

# Diocese of Bridgeport Parish Pastoral Plan “Building a Bridge to the Future”

## Part One: Introductory Information

Parish:	Holy Trinity Parish, Sherman, CT
Pastor:	Fr. Richard Gemza
Date:	September 15, 2016

<u>Parish Task Force Members:</u>	<u>Leadership Position:</u>
1) Father Richard Gemza	Pastor
2) Mr. Hugh Boylan	Finance Council
3) Mrs. Michele Curnan	Director of Religious Formation
4) Mr. John Dwyer	Finance Council
5) Dr. Janice Jordan	Parish Council and Trustee
6) Mr. Douglas Kastilahn	Parish Council, Chair and Trustee
7) Mr. Kieran McGrath	Finance Council
8) Mr. Sean McGrath	Parish Council
9) Mrs. Theresa Pakrad	Parish Council
10) Mr. Michael Pelletier	Parish Council
11) Mrs. Kim Santoro	Parish Council and Parish Secretary
12) Mrs. Bernadette Schopfer	Finance Council, Chair

Signature of the Pastor: \_\_\_\_\_ *Rev. Richard J. Gemza*

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ 9/29/16 \_\_\_\_\_

## Pastoral Challenge #1: Catechesis and Education

### A. Pastoral Challenge to be addressed: Catechesis and Education

### B. Rationale for Choosing this Priority Area:

Holy Trinity enjoys a strong religious formation program for young parishioners in grades one through eight. Students are actively engaged in sacramental preparation, and as part of their journey toward development as mature, committed Catholics, they participate in special Masses throughout the year, take part in service projects, and engage in retreats designed to deepen the children's understanding of their faith and traditions. The Director of Religious Formation supervises a vibrant educational program with many devoted catechists who volunteer their time and talent to teaching the children and passing on their knowledge and love of the faith. In addition to the regular faith formation program, special catechists work with children who have not participated in the programs for whatever reason, but who seek now, with their parents, to close the gaps in their sacramental preparation. Feedback about the religious formation program is very positive and is viewed as one of the strongest assets of our parish.

Holy Trinity recognizes that, when parents have a deep understanding and live out their commitment to the faith, their children truly benefit as the entire family worships together. The Director of Religious Formation continuously interacts with parents, encouraging them to attend Mass and to be faith-filled role models to their children. The parish seeks to more fully support all adult parishioners in their pursuit of knowledge of the faith and their commitment to it, especially parents whose ability to pass on their faith to their children is so critical.

In an effort to meet the catechetical and educational needs in our parish, we believe it is critical to focus on the following over the next two years:

- Holy Trinity will reach out to the youth and young adult members of the parish so that they will continue to hold on to their fervor for the sacraments and to the importance of being active members of the Holy Trinity faith community.

**This includes supporting the families of teens and young adults who may be influenced to pull away from the faith during these turbulent years;**

- **Holy Trinity will evangelize those adult parishioners who experienced incomplete or weak catechesis in their past, and the parish will enrich the faith of all its adult parishioners through encouraging and supporting their love, knowledge, and commitment to the Word in community with other parishioners.**

**These catechetical and educational priorities came to light in discussion with parishioners and parish leaders.**

**C. Statement of the First Goal to be achieved:**

**Holy Trinity Parish seeks to further develop programs for parish youth, especially those who have received their Confirmation and are now in high school, to prepare them to continue living the truth of the Gospel throughout their formative years.**

**Additionally, Holy Trinity Parish will design and implement programs targeted to all the adult parishioners to increase their understanding of the faith and their capacity to live the Gospel in their daily lives.**

**a. Action Step # 1 to achieve the Goal:**

**At the completion of the Confirmation program in 2017, Holy Trinity will strongly encourage its youth to become Lectors and to participate in other parish service work so that these students will have a forum for further increasing their faith, for putting their faith into action, and for voicing their questions about the faith.**

**The Director of Religious Formation and/or her designee will develop at least one follow-up outreach in 2017 and continue to build this program through 2018 with the help of students engaged in the Confirmation program. The**

Pastor will informally assess the efficacy of this outreach with the DRE, the Confirmation catechists, and with the Confirmed, of course.

b. Action Step #2 to achieve Goal:

By January 2017, our Pastor, Father Gemza, will appoint lay leaders of his choice to help develop and facilitate at least one additional program a year over the next two years designed specifically to reach those parishioners who want to grow their knowledge of the faith and to live as witnesses to Jesus in the world. This can be done through the traditional ways we've used in the past, such as book discussions, special presentations on prayer or Church teachings, Contemplative Prayer groups, Bible study, etc. Additionally, it will also include new ways of reaching those parishioners who do not attend Mass regularly; those who may have been hurt by the Church in the past or have left the Church; and those who are in need of authentic and faithful teaching because their faith formation as children was not adequate.

The purpose of this outreach is to provide opportunities for all adult parishioners to learn and live their faith in a loving and inclusive atmosphere. The outcome we seek is that *all* of Holy Trinity's parishioners will go from just *knowing about* Jesus, to *truly knowing* Jesus and living His Word.

We will look for support from the Diocesan Office for ideas to help us reach out to the marginalized or alienated Catholics, and for new ideas for revitalizing the faith of those commitment Catholics who continue to want to learn more.

## Pastoral Challenge #2: Liturgy and Worship

### A. Pastoral Challenge to be addressed: Liturgy and Worship

### B. Rationale for Choosing this Priority Area:

Holy Trinity is a small parish in comparison to others in the diocese, but we have a history of which we are proud. More than twenty-five years ago, Holy Trinity was a mission church, and the Catholics in the area petitioned the diocese to become a parish for the town of Sherman. The church was built with the hard work and funds from a core group of committed Catholics, and they continue to be very proud of their church. Several parishioners of financial means have helped to sustain the parish during its formative years, and now collections at Mass are increasing due to increased registrations. The parish is proud that it met its Annual Catholic Appeal of \$65,000 for two years in a row, and the parish also increased its participation rate in the ACA.

Mass attendance is steady, and parish membership numbers 451 active registrations with 350 inactive ones. Daily Mass attendance is small but consistent. Many committed volunteers fill the lay leadership roles of Eucharistic Minister, Lector, and Catechist—as well as Parish Council and Finance Council seats—sharing their time, talent, and treasure with love. Social events and fundraisers to celebrate the holidays or special circumstances are well attended and developed by formal and informal parish leaders. The parish registration roll continues to increase.

The mission statement of Holy Trinity reads: *“We are Holy Trinity Catholic Community of faith. We are a diverse and welcoming community of believers in Jesus Christ. We are energized and empowered by Christ’s love, forgiveness, and healing. We strive to experience and make Him known to others through joyful worship, heartfelt prayer, formative education, life-giving service, and supportive fellowship.”* The parish seeks to foster a personal conversion for each parishioner and to deepen every parishioner’s relationship with the Lord in the community of the Catholic Church. Father Gemza provides challenging homilies that explicate the Scriptures and call the parishioners to think deeply about what it means to live the Gospels. The parish website and especially Father’s weekly Parish Newsletter provide information and inspiration to

the members of the parish throughout the week. The liturgical music program has improved greatly over the years.

In spite of Holy Trinity's many strengths as a small and Spirit-filled faith community, Holy Trinity seeks to address these perceived needs:

- Holy Trinity will continue building an atmosphere of welcome and hospitality toward new and inactive members of the parish at all parish worship and social events, and will expand parish leadership and service opportunities to new and younger parishioners;
- Holy Trinity will further strengthen all lay ministers' and parish leaders' knowledge of the sacramental guidelines and liturgical updates through on-going training.

C. Statement of the Second Goal to be achieved:

In order to address the Liturgy and Worship Pastoral Challenge, Holy Trinity will continue building an atmosphere of welcome and hospitality toward new and inactive members of the parish at all parish worship and social events, and will expand parish leadership and service opportunities to new and younger parishioners.

Additionally, Holy Trinity will further strengthen all lay ministers' and parish leaders' knowledge of new sacramental guidelines and liturgical updates through on-going training.

a. Action Step # 1 to achieve Second Goal:

By January 2017, the Parish Council, with Father Gemza's leadership, will establish additional ways to reach out to new and current members of the parish for the purpose of engaging them as fully participating members of parish life that includes leadership and service opportunities, catechetical and educational opportunities, and through worship and social events. The special emphasis of this Action Step will be to build up the Body of Christ so that the entire parish membership works as a community to live their faith in all they do.

The Parish Council, as they establish new ways to welcome and engage parishioners, will also assess the efficacy of their program and make adjustments, as needed, over the next two years. The Parish Council may access the newly formed diocesan Leadership Institute for innovative ideas in order to fulfill this Action Step. The Chair of the Parish Council will assist Father in leading this initiative, and the Chair will seek financial support from the Finance Council for any outreach with attendant costs.

**b. Action Step #2 to achieve Second Goal:**

Father Gemza has already begun the increased training of Eucharistic Ministers and Lectors during July of 2016. During 2017, he will continue to build up the skills of EM's and Lectors regarding their knowledge of sacramental guidelines and expected protocols. Additionally, he, with the assistance of a lay volunteer of his choice, will build a stronger, more robust altar server program as another way to engage the youth of the parish (and their families).

Father will also encourage all parish leaders in their ministries to invite new parishioners to serve, and he will encourage all parish leaders (and potential leaders) to attend leadership training offered by the diocesan Leadership Institute.

Father will informally assess the efficacy of the training he provided and the training provided by the Leadership Institute over the next two years, and he will communicate this to the Parish Council.

**A. Temporalities and Administrative Challenge to be addressed: Buildings and Facilities**

**B. Rationale for Choosing this Priority Area:**

At the beginning of his tenure as Pastor, Father Gemza sought assistance from key parish leaders and his Trustees to conduct a thorough evaluation of all parish buildings and the areas around them. In response, Holy Trinity's Parish and Finance Councils made a commitment to refurbishing and updating parish buildings and grounds that were showing wear. This effort started with a new roof for the rectory, re-building the rectory fireplace, a new walkway to the Pastor's front door, and a new coat of paint for his home with replacement of some of the siding. In addition, Father Gemza led an effort to replace the baptismal pool that was leaking at the front of the church. He asked parishioners to support the project, they donated money, and the project was completed over a year ago. Father was also able, with the help of parish leaders, to open up the skylights in the church (which had been covered over) to emit more light, update the lighting in the church, and replace worn carpeting around the altar and new baptismal font.

After the completion of an evaluation of the buildings and grounds, Father and his Council members prioritized the list of needs and began planning for the completion of these items, especially those that are safety-related or in need of immediate consideration. Below is a list of those priorities:

- Update external lighting and timers to digital system (currently in progress);
- Repair folding walls in the parish hall;
- Replace flooring for the parish hall;
- Repave the church parking lot;
- Remediate mold in church and in parish hall;
- Replace or do extensive repairs to roof for church in the next several years;
- Replace hot water heater and furnace in the rectory in the next several years.

**C. Statement of the Third Goal:**

Holy Trinity Parish will work toward the completion of the first five items on the priority list over the next two years, and will complete the entire list within the next five years.

**a. Action Step # 1 to achieve Third Goal:**

**By December 2018, Holy Trinity Parish will complete the following priority list items:**

- **Update external lighting and timers to digital system (currently in progress);**
- **Repair folding walls in the parish hall;**
- **Replace flooring for the parish hall;**
- **Repave the church parking lot;**
- **Remediate mold in church and in parish hall.**

**Persons responsible for the completion of these projects are the Finance Council and the Parish Council with the Pastor and Trustees. The projected costs for each project are determined by the protocols established by the Finance Council and the Diocese (if estimated cost necessitates bidding).**

**b. Action Step #2 to achieve Third Goal:**

**By December 2020, Holy Trinity Parish will complete the rest of their current priority list items:**

- **Replace or do extensive repairs to roof for church;**
- **Replace hot water heater and furnace in the rectory.**

**Persons responsible for the completion of these projects are the Finance Council and the Parish Council with the Pastor and Trustees. The projected costs for**

**each project are determined by the protocols established by the Finance Council and the Diocese (if estimated cost necessitates bidding).**