

**The
Catholic Church
of St Ann
Pastoral Plan**

November 2016

A Letter from the Pastor

Dear Friends,

Many of us might remember Doris Day singing "Que sera, sera, whatever will be, the future is not ours to see, que sera, sera." Since Doris sang that song we have learnt, sometimes in a difficult way, the importance of planning for the future. We agree with Doris that we will have a future but I feel from my own experience, we can influence the future by our own efforts to read the signs of the time and to welcome the future with faith and enthusiasm.

That is the purpose of the Parish Pastoral Plan. How are we able to create a vision for our Parish? How will St. Ann become more effective in preaching the message of Jesus by the way we minister to ourselves and to those seeking a better relationship with Jesus and a parish community that will nurture that desire and invite the stranger to join us as we seek the same goal?

I thank the Pastoral Council for their visioning and for making concrete the essential elements of this vision. We will have a future. It is our decision to either sit back and have our future hoisted on us or we can be proactive in our efforts to welcome our future as a faith-filled loving community grounded in our commitment as disciples of Jesus.

God Bless,
Fr. Tom

Fellow St Ann's Parishioners,

After much prayer, discussion and discernment is a great honor to share with you the St Ann's Pastoral Plan.

Background

After I joined the Parish Pastoral Council in 2014, we began a discernment process to craft the framework for this plan based on feedback from parishioners in response to St. Ann's online survey. Shortly thereafter, Catholics across the Archdiocese responded to two additional surveys conducted by the Holy See in preparation for the Extraordinary Synod on the Family as well as the Archbishop's survey for the Pastoral Plan. Between the three surveys, an amazing 20,000+ responses were received. Although tightly connected to the Universal Church, St. Ann's clearly has its own unique culture and character yet in many ways, the responses mirrored one another. In addition, the PPC focused on benchmarking thriving churches, Catholic or otherwise, across the United States. Two key themes kept surfacing – **relationships** and **relevance**.

To help prioritize the specific recommendations from Catholics across the diocese, 12 separate sessions were conducted with parish representatives; clergy and lay leadership alike. After a thoughtful two-and-a-half-year process, Archbishop Wilton Gregory released the Archdiocese of Atlanta Pastoral Plan last spring. Collectively, four areas of Catholic life were strongly identified to be in need of attention:

- Knowing Our Faith
- Living Our Faith
- Spreading/Keeping Our Faith
- The Evolution of Our Parishes

Upon release of the Archdiocese's Pastoral Plan, we were among the first parishes within the 69 counties of the diocese to conduct our own strategic planning session specific to our parish. Members of the clergy, staff, ministry leaders and the PPC participated in two full day sessions at St Ann's to review and discuss in detail the 14 key recommendations released as part of the Archdiocese's plan. These were:

Knowing Our Faith

- Move to a family formation model that recognizes the diversity of family units today and that emphasizes the head of the family's role in faith formation.
- Prioritize adult catechesis
- Offer more opportunities to participate in parish life as a family – service days, spiritual activities, social events.

Living Our Faith

- Promote understanding the “why” behind the Church’s teachings.
- Prioritize charity and service as the epitome of living out the faith.
- Encourage a deeper personal prayer life.
- Build a stronger sense of unity within the parish and increase personal connection to the parish.

Spreading/Keeping Our Faith

- Promote and provide infrastructure for small faith communities to keep people connected to the Church.
- Use new technology and social media to keep the Church up to date and present in the lives of Catholics.
- Foster whole family programs to keep parishioners centered on the parish.
- Develop more formal outreach programs for groups who feel disenfranchised from the Catholic Church.

Evolution of Our Parishes

- Let qualified laity/deacons do more administration so priests can focus on sacraments/catechesis.
- Empower deaneries to collaborate and share ministries, staff, and clergy resources.
- Create a welcoming and nurturing environment for all cultures within the parish.

The response was quite positive. There’s no question we have a very good parish. We are blessed in many ways and St Ann’s already focuses on several of the key areas identified in the Archdiocesan process. Father Tom, for example, has long been a supporter of the laity taking leadership roles and, based on a recommendation from the PPC, hired a Parish Administrator almost a decade ago. This gave him and the other priests the opportunity to spend more time focusing on their sacramental work vs managing the day-to-day operational requirements of a parish. That said though, every parish can improve. Consistent with our parish mission statement, we as a La Salette parish family, strive to grow in our dedication to reconciliation through worship, works, word and sacrament.

Belong. Believe. Become.

We have broken the pastoral plan into three phases – Belong. Believe. Become.

We know that Jesus purposefully reached out to those who others wouldn't - The woman at the well (John 4:1-42), the lepers (Luke 17:11-19), the blind (Mark 10:46-52), the demon-possessed (Mark 5:1-20), the woman caught in adultery (John 8:1-11) and the sinful woman who anointed His feet (Luke 7:36-50). Jesus first let them know that they *belonged*. He made it clear that He loved them as brothers and sisters whether they chose to follow Him or not.

Something that followed naturally from receiving the unconditional love of God was that people *believed*. They didn't have to believe in Jesus before they were shown His love and

compassion. Rather, they believed *because of it*. And only after *belonging* and *believing* does one truly *become* transformed by Him from the inside out.

This was the inspiration for St. Ann's pastoral plan. On behalf of the entire Parish Pastoral Council, it is a great honor to share our vision for the next three years. We endeavor to create a parish where all *Belong, Believe and Become*; a place where we grow in our faith as we strive to be Jesus' hands and feet. A place where "We are Changing Lives."

Phase 1 - Belong

- Create a Welcoming and Nurturing Environment
- Foster Whole Family Programming
- Create a Culture of Small Groups
- Develop Outreach Programs for those who Feel Disenfranchised

Phase 2 – Believe

- Prioritize Adult Catechesis
- Encourage a Deeper Personal Prayer Life

Phase 3 – Become

- Prioritize Charity and Service as the Epitome of Living out the Faith

Essentially, our vision is to create a ONE DAY church ...Most of us know someone that NEEDS church. We know how much they would benefit from a relationship with Jesus and/or that they would find St Ann's a place of warmth, solace and community. Maybe that person doesn't feel welcome in the Catholic Church. Maybe that person is hurting from past wounds or broken relationships. Maybe that person doesn't feel like they belong. We pray for them. We pray that ONE DAY they might find their way to St. Ann's and that St Ann's be a place they feel welcomed and loved.

Each day, each mass, each encounter may just be the ONE DAY that someone in our parish has been praying for. In these cases, we have an opportunity to open our arms and show the loving mercy of Jesus Christ. With this in mind, let us, together, make St Ann's a ONE DAY parish.

Ultimately, for the pastoral plan to be more than a reference document, we, the laity, must take action. We are all called to be Jesus' hands and feet in different ways and I pray you will be receptive to the Holy Spirit's gentle nudge if you feel moved to bring this pastoral plan to life in any way. God is not calling us to go to church after all. Rather, He is calling us to **be** His church. As we strive to be more welcoming, relevant and inspirational in our works and deeds, may we become the ONE DAY parish that God intended.

To God be the Glory,

Amy Pedersen
St Ann's Parish Pastoral Council Chair
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“You could say to me, “But the Church is made up of sinners; we see them every day.” And this is true: we are a Church of sinners. And we sinners are called to let ourselves be transformed, renewed, sanctified by God.”

Pope Francis
The Church of Mercy



Creating a Welcoming and Nurturing Environment

Jesus included – not excluded. He loved unconditionally and opened his arms. St. Ann's is not a church that condemns or casts the first stone. Rather we strive to be a haven for all.

We know everyone is on their own faith journey and St Ann's strives to be there for (and with) all individuals regardless of where they are on the path. Some are just getting started. Some are coming back after years away. Some are at St Ann's week after week. No matter who they are, where they've been, what they've done or haven't done, ALL are always welcome at St Ann's. As Pope Francis said, "Let the church always be a place of mercy and hope, where everyone is welcomed, loved and forgiven."

We long to create an irresistible environment at St Ann's – A place where all are welcome and loved. A place where all feel they belong. A place that is relevant and inspirational. A place to grow in God's Word.

To achieve this vision, our strategic objectives include:

- Create a welcoming and nurturing environment
- Create a process to help onboard new members and help current members take the next step
- Hire a Director of Parishioner Engagement to champion these efforts

"By welcoming a marginalized person whose body is wounded and by welcoming the sinner whose soul is wounded, we put our credibility as Christians on the line. Let us always remember the words of Saint John of the Cross: "In the evening of life, we will be judged on love alone."

— **Pope Francis, *The Name of God Is Mercy***

"God makes Himself felt in the heart of each person. He also respects the culture of all people...God is open to all people. He calls everyone. He moves everyone to seek Him and to discover Him through creation."

— **Pope Francis, *On Heaven and Earth: Pope Francis on Faith, Family, and the Church in the Twenty-First Century***

BELONG. BELIEVE. BECOME.

OBJECTIVE: To Create a Welcoming and Nurturing Environment

GUIDING PRINCIPLE: We believe the best way to create this environment is to create a process to help onboard new members and help current members take the next step.

METHODOLOGIES: Embrace. Engage. Empower.

EMBRACE

New to Catholicism

- Dedicated section on st-ann.org
- Returning Catholic group
 - RCIA
- Catholic Q&A section on st-ann.org

New to St Ann

- Bulletin/Screens – Weekly invitation
- Dedicated Section on st-ann.org
 - Renovation of Welcoming Table: *kiosks to RSVP for Welcome Gathering, couches, volunteers*
 - Monthly Welcome Gathering
 - Encourage participation before registration*
 - Each dept. represented by staff*
 - Dedicated staff ownership*
 - 1:1 time with staff member*
- Automated registration/ministry connection*

ENGAGE

Pick a Small Group

- Weekly discussions around Sunday readings
- Certain leaders equipped for new members

Pick a Ministry

- Recommended list of engaging ministries

6 & 12 Month Check-In from Staff/Support Staff

EMPOWER

Leadership in small group or ministry

TIME FRAME: 2017

EVALUATION: JANUARY 2018

Creating a Culture of Small Groups

Hearing the message of God at mass can be an awesome experience. As we benchmarked other growing faith communities, we found that transformational churches also prioritize small group discussions. In addition to what is experienced at mass, spiritual growth happens with others, in community, when there are open lines of communication and freedom to speak into one another's lives. Participants can learn, ask questions, engage in the lives of others, and maybe even become a bit vulnerable among other people who are doing the same in small groups. There's a level of intimacy in small groups that can be lost in large numbers.

Small groups, in fact, are where much of the theology taught in Scripture and the priests' homilies begins to be fleshed out in both conversation and action. These groups also deliver deeper friendships that can double as accountability with a trusted group of friends. When people know you, really know you, your life becomes far more transparent, creating opportunities to deal with life as it happens.

Finally, small groups provide opportunities to discuss relevant issues with others in the church. Church life issues can be discussed openly among trusted friends. Mission can be planned out and participated in together. Lives are sharpened and leaders developed. Small groups are an absolute necessity for involving as many people as possible in the life and ministry of St Ann's. After trialing a small group program this year, we see value for the parish and its parishioners to scale the program to help people continue down their spiritual journey.

To achieve this vision, our strategic objectives include:

- Develop a culture for small groups
- Develop and train small group leadership
- Develop materials for Catholic theology/ties into weekly liturgies; customized for age groups

"I think this is truly the most wonderful experience we can have: to belong to a people walking, journeying through history together with our Lord, who walks among us! We are not alone; we do not walk alone. We are part of the one flock of Christ that walks together."

— **Pope Francis, *The Church of Mercy***

"Whenever we encounter another person in love, we learn something new about God."

— ***Pope Francis, *The Joy of the Gospel: Evangelii Gaudium****

BELONG. BELIEVE. BECOME.

OBJECTIVE: To Create a Culture of Small Groups

GUIDING PRINCIPLE: We believe that small groups are an absolute necessity for involving as many people as possible in the life and ministry of St. Ann's. Parishioners coming together in small groups have the opportunity to encounter Christ in Scripture, in each other and in prayer.

METHODOLOGIES: Embrace. Engage. Empower.

EMBRACE

- New parishioners, returning Catholics and those already members of our parish community will regularly be invited to join a small group in various ongoing communications through our ministries, from the pulpit, parish bulletin and personal invitation.

ENGAGE

- Personal invitations from existing small group members to join a small group will be promoted and encouraged from parish leadership.
- Create invitation Sundays twice a year to encourage parish-wide involvement and provide easy access to information and signing up to join a small group within the parish. Highlight stories of those who have embraced small groups.
- Create small groups which include returning Catholics and those new to the faith, those new to the parish, or new to small group involvement; along with those already active in parish life. Provide a nursery as needed.
- Customize curriculum for new groups forming that introduce each new group to the best practices in small groups.

EMPOWER

- Create a Small Group Planning and Leadership Development Committee under Adult Ed.
 - o *Decide on best materials, marketing and recruitment methods for members and leaders*
 - o *Develop and train small group leaders to be equipped for the groups they serve. Provide training, resources and feedback sessions at least twice a year.*
- Enlist the help of other PPC committees and parish ministries to encourage involvement of those they serve to join a small group.
- Provide various times, days and opportunities, some with a nursery provided, to join a small group that fits parishioner's needs.

TIME FRAME: 2017

EVALUATION: JANUARY 2018

Fostering Programs for the Whole Family

Today, the term “family” has many meanings...Blended families, extended families, nuclear families, single families, etc. In the Catechism, the Christian family is defined as a community of faith, hope, and charity; it assumes singular importance in the Church, as is evident in the New Testament (2204). St Ann’s is indeed a Christian family; a community of faith, hope, and charity.

Despite our best intentions though, we are not perfect. In the words of Pope Francis, “Perfect families do not exist. This must not discourage us. Quite the opposite. Love is something we learn; love is something we live; love grows as it is ‘forged’ by the concrete situations which each particular family experiences. Love is born and constantly develops amid lights and shadows.”

The importance of the family for the life and well-being of society entails a particular responsibility for society to support and strengthen marriage and family (2210). At St. Ann’s, we want to do just that.

To achieve this vision, our strategic objectives include:

- Develop and implement monthly family program opportunities around most popular mass times
- Develop and implement family mission trip
- Develop faith-based marriage enrichment programs and social activities

“We need to strengthen the conviction that we are one single human family.”

— **Pope Francis, *ENCYCLICAL LETTER LAUDATO SI' ON CARE FOR OUR COMMON HOME***

“Faith grows when it is lived and shaped by Love.”

— **Pope Francis**

BELONG. BELIEVE. BECOME.

OBJECTIVE: To Foster Programs for the Whole Family

GUIDING PRINCIPLE: We believe families come in all shapes and sizes and are instrumental in faith. “Love is something we learn; love is something we live; love grows as it is ‘forged’ by the concrete situations which each particular family experiences.” – Pope Francis

METHODOLOGIES: Embrace. Engage. Empower.



EMBRACE

“Traditional Families” & “Nontraditional Families”

- Meet the “family” where they are on their journey.
- Offer family programs that are convenient to multiple schedules
- Create family-friendly spaces in the church for all family types to gather
- Develop programs that recognize the diversity of today’s family and welcome all who want to come to know Christ



ENGAGE

- Invite all families to join in a local “Family Mission Trip” where they can see the direct impact of their work in the community
- Recruit St Ann’s families to lead monthly programs following popular Mass times
- Alert St Ann’s parishioners and visitors of upcoming family events at least a month in advance through the use of traditional media methods as well as social media and text alerts



EMPOWER

- Encourage all St. Ann’s families to participate, no matter where they fall on the spectrum
- Expect feedback from ministry heads regarding how the family can become involved in their efforts
- Preach inclusion from the pulpit so that our parish becomes a welcoming, nurturing environment for all those that seek Christ.

TIME FRAME: 2017

EVALUATION: JANUARY 2018

Develop Outreach Programs for those who Feel Disenfranchised

The Catholic Church of St. Ann's is *inclusive*. As Fr Gabe says, "St Ann's is a place for those to be who they are. Not who they should be, or who they ought to be, or who they long to be...but who they are." At St Ann's, we don't point fingers. We don't throw stones. Our parish is a welcoming haven for sinners, not a stuffy sanctuary of saints.

With hearts wide open, we try our best to spread Jesus' reconciling love in this wounded world. Despite our best efforts, we are not perfect in our words or our actions. However, we strive to grow in God's grace and help others do the same. We aspire to be Jesus' hands and feet on earth. All are welcome here, especially those who have felt disenfranchised in the past. We include. We worship. We serve. We love. We are St. Ann's.

To achieve this vision, our strategic objectives include:

- Develop more formal outreach programs for people that feel disenfranchised
- Create vehicle to welcome and inform the disenfranchised with special attention to fallen away Catholics, divorced and same sex marriages
- Generate Ambassadors Group

"Instead of imposing new obligations, (Christians) should appear as people who wish to share their joy, who point to a horizon of beauty and who invite others to a delicious banquet."

— **Pope Francis, *The Joy of the Gospel: Evangelii Gaudium***

"The Church does not exist to condemn people but to bring about an encounter with the visceral love of God's mercy."

— **Pope Francis, *The Name of God Is Mercy***

"Jesus' love goes before us; his look anticipates our needs. He can see beyond appearances, beyond sin, beyond failures and unworthiness. He sees beyond our rank in society. He sees beyond this, to our dignity as sons and daughters, a dignity at times sullied by sin, but one which endures in the depth of our soul. He came precisely to seek out all those who feel unworthy of God, unworthy of others."

— **Pope Francis**

BELONG. BELIEVE. BECOME.

OBJECTIVE: Develop Outreach Programs for those who Feel Disenfranchised

GUIDING PRINCIPLE: We believe the best way to welcome home disenfranchised Catholics is to understand/address the obstacles to returning to full sacramental union with the Church and to have an informed, inclusive community of faith.

METHODOLOGIES: Enlist. Embrace. Engage

Generate Ambassadors Group

-Focus on Outreach and Welcome/Invitation for current and new members

Collaborate with Ministries

- that address the needs of disenfranchised Catholics



ENLIST

- Other PPC subcommittees working on the three additional subcommittee efforts (Welcoming, Small Groups and Whole Family Programming)
- Diversity of St. Ann's ministries to embrace an inclusion atmosphere in outreach, engagement and support



EMBRACE

Disenfranchised by Catholicism

- Disenfranchised by (among others)
- Church teachings
- Lifestyle choices/decisions

Actions

- Provide access to latest Catholic teachings on inclusion, return to sacraments
- Identify current ministries with a focus on disenfranchised
- Create vehicle to welcome and inform the disenfranchised



ENGAGE

TIME FRAME: 2017

EVALUATION: JANUARY 2018

Prayer for My Parish

Almighty God, my parish is composed of people like me. I help make it what it is.

It will be friendly if I am. It will be holy if I am. Its pews will be filled if I help fill them.

It will do great work if I work. It will be prayerful if I pray. It will make generous gifts to many causes if I am a generous giver.

It will bring other people into its worship if I invite and bring them. It will be a parish family of loyalty and love, of fearlessness and faith, of compassion, charity and mercy if I – who make it what is – am filled with these same qualities.

Therefore, with the help of God, I will dedicate myself to the task of being all things that I want my parish to be.

Bless my journey, Lord God that I might build the Church through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.