

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

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## Part One: Introductory Information

**Parish:** St. Thomas the Apostle RC Church

**Pastor:** Rev. Miroslaw Stachurski

**Date:** August 29, 2016

### Parish Task Force Members:

- 1) Robert Lametta
- 2) Dr. William Stephanak
- 3) Thomas Gorzkowski, CPA
- 4) Ulrike Schambeck, CPA
- 5) Marge Simon
- 6) Mark Simon, CPA
- 7) Ed Bocchino
- 8) Thomas Donaher
- 9) Karen Gasper
- 10) Glenn Iannaccone
- 11) Christopher Jarboe, Esq.
- 12) Mary Nichols
- 13) Rose Sferlazza
- 14) Catherine Mulvehill
- 15) Nancy O’Connell
- 16) Lisa Castorina

### Leadership Position:

- Trustee
- Trustee
- Finance Council Chairman
- Finance Council
- Finance Council
- Accountant
- Parish Council
- Parish Council
- Parish Council
- Parish Council
- Parish Council
- Parish Council
- Parish Council
- Business Manager
- Secretary/Admin Asst.
- Religious Education Staff

**Signature of the Pastor:** \_\_\_/s/ Rev. Miroslaw Stachurski\_\_\_\_\_

## **Introduction**

**The Parish of St. Thomas the Apostle in Norwalk, Connecticut, is happy to submit this Strategic Plan for the future of our Parish. As a result of the Synod convened by Bishop Frank Caggiano, we are eagerly putting into practice our plan to “Building a Bridge to the Future.” Members of the Clergy, Parish Council, Finance Council, Trustees and staff have met and carefully evaluated all the areas of our Parish Life and using the Synod guidelines, we have selected to focus on Family Life and Liturgy and Worship.**

**St. Thomas the Apostle Parish now has approximately 1,100 registered parishioners. As the demographics of East Norwalk have changed significantly over the last 15 years, so has the composition of our parish. We still have a very large aging senior population, as well as an increased immigrant, lower income population. Where we have lost traction is the same area in which most parishes have experienced loss—middle income families with children. But we are slowly regaining new parishioners who are just starting their families which will in time also rejuvenate our Religious Education program enrollments.**

**We are seeing an increase in weddings and baptisms, and through a new Welcoming Ministry, we will set as our goal to maintain contact and develop relationships with these new members and families. An overarching goal is to increase the number of volunteers that assist with Parish events and ministries. The burden of running the Parish, coordinating all events and developing ministries has fallen on the shoulders of the Pastor and staff. We need to migrate to a shared leadership model where many take responsibility for the life of the Parish, not just the same few. We are working to maintain the core group of our aging volunteers, while we engage the younger parishioners to “own” their parish and work to ensure its success.**

Pastoral Challenge #1: Worksheets for Parish Goals and Action Steps

***Please note: One Worksheet must be completed for each pastoral challenge to be addressed.***

**A. Pastoral Challenge to be addressed:**

- Catechesis and Education
- Evangelization
- Family Life
- Leadership
- Liturgy and Worship

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

We feel the Parish will be most successful if it focuses on involving families in its programming, ministries and worship. This Challenge goes hand in hand with “Liturgy and Worship” which is why we have selected both of these areas to address. Success in this area should also impact in the other challenges as well.

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

**Increase the number of families attending Family Mass, participating in the Sacrament of the Mass and volunteering and attending parish events.**

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

Advertise Family Mass and actually invite all families with young children to “Fill the Church!”

**Summary Information for Action Step #1:**

- Timeline for completion: September 1, 2016 – December 1, 2017
- Responsible person/Task Force: Pastor, DRE, Staff & Volunteers
- Diocesan Office assisting (if any): None
- Projected Costs (if any): None

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

Invite families, as a unit, to join in the Mass as Lector teams.

**Summary Information for Action Step #2:**

- Timeline for completion : September 1, 2016 – December 1, 2017
- Responsible person/Task Force: DRE, Staff, Lector Coordinator
- Diocesan Office assisting (if any): None
- Projected Costs (if any): None

**c. Action Step #3 to achieve Goal:**

Establish a youth greeting ministry for middle schoolers.

**Summary Information for Action Step #3:**

- Timeline for completion: November 27, 2016 – April 1, 2017
- Responsible person/Task Force: Pastor, DRE & Volunteers
- Diocesan Office assisting (if any): None
- Projected Costs (if any): \$300 (est)

**d. Action Step #4 to achieve Goal:**

Invite high school age parishioners to join a social justice program culminating in a domestic mission service trip, using their parents as chaperones and supervisors.

**Summary Information for Action Step #4:**

- Timeline for completion: September 30, 2016 – June 30, 2017. Trip pending based on participation, but tentatively Summer 2017.
- Responsible person/Task Force: Pastor & Volunteers
- Diocesan Office assisting (if any): None
- Projected Costs (if any): Depends on mission selection; fundraising events will be held to cover program costs as well as seeking corporate underwriting.

**e. Action Step #5 to achieve Goal:**

Offer relevant retreats and speakers for families to deal with today’s pertinent issues and stressors.

**Summary Information for Action Step #5:**

- Timeline for completion: September 25, 2016 – June 30, 2017
- Responsible person/Task Force: Clergy, DRE & Invited Guests
- Diocesan Office assisting (if any): Diocesan Communications Office  
Office of Faith Formation
- Projected Costs (if any): \$400-\$800 per speaker or as negotiated

**f. Action Step #6 to achieve Goal:**

Through homilies and our Religious Education program, re-educate parents on their roles as first educators of faith, and ensure all parents are Virtus trained.

**Summary Information for Action Step #6:**

- Timeline for completion: September 25, 2016 & Ongoing
- Responsible person/Task Force: Pastor & DRE
- Diocesan Office assisting (if any): Office of Safe Environments
- Projected Costs (if any): Cost of background checks

**g. Action Step #7 to achieve Goal:**

Establish a mechanism that allows families to reach out for pastoral care, using an easy feedback/communication vehicle that is available in the Church, online and through the Religious Education program.

**Summary Information for Action Step #7:**

- Timeline for completion: November 27, 2016 – November 26, 2017
- Responsible person/Task Force: Pastor & Office Staff
- Diocesan Office assisting (if any): Diocesan Communications Office
- Projected Costs (if any): TBD

#### **h. Action Step #8 to achieve Goal:**

Establish a Hospitality Committee to host and assist with Parish social gatherings and events.

##### **Summary Information for Action Step #8:**

- Timeline for completion: October 1, 2016
- Responsible person/Task Force: Pastor & Committee Volunteers
- Diocesan Office assisting (if any): Catholic Service Corps  
Office of Family Life
- Projected Costs (if any): TBD

#### **i. Action Step #9 to achieve Goal:**

Develop family-oriented social events that are of interest to the target audience, using some of those same families as event coordinators and volunteers.

##### **Summary Information for Action Step #9:**

- Timeline for completion: September 1, 2016 – June 30, 2017
- Responsible person/Task Force: Pastor, DRE, Staff and Ministry volunteers
- Diocesan Office assisting (if any): None
- Projected Costs (if any): TBD

**j. Action Step #10 to achieve Goal:**

Strengthen Ministry serving Parish homebound and seniors.

**Summary Information for Action Step #10:**

- Timeline for completion: November 1, 2016
- Responsible person/Task Force: Pastor & Volunteers
- Diocesan Office assisting (if any): None
- Projected Costs (if any): TBD



**A. Pastoral Challenge to be addressed:**

- Catechesis and Education
- Evangelization
- Family Life
- Leadership
- Liturgy and Worship

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

This area has been selected as a priority because we need to reach out to parishioners who have stopped attending Mass, and be more engaging with parishioners when they do attend. We need to modernize, to the degree possible, in order to appeal to a younger and more diverse population.

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

We shall be more welcoming to all who attend Mass, being sure to let parishioners and visitors alike know that their attendance and participation is appreciated and valued. And we shall strive to have vibrant and relevant homilies that uplift, educate and inspire.

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

Reach out to inactive families to ask why they are not participating through mailings, emails, personal phone calls and face-to-face outreach.

**Summary Information for Action Step #1:**

- Timeline for completion: September 30, 2016 – June 30, 2017
- Responsible person/Task Force: Pastor, Parish Council & Finance Council
- Diocesan Office assisting (if any): None
- Projected Costs (if any): Mailing & Printing TBD

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

Develop relevant and vibrant homilies that uplift, educate and inspire.

**Summary Information for Action Step #2:**

- Timeline for completion: Ongoing
- Responsible person/Task Force: Pastor & Guest Speakers
- Diocesan Office assisting (if any): None
- Projected Costs (if any): TBD

**c. Action Step #3 to achieve Second Goal:**

Develop a Welcoming Committee whose responsibility it is to follow up with new parishioners, enlist adult greeters for Masses and put a personal face on the Parish.

**Summary Information for Action Step #3:**

- Timeline for completion: November 27, 2016 – November 26, 2017
- Responsible person/Task Force: Committee Members, Pastor & Staff
- Diocesan Office assisting (if any): None
- Projected Costs (if any): TBD

**d. Action Step #4 to achieve Second Goal:**

Assess the need/desire for cross-cultural and culture-specific programming, and if necessary, develop a plan based on that assessment due to significantly changing demographics in the Parish.

**Summary Information for Action Step #4:**

- Timeline for completion: November 27, 2016
- Responsible person/Task Force: Pastor, Liturgy leaders & Volunteers
- Diocesan Office assisting (if any): Office of Faith Formation
- Projected Costs (if any): TBD

**e. Action Step #5 to achieve Second Goal:**

Hold a Ministry Fair to inform and educate parishioners of the various ministries and volunteer opportunities we have at the Parish.

**Summary Information for Action Step #5:**

- Timeline for completion: Lent 2017
- Responsible person/Task Force: Pastor, DRE, Staff & Ministry Leaders
- Diocesan Office assisting (if any): Leadership Institute
- Projected Costs (if any): TBD

**f. Action Step #6 to achieve Second Goal:**

Improve and update music at all Masses working with not only the Music Director, but staff and volunteers.

**Summary Information for Action Step #6:**

- Timeline for completion: November 27, 2016
- Responsible person/Task Force: Music Director, DRE & Pastor
- Diocesan Office assisting (if any): TBD; Planned outreach to Sacred Heart University & Fairfield University
- Projected Costs (if any): TBD

## Temporalities and Administrative Challenge: Worksheets for Parish Goals and Action Steps

### A. Temporalities and Administrative Challenge to be addressed:

- Buildings and Facilities
- Finances
- Community Life

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

The Parish has just completed a 3-year cycle of significant repairs and upgrades to its buildings and facilities. The vast majority of repairs were paid for from accumulated savings which are now depleted. The Parish must increase revenues, control expenses and re-establish savings for future needs.

### C. Statement of the Third Goal:

The Parish desires to increase its offertory by \$24,000 on an annualized basis (per fiscal year) and overall rental revenues while also reducing operating costs.

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

The Parish will undertake an Increased Giving Campaign, and will reach out to all parishioners, active and inactive to educate them about the need for them to support their Parish.

#### Summary Information for Action Step #1:

- Timeline for completion: October 31, 2016
- Responsible person/Task Force: Fr. Mirek Stachurski, Catherine Mulvehill, Nancy O'Connell, Ulrike Schambeck, William Austin

- Diocesan Office assisting (if any): None
- Projected Costs (if any): \$2,000 for printing and advertising (est)

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

The Parish will negotiate new lease(s) with tenant(s) to ensure fair and equitable payments are received for use of Parish facilities.

**Summary Information for Action Step #2:**

- Timeline for completion: July 31, 2017
- Responsible person/Task Force: Fr. Mirek Stachurski, Christopher Jarboe, Esq.,  
Catherine Mulvehill
- Diocesan Office assisting (if any): Legal Department will need to review proposed lease agreement once drafted.
- Projected Costs (if any): None

**c. Action Step# 3 to achieve Third Goal:**

Staff hours will be reduced and expenditures curtailed until such time as cash flow and collections have improved.

**Summary Information for Action Step #3:**

- Timeline for completion: Reductions implemented as of July 1, 2015
- Responsible person/Task Force: Fr. Mirek Stachurski
- Diocesan Office assisting (if any): None
- Projected Costs (if any): None

**d. Action Step# 4 to achieve Third Goal:**

Improve financial transparency and reporting to parishioners through the State of the Parish annual meeting and increased quarterly reporting in the bulletin.

**Summary Information for Action Step #4:**

- Timeline for completion: October 2016
- Responsible person/Task Force: Fr. Mirek Stachurski, Catherine Mulvehill,  
Thomas Gorzkowski
- Diocesan Office assisting (if any): None
- Projected Costs (if any): Printing costs

**e. Action Step# 5 to achieve Third Goal:**

Develop a vicariate-wide plan for sustaining the food pantry which services Norwalk and the surrounding towns.

**Summary Information for Action Step #5:**

- Timeline for completion: December 31, 2016
- Responsible person/Task Force: Pastor & Finance Committee
- Diocesan Office assisting (if any): Permission and support from Bishop Caggiano is needed.
- Projected Costs (if any): None

## **Optional Question:**

- 1. If you had the ability to respond to a third pastoral challenge, which would you choose and why?**

The Parish would select “Catechesis and Education” because it requires such a significant updating and revamping to match current learning styles. We are simultaneously working on various aspects of upgrading our program, but we have limited resources to do so.