



Saint Mary of the Immaculate Conception 2023-2028 Strategic Plan Revisited

Our Plan Revisited

We are grateful for the participation we received in the recent parish survey. The results of the survey revealed wholehearted parish support for the strategic plan. An impressive 90% of survey respondents indicated support. Having said that, we have listened to your feedback which indicated the need for a more measured and phased approach. Our consultants shared their professional judgment that our parish community, if following the recommendations outlined in their report, possesses the potential to support a \$1.0 - \$1.2 million campaign.

In response to your continued encouragement, yet hearing the need for more clarity, the present document shares a revised plan with greater detail and a lower financial goal.

A Foundational Pillar of the Community

With its roots dating back to 1833, St. Mary of the Immaculate Conception remains a foundational pillar of the city of Muskegon and the surrounding central city. Its prominent location in downtown Muskegon for nearly 200 years signals the Catholic Church's deep roots in the area as well as its ongoing commitment to growing the faith and serving the local community.



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The present plan serves to preserve that rich heritage and engage everyone in the work God is doing in Muskegon. We are also gladdened by the recent addition of so many parish members arriving from the recently closed parishes of Our Lady of Grace and Sacred Heart. Their presence adds to the richness of the parish and broad representation of the greater Muskegon community.

Plan Objectives

We are launching this critical initiative to ensure that St. Mary of the Immaculate Conception Parish, building upon its strong history, continues the work of leading souls to God. That is the primary vision and “golden thread” running throughout this plan. As we are led to God through our worship of Him, we desire to be led to see and respond to the needs of others in our community.

In order to strengthen our ability to carry out this vision, vital investments to improve and upgrade our Church are needed to preserve our beautiful space of worship. Further, the revised plan details a creative and more efficient use of space along with specifics on the infrastructure and renovations needed to support expanded efforts in formation, evangelization, and outreach.

Worship



Glorifying God

Our honor to God starts with our plan to preserve and continue to beautify His home. Work is required to restore key parts of the church structure. Upgrades are needed to maintain the splendor of the interior space.

Charity



Reaching Out to Others

Building upon existing charitable efforts at St. Mary's and in response to increased food prices, we see an essential need to expand the work of the existing food pantry, so that we can better serve our brothers and sisters in need.

Evangelization and Discipleship



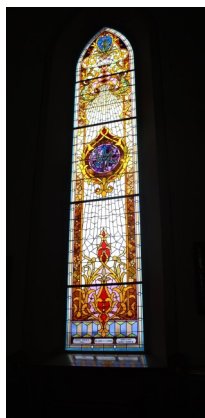
Making Disciples of All Generations

The good news of the Gospel is for everyone, and we want to help all who are seeking a deeper relationship with God and greater knowledge of His ways. We want to provide opportunities for people of all ages to encounter God, be formed in a life of discipleship, and be equipped and sent out on mission.

Glorifying God

“The visible church is a symbol of the Father's house toward which the People of God is journeying and where the Father ‘will wipe every tear from their eyes’...In its earthly state the Church needs places where the community can gather together. Our visible churches, holy places, are images of the holy city, the heavenly Jerusalem, toward which we are making our way on pilgrimage.”

[CCC 1186 & 1198]



“My house shall be called a house of prayer for all nations” (Mark 11:17)

Crucial Needs

In order to further our mission at St. Mary of the Immaculate Conception Parish critical renovations and repairs are needed, including:

In the church:

- Completion of the bell tower repairs
- Tuck pointing (mortar repair) and gutter work on the lower church
- Repairs to leaking welds in the stained glass windows
- Repairing or upgrading the current red carpeting

In the rectory:

- An upgrade to the current rectory bathroom to be fully accessible for individuals using a wheelchair will be required. We will also render the rectory main level accessible through construction of a wheelchair ramp. Other current rectory rooms will be renovated for parish offices (instead of creating offices at the former Hennessy's property).
- Finally, crucial brickwork on top of rectory and rectory brick mortar repair is needed to create a stable space for atria for the Catechesis of the Good Shepherd and future offices.

To preserve and acknowledge our joint heritage with Our Lady of Grace Parish, we also propose moving the Our Lady of Fatima Shrine from its current site at OLG to Saint Mary's.

Making Disciples of All Generations

Catechesis of the Good Shepherd

We plan to introduce a new approach for the formation of children called Catechesis of the Good Shepherd. Catechesis of the Good Shepherd (CGS) seeks to assist the 3-12 year old child in fostering a relationship with God in a prepared environment that is appropriate for the child's stage of development. Founded by biblical scholar Sofia Cavaletti and Montessori guide Gianna Gobbi, CGS is rooted in Sacred Scripture and the Liturgy, and utilizes the pedagogy of Maria Montessori, a physician, educator, and faithful Catholic.



CGS is a long, slow work that strives to honor the religious potential of the child and respond to his or her spiritual needs in order to grow in relationship with Jesus, the Good Shepherd. The Catechesis is offered in over 37 countries throughout the world, and is easily adaptable to the culture of the child.

The primary work of the children is done in a prepared environment called an "atrium" which is more like a church than a classroom. It is a place where the children learn to contemplate God.

While there are three levels of CGS, we plan to start by renovating two rooms at the rectory to create Level 1 and Level 2 atria. We plan to offer a Level 1 (3-6 years old) here at St. Mary's by the start of the 2024-2025 academic year. We plan to expand CGS to offer Level 2 (6-9 year years old) and Level 3 (9-12 years old) in the next few years. The program will also be supported by trained catechists – we anticipate 4-6 individuals will receive formation in CGS principles and methodology this summer.

Critical Needs to Implement

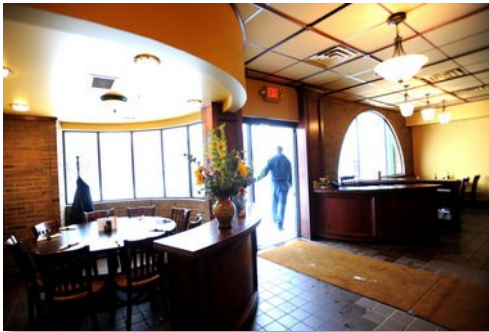
We will renovate and remodel existing rectory rooms to be used as Catechesis of the Good Shepherd atria. Numerous materials need to be built for CGS atria including: ("Works," presentations, needed furniture.)

Given that CGS and office space will be utilized in the Rectory, Fr. Kyle will be moving into the apartment space in the former Hennessy building on the second floor. This will make for a more sensible living space for him, and allow for much needed CGS and office space in a building more suited to that purpose. To make the apartment space more livable, some minor improvements will be made.

Making Disciples of All Generations

The Vision for Hennessy's A Bridge between the Church and the World

The recent purchase of the former Hennessy's property adjacent to the church and rectory expands our ability to implement various initiatives in the areas of evangelization and discipleship. The new space is already being used to host feast day celebrations, men's and women's groups, Exodus 90 groups, RCIA and other sacramental preparation, and coffee and donuts after Mass.



We plan to upgrade and rename this space. We see the opportunity through the use of this more informal space to build community inside and outside the parish, strengthening existing relationships and forming new ones. We hope to make the space a bridge between the church and the world, in order to share the Gospel with those who are seeking but do not yet feel comfortable entering the formal setting of a church.

Through a variety of events and programs, we plan to support the formation of adults of all ages (as outlined on the next page) and create an inviting and open environment for parish as well as community members. Through simple hospitality over coffee or beverages, scheduled talks or spontaneous discussions, space for reading good books and spiritual reading, we hope to lead people into an encounter with the Good, True, and Beautiful.



In order to enhance these experiences for all, the interior space needs work. Specifically, significant updates of paint, lighting, kitchen equipment, fire suppression, and HVAC are needed, in addition to some light remodeling and beautification of the space. All of this is to make the space more efficient, functional, warm, and welcoming.

Making Disciples of All Generations

Reaching Our Youth



We are moving to a small group model for youth ministry. Formation in a small group setting is ideal for providing mentorship and community for young people as they grow in the Catholic faith, learn practical ways to live it, and acquire a taste for prayer on their own and with others. Boys and girls will meet in separate groups throughout the year on a day/time set by the group members.

Forming Young Adults

Building upon the success of current for young adults ages 18-35 (i.e. Tacos & Theology, Theology on Tap, Trivia Nights and other social events), we will continue to offer formation and social opportunities specific to this age group. Continued partnership with other parishes is also planned, offering additional formation for young adults.

The new space at the former Hennessy's property, once further upgraded, will provide a beautiful and yet comfortable setting for forming new relationships, strengthening the parish community and helping young people grow in their faith.



Making Disciples of All Generations

Equipping Adults of the Parish

Growing in our relationship with the Lord involves ongoing formation. To that end, we plan to continue offering a variety of pathways of formation for all adults of the parish:

- **Small Discipleship Groups:** Individual groups for men and women requiring a regular commitment. Typically made up of 5-8 people, their purpose is to provide formation, community, and accountability as members pursue a life of holiness patterned after the life of Jesus within the sacramental and liturgical life of the Church. Groups would engage in more intense periods of formation during Advent and Lent, while maintaining a regular meeting rhythm at other times of the year.



- **Theology on Tap:** Speakers will be brought in to provide talks on particular topics of interest in a low-pressure environment where people can invite their friends for a time of learning and fellowship.



- **Date Nights:** Evenings will be set aside for married, engaged, and dating couples to receive formation pertinent to living out the vocation of marriage in today's world.
- **Parish Missions:** These events will serve as a jump start to a lifestyle of discipleship, a time of equipping disciples for mission, or an opportunity for people to invite others outside the walls of the Church to hear the Gospel message.

These and other events will make full use of both the Church proper as well as the new space at the former Hennessy's property. The Church may be more conducive to more formal events involving times of prayer and adoration, such as parish missions, while Hennessy's will serve as an excellent space for building community.

Reaching Out to Others

Saint Mary's Parish has a strong history of charitable giving. The Giving Tree at Christmas, Thanksgiving and Christmas food baskets, and direct donations to those in need are just a few examples.

Aware of many local initiatives serving the common good in the community, we will continue to direct charitable contributions in support, moving the parish towards tithing 10% of its parish collections.

The recent increase in food prices has placed tremendous pressure on members of our surrounding community who are on limited incomes. This has likewise placed a similar strain on local food pantries and St. Mary's Food Pantry is no exception.



Responding to this urgent need, the "Mary's Heart" food pantry needs permanency and upgrades. Some renovation of Lourdes Hall will take place along with the addition of more shelving to secure the pantry and offer it a visible home.

We further propose the creation of a parish fund to set aside dollars available for the emergency purchase of critical food and household items during times when donations and inventories run low.



Utilizing a small allotment of rectory lawn space, a community garden initiative is possible, with the help of parish volunteers, to provide fresh vegetables to go along with much of the fruit that is already growing on church grounds, all to be provided to the food pantry initiative.

We also hope to continue to build on previous efforts to reach out to the broader Muskegon community (for example, the blessing of the bikes during Bike Time)

St. Mary's parish has been consistently dedicated to work in the pro-life movement, and in partnership with other pro-life organizations in our community, we hope to grow our efforts to promote the dignity of human life from conception to natural death.

Plan Budget

<p>Worship: Glorifying God</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Complete exterior renovation project of St. Mary's including: ■ Bell tower repairs ■ Lower church tuck pointing (mortar repair) ■ Restore copper and gutter work ■ Repair of leaking stained glass welds ■ Fix or upgrade red carpeting ■ Render the rectory main level accessible through construction of a wheelchair ramp and upgrade the rectory bathroom to make it handicap accessible. ■ Renovate other rectory rooms for parish offices. ■ Securing brick work on top of rectory, creating a stable space for future offices and CGS space. ■ Tuck pointing (mortar repair) rectory brick for the same purpose. ■ Move Our Lady of Fatima Shrine from Our Lady of Grace to Saint Mary's. 	<p>\$750,000</p>
<p>Evangelization and Discipleship: Making Disciples of All Generations</p> <p>Rectory</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Renovate and remodel existing rectory rooms to be used as Catechesis of the Good Shepherd atria. ■ Build numerous materials needed for CGS atria. (Works, presentation materials, needed furniture.) <p>Hennessy's</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Renovate existing interior to create a hospitality initiative--a space to support evangelization, discipleship and hospitality (coffee or other beverages, books, Catholic reading) ■ Update paint, lighting, artwork, and modernize kitchen features. 	<p>\$400,000</p>
<p>Charity: Reaching Out to Others</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Respond to community needs by supporting local area initiatives working for the common good in the community, moving the parish towards tithing 10% of its collection income. ■ Dedicate additional funds to the pantry for food purchase needs when donations run low. 	<p>\$50,000</p>
<p>Total Financial Goal</p>	<p>\$1,200,000</p>

Questions and Answers

Q: How will the renovations and upgrades to St. Mary's Church impact regular parish activities like Mass and other liturgical events?

A: We hope the impact will be minimal. Much of the repair and upgrade work is exterior, and for any of the interior work, we will collaborate with construction teams to minimize any disruption to the daily or weekly sacraments.

Q: Regarding the proposed Catechesis of the Good Shepherd program, what specific changes will be made to the rectory rooms to accommodate this initiative?

A: Rooms need to be painted and furnished with furniture that meets the physical needs of the child. Materials will be made to prepare “works” that are used to assist the child in meditating on Scripture and the Liturgy leading them to a deepening of their relationship with God.

Q: With the purchase of the former Hennessy's property, how do you anticipate this space will facilitate the parish's mission of evangelization and discipleship, especially in engaging with the wider community?

A: By creating a “low pressure, high socially comfortable” space for us to gather, and have discussion, reading, talks, meetings, food, and drink, this is envisioned to become a space where anyone feels welcome. This is both an evangelization opportunity as well as a parish unity aim!

Q: Why is the parish moving towards giving 10% of its collection income to charity?

A: The obligation to tithe has a long precedent throughout Scripture and in the Tradition. Jesus reminds us that “whatever we do to the least of [his] brethren, we do to [him]”. St. John Chrysostom says: “Not to enable the poor to share in our goods is to steal from them and deprive them of life. The goods we possess are not ours, but theirs”. By tithing to our own charitable initiatives and to other organizations in the city of Muskegon, we hope to do our part in caring for the poor.



Pledges of Commitment

Ways to Support

This plan is for everyone! Therefore, it will take the prayer, help, and financial assistance of every parishioner for the good of the people of God here at St. Mary's. How can YOU assist? Below, you'll see all the ways people can get involved. There is a way for each person to participate: Prayer, volunteering, and financial support are three avenues anyone can access.

After reading through these, visit our **Web Site Commitment Page** (linked at the end of this section) to pledge how you plan on being a part of this plan.

Prayer

Prayer is fundamental for all followers of Christ Jesus: "Apart from me, you can do nothing". Without it, any of our efforts are in vain. Prayer is the only assured way we can seek God's will in our parish and implore his protection from forces that would seek to stop and divide us. Each person is able to pray.

We have an ambitious goal: to have someone praying for our parish every hour of every day of the week. We invite all to pray for the protection of our parish and the work God is doing here through the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary, and for an outpouring of the Holy Spirit, that we might have the courage and the strength to go out and both be and make disciples.

By signing up, you need not pray an entire hour...a simple three Hail Mary's at the beginning of the hour will suffice. However, feel free to offer more! Rosaries, Chaplets, Novenas, or even an hour in front of the Blessed Sacrament as intercession will be most welcome!

Please, sign up to pray for us, and help us find as many as we can to fill every hour of every day of the week with prayer! You may choose to more than one hour if you wish. To sign up, please scan the QR Code or visit this link: <https://www.signupgenius.com/go/10C0E45ACAA2BA5FFC25-around3#/>



We are asking everyone to choose at least one hour of the week when you'll pray for our parish.

Volunteer

Much of what we are proposing will require the help, talent, and gifts of many people! Please let us know what you're talented with, gifted in, or interested in, and we'll be happy to have a conversation with you about how to best utilize your gifts - we'll have a place for anyone willing to help. This kind of initiative cannot be done with only a few! Please pray and consider how you can assist. Our Commitment Page will also have a place to sign up for volunteer opportunities.

Pledges of Commitment

Ways to Support (continued)

Financial Support

While we cannot equally give, we can equally sacrifice. During the feasibility study, everyone was asked how they could give something extra to help us raise the necessary funds to provide for the current needs of our parish, as well as our vision to continue to grow and open our doors to Muskegon.

- Please consider offering a “lead gift” to help our initiative get underway.
- As this plan covers three years, you may pledge your total additional support weekly (156 weeks), monthly (36 months) or annually (3 gifts).
- Increasing your normal contribution by even 1-2% annually enhances our efforts.
- Personal tithing generates gifts for both giver and receiver. Please consider tithing 10% of your income.
- If you would like to learn more about providing a gift by directing a tax-free distribution from an IRA called a Qualified Charitable Distribution (QCD), please contact the parish office.
- Others you know may be similarly motivated to support the present plans at St. Mary’s. Please share this plan with them or provide us contact information on the pledge envelope or our web site so that we might reach out to them.

Pledge Steps

To make your pledge of commitment for the future of our parish, please scan the QR Code or visit the link below:

<https://www.osvhub.com/stmarysmuskegon/forms/commitment>



You may instead complete the Pledge Envelope contained in this report and mail it to the Parish Office or simply drop it in the collection basket the next time you attend Mass.

Closing Remarks

Commitment and responsibility are vital to the mission of this parish. God has given each of us unique gifts, so that together as a parish we might realize Christ’s 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 obey everything I have commanded”. Please prayerfully consider how you can take part.