to determine their adequacy and relevance in maintaining the core values of our faith, in the context of changing times, demographics, cultural and language diversity.
- Recognize the needs of bilingual families, in which there may be a language divide within Spanish-speaking households, to allow us to reach both the children and their parents in their preferred language.

**Goal 2:**

Develop a Faith Formation model that resonates with the current trends in communication and technology and facilitates opportunities for learning through multiple methods.

**Strategies:**

- Establish a Faith Formation resource center in our web site, where parishioners can access sanctioned catholic faith education resources available online.
- Record, reproduce and catalog the formation taught by our priests and make them available by several methods, such as online, checkout, etc.

**Goal 3:**

Facilitate the renewal of learning for our volunteer faith formation teachers, as well as continue to replenish the corps of volunteers.

**Strategies:**

- Continue to provide formal programs of education at low cost to both English and Spanish speaking volunteers.
- Increase the recruitment of volunteers that can bridge paths of communication to young faith formation members in preparation of Confirmation.

**Goal 4:**

Continue to support St. Mark Catholic School with financial, spiritual and facility upkeep, to maintain the high level of formation that has become a tradition in the Plano community.

**Strategies:**

- Incorporate financial and structural needs of the school into overall plans for the parish.
- Look for opportunities for mutual engagement of the school and the Parish.

## 2. COMMUNICATIONS

*Jesus said; "Nothing is concealed that will not be revealed, nor secret that will not be known. What I say to you in the darkness speak in the light; what you hear whispered, proclaim on the housetops."*  
(Mt: 10:26-27)

**Purpose:** This Communication component of the Strategic Plan is primarily focused on ways to keep existing parishioners and youth, involved and connected, to the parish by using various communication means.

### **Goal 1:**

We will communicate frequently, effectively and consistently with all parishioners.

### **Strategies:**

- Establish a media office that will be in charge of creating multimedia record of the activities of the parish (such as the Pulpit Teachings).
- To communicate through the Sunday Bulletins, pulpit announcements and quarterly newsletters, electronic communication media and other online social media.
- To communicate volunteer opportunities and ministry needs to all parishioners and invite their participation.
- Increase and improve campus signage.

### **Goal 2:**

We will create a Communications Plan to inform and educate the faith community about parish goals and visions, and ministries in a standardized format.

### **Strategies:**

- To create ways to implement social communication via Facebook, Twitter, blogs, and websites.
- To make sure that communications are bilingual.
- Maintain the content of our web site and other communication media updated and relevant.

**Goal 3:**

To facilitate dialogue and collaborative interactions among the ministries and commissions.

**Strategies:**

- To have joint ministry meetings on a quarterly basis.
- To integrate several ministries at a time into the agendas of standing committee meetings.
- To have on staff an IT-resource.

**Goal 4:**

We will invite, through active communication and evangelism, all parishioners and faith communities to share in our Catholic faith.

**Strategies:**

- To reach out to those in our Parish who do not attend services regularly.
- To create programs which will facilitate communication and dialogue.
- To survey parishioners on a regular basis.

**Goal 5:**

Permeate a culture of celebrating and acknowledging Stewardship to recognize the many contributions of time, talent and treasure by our parish members.

**Strategies:**

- Use the several communication mechanisms to inform parishioners of stewardship successes, and to express the parish's appreciation for contributions, i.e., through personal letters, bulletin, stewardship newsletter, a special spot on the web site, sharings at mass, etc., while respecting people's anonymity preferences.

### 3. EVANGELIZATION

*“Go into the whole world and proclaim the gospel to every creature.  
Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved.”  
(Mk 16:15-16)*

**Purpose:** To help fulfill the Mission of the Church and to further the presence of God in the world.

**Goal 1:**

Put in place ministries and programs that bring parishioners to a fuller encounter with Jesus Christ, thereby creating an evangelistic environment.

**Strategies:**

- Create within the Parish a committee whose specific purpose is evangelization to develop a comprehensive Evangelization effort.
- Provide opportunities of discipleship to foster conversion and renewal in every member thru programs such as CHRP, Marriage Encounter, Retreats, Cursillo, Women of Grace, Magnificat, Act Retreats, and RCIA; establish other intentional Evangelistic programs.
- Review all ministries, and their mission. Align as necessary to emphasize the evangelistic efforts.
- Provide more opportunities for study of scripture, Catechism, and the Catholic teachings.
- Continue to make every Mass a more intentional Evangelization effort thru greater sense of Prayer, calling to conversion, building of community, and a welcoming environment thru the Greeters and Ushers.
- Directly contact every inactive member of the Parish and invite them back to active participation in the parish.
- Equip parishioners by training and forming to be evangelistic within the parish ministries, one-on-one, and outside the parish.

**Goal 2:**

Become a welcoming Parish to all people, whatever their social or cultural background, "to worship together, to serve one another and to grow in faith".

**Strategies:**

- Make all facets of our parish more welcoming; including all volunteers, personnel, and staff.
- Increase bonds within the parish ministries by emphasizing faith sharing groups to build relationships in addition to ministry.
- Develop parishioners whose mission is evangelization and outreach.
- Foster a deepening of prayer life in the parish.

#### 4. COMMUNITY LIFE

*"Above all, let your love for one another be intense. Be hospitable to one another. As each one has received a gift, use it to serve one another as good stewards of God's varied grace."  
(1Pt: 4:8-10)*

**Purpose:** To Create an environment where the parish community is strengthened by the diversity of cultures that is reflected in the Body of Christ, and that the community works together to fulfill the great commission.

##### **Goal 1:**

Enable the various Groups of St. Mark to walk together toward the common goal of our Mission Statement and to work within their commissions to allow them to meet their goals more effectively.

##### **Strategies:**

- Create a greater awareness of the various Groups that make up St. Mark and offer educational and social programs that bring the various Groups together within their commission structure
- Commissions should promote projects that involve 2 or more ministries working together.
- Hold parish-wide events annually, using resources from the various groups, across commissions.
- Build on the diocesan "Coming Home" program – coming home to St. Mark: turning registered parishioners into active parishioners and further involving active parishioners.

##### **Goal 3:**

Increase participation in the various ministries thereby increasing St. Mark's ministries outreach.

##### **Strategies:**

- Create a new parishioner welcome program or expand the existing program, with the dual purpose of welcoming and presenting the various programs and opportunities St. Mark offers
- Recruit rather than just request for volunteers for the various needs of the parish. Seek the help of lay leaders to identify potential volunteers that can be persuaded to become more involved.

**Goal 4:**

Increase options for coordinated fellowship efforts of the community, making sure that Evangelism and Discipleship are incorporated within them.

**Strategies:**

- Recognize the fellowship needs of the diverse groups at St. Mark and direct efforts towards meeting the needs of specific groups, such as aging population, young couples as examples.
- Recognize language-specific needs of programs, in particular Spanish-speaking, to make sure those programs are supported in a bilingual setting.

## 5. SOCIAL SERVICES and COMMUNITY OUTREACH

*"For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, a stranger and you welcomed me, naked and you clothed me, ill and you cared for me, in prison and you visited me."  
(Mt 25: 35-36)*

**Purpose:** We're called to be Christ to one another; to fulfill our Christian mission to love one another, to share the Good News and in doing so to deepen our own faith; to carry out the church's mission to aid the poor and the needy and bring forth social justice.

### **Goal 1:**

Increase the number of people served by existing physical, emotional, spiritual, citizenship and other assimilation services that St. Mark's currently offers and in doing so increase our presence in the Plano community.

### **Strategies:**

- Supplement the social services, programs and classes the Plano Community and, Collin County and Private Business Sector offers including but not limited to : Clothes Closet, St. Vincent DePaul Food Pantry, Parish Tithe, St. Michael Society to Support the Military and Prison Ministry, English as a Second Language and citizenship classes
- Proper communication and information distribution will be needed to inform the community what social services, programs, ministries and classes St. Mark offers.
- Consideration should be given to the St. Mark aging community in terms or accessibility, physical and spiritual outreach.

### **Goal 2:**

The Family and Adult Ministry should continue to meet the needs of our parish and change as our parish needs change.

### **Strategies:**

- Provide proper resources within the Family and Adult Ministry to handle the administration of their programs and ministries.

**Goal 3:**

Effectively administer the donations of all physical goods.

**Strategies:**

- Understand the donation needs.
- Communicate needs.
- Manage the receiving and distribution of goods.

## 6. SPIRITUALITY AND LITURGY

*"Were not our hearts burning while he spoke to us on the way and opened the scriptures to us? The two recounted how he was made known to them in the breaking of the bread."  
(Lk.24:32-35)*

**Purpose:** Foster the spiritual growth of individuals and the community by promoting Stewardship as a way of life by providing each parishioner the opportunity to grow in their love of Christ and the Church.

### **Goal 1:**

Maintain faithful Liturgy through prayer, music or other avenues.

### **Strategies:**

- Maintain worship music.
- Maintain a prayerful Sanctuary space between masses

### **Goal 2:**

Create within the Parish a dynamic environment that fosters God's love and one that nurtures members to grow spiritually through worship, prayer sacraments and education.

### **Strategies:**

- Be sure that all ministries and commissions incorporate plans to grow deep in Christ and form Parishioners as Christians and Catholics.
- Provide learning opportunities for members to understand the reason and purpose of developing our spiritual life.
- Foster the appreciation of the presence of Christ in the Eucharist and all sacraments; encourage Adoration, and Spirit-filled celebration of each Liturgy
- Assure that our small groups incorporate specific purpose and intent for spiritual growth.

**Goal 3:**

Develop within each Ministry an intentional effort for personal spiritual growth. Ministries mirror our diverse Christian community, but also encourage discipleship and the growth of individual faith.

**Strategies:**

- Recruit lay members to be part of ministries to nurture and teach spirituality and build teams of committed leaders to establish and maintain ongoing spiritual growth ministries.
  
- Work with existing ministries to extend their ministries of discipleship and formation.

## 7. YOUTH AND YOUNG ADULTS

*"And Jesus advanced in wisdom and age and favor before God and man."  
(Lk.2: 52)*

**Purpose:** To provide an environment where the youth and young adults of the parish are spiritually nurtured and are provided the opportunity for active involvement in the parish.

### **Goal 1:**

Continue to evolve Youth Ministry to effectively reach a greater percentage of our youth parishioners.

### **Strategies:**

- Effectively communicate with the youth of the parish in the ways the youth are accustomed to so that the message of God and the Church will reach the youth.
- To communicate volunteer opportunities and ministry needs to all youth and invite their participation.
- Facilitate integration, not segregation, and joint fellowship between youth of different heritage – Asian, Hispanic and Anglo.

### **Goal 2:**

Assess Church's current role and involvement with the youth of the parish and community by means of interviews and surveys of staff, volunteers, youth and parents

### **Strategies:**

- Determine which current programs and activities are meeting needs of the youth and any additional resources those programs may need.
- Determine which current programs and activities are not meeting the needs of the youth and if those programs need to be adjusted or dismissed.
- Determine best use of resources to meet the most needs of the youth in our parish and community.

**Goal 3:**

Provide an environment that is attractive to the youth of the parish, school, and community and will provide them with opportunities to come to Christ, deepen their faith, an education in God's word, and ability to take responsibility in the Church by volunteering, serving, and witnessing

**Strategies:**

- Facilitate the spiritual growth of the youth in the parish.
- Facilitate lifelong involvement with the Church.
- Provide opportunities for evangelization to the youth of the community through the youth of our parish.
- Cultivate future leaders and role models inside the Church.
- Provide more opportunities for the youth of the school to integrate with the youth of the Church and to be active within the Church.

**Goal 4:**

Assessment of current programs, activities and ministries available to meet the needs of young adults by means of interviews and surveys of staff, volunteers and young adults of the parish

**Strategies:**

- Determine which current programs and activities are meeting needs of the young adult parishioners and any additional resources those programs may need.
- Determine which current programs and activities are not meeting the needs of young adults and if those programs need to be adjusted or dismissed.
- Determine most important needs of the young adult population and the best use of resources to meet those needs.

**V. RESOURCES (Staffing, Financial, Structural, Land, Facilities)**

In order to provide sufficient facilities for Ministry needs, the facilities for the Parish need constant and ongoing evaluation, thus, part of these plans includes strategies to address these needs.

- 1. FINANCIAL:** A parish is run on faith, love and financial resources. While weekly or monthly collections cover the majority of day to day expenses, large maintenance or capital improvement projects are not covered. Therefore, an ongoing process and plan to increase fundraising needs to be put in place.

**Goal 1:**

Identify a single point of responsibility to direct fundraising efforts for both the school and the parish.

**Strategies:**

- Establish and execute a funding strategy for large capital projects.
- A Development / Financing Plan shall be prepared for consideration and review by the Pastor and Staff.
- Grants and Foundation Applications shall be prepared by the responsible person.
- Develop a database from the school and school alumni, plus the church registry to be used as contacts to involve people in capital improvement projects
- Establish a program to reach out for support from those parishioners who have in the past been associated but may not be now, with the School or Parish.

- 2. STAFFING:** In order to implement and execute on the strategies stated before, in addition to lay volunteers, adequate staffing needs to be in place.

**Goal 1:**

Yearly assessment of population growth, mass attendance and available resources will require an equal assessment of available staffing.

**Strategies:**

- Establish an annual plan cycle, where staffing resources are considered, which will include optimization of available resources.
- Staffing plans to include annual performance assessment, where goals are compared to plan's achievement.

3. **FACILITIES and CAMPUS:** with growth of the Parish, ministries will dictate a greater need for facilities.

**Goal 1:**

Provide ongoing assessments of facilities' needs.

**Strategies:**

- A standing committee reporting to the Parish Manager and Father Cliff will assist to evaluate, study, and recommend facility improvements.
- Study alternative solutions and compare costs
- Recommend the priorities of addressing the building needs of the parish.

**Goal 2:**

Study major areas of Sanctuary utilization, expansion of parking, renovation of the Smyth Pastoral Center and larger child care and nursery needs. Incorporate the facility needs of St. Mark Catholic School.

**Strategies:**

- Evaluate the proper strategy for ongoing improvements to the Sanctuary and renovation of the Pastoral Center.

**Goal 3:**

Implement a comprehensive financial plan to properly fund facility needs.

**Strategies:**

- Interact with the Financial and Stewardship councils to study option to finance large facilities projects.
- Pay-off debt on the Legacy Building and Narthex during 2011.

**VI. Concluding Remarks:**

**This Strategic Plan has addressed the future direction and needs of the St. Mark Parish in both strategic areas and resources. This Strategic Plan should be updated and remain as a continuing planning process. As such, a Vision 2020 plan should be started no later than 2014. It is the intent that any major undertaking the parish begins is assessed against this Strategic Plan, to assure that it fits the parish's strategy and Mission Statement.**