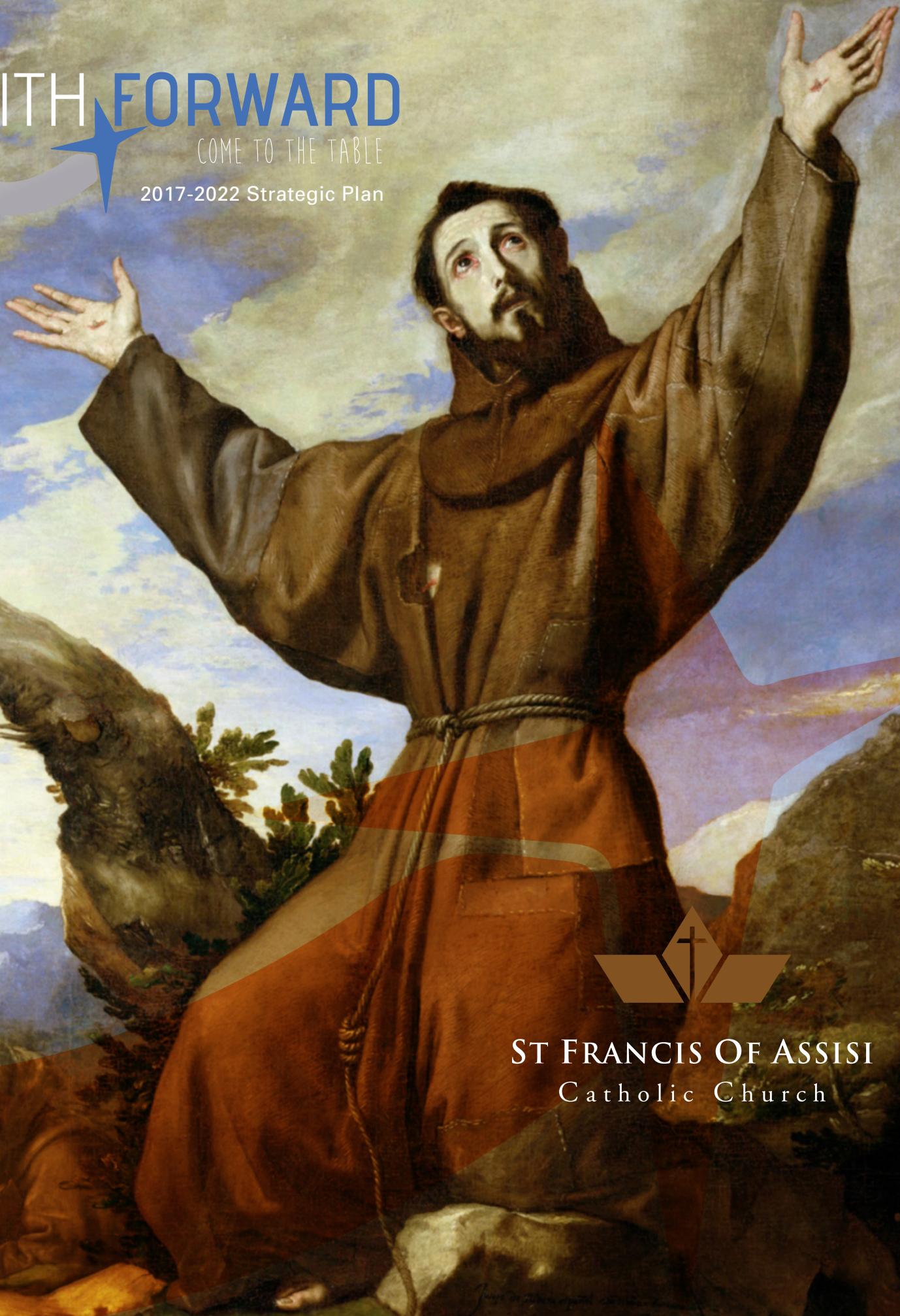


# FAITH FORWARD

COME TO THE TABLE

2017-2022 Strategic Plan



ST FRANCIS OF ASSISI  
Catholic Church



Dear Parish Family,

With eyes looking to Jesus Christ and hands stretched to heaven, St. Francis of Assisi beheld a vision of our Lord and received the stigmata (see front cover). That stigmata was a sign of his discipleship, a witness to his stewardship and a testimony of his evangelization. As St. Francis had a vision of our Lord and imitated him, so too we ask for vision so that we can imitate our Lord as his disciples.

Vision is an essential part of our life of faith. As Proverbs pointedly states, "Where there is no vision, people perish" (29:18); but where there is vision there is success. And the bible goes on to say, "Vision is a witness for the appointed time, a testimony to the end; wait for it, it will surely come" (Hab 2:3). This is exactly what our parish has done for the past year: we have waited for a vision, and it has come. The Faith Forward parish visioning process was inaugurated on September 4th, 2016. From that time till today we have striven to invite every member of our parish into dialogue about their hopes, dreams, needs and desires for our parish.

And our vision is this: *to invite people to become Disciples of Jesus Christ through proclamation of the Gospel and inclusion within the parish family.* This is the goal that is set before us.

The core of this vision is Discipleship and it has three goals: Stewardship, Evangelization and Parish Operations. Discipleship is the foundation Christian life; stewardship is its response. Stewardship is the response of a Christian disciple to the overwhelming love shown us in Christ Jesus expressed in communion of sacrament and life within a parish. And one who is both a disciple and a steward seeks to share the message of the Gospel through evangelization. And the message of the Gospel is this: to proclaim God's love for the Redemption of sin through the Advent of Christ so that by Confessing his name all people might receive Eternal life (G.R.A.C.E.). These three goals, Evangelization, Stewardship and Parish Operations, are broken down on the next pages into four or five strategies, and again, into several concrete actions.

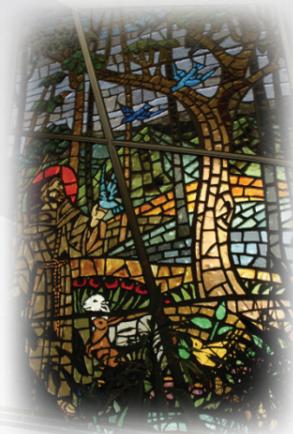
I am honored to present this strategic plan to the parish. May the Holy Spirit inspire us to invite all people into the life of Christ as we imitate the spirit of St. Francis unto the glory of God the Father.

In Christ,  
Rev. C. Jarrod Lies



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TO NOURISH OUR LOVE OF GOD THROUGH JESUS CHRIST UNDER THE GUIDANCE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT. CENTERED IN THE EUCHARIST, WE ARE DEVELOPING A FAITH COMMUNITY THROUGH PRAYER, EDUCATION, WORSHIP, AND CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP. AS STEWARDS OF GOD'S LOVE, WE STRIVE TO SHARE OUR GIFTS AND TALENTS FOR THE SERVICE OF GOD AND ALL HIS PEOPLE.



# Overview

## Evangelization

*"The proclamation of Christ and His Gospel by word and the testimony of life, in fulfillment of Christ's command."*

To enhance the sharing of the Gospel through outreach, prayer, proclamation and pastoral care.

## Stewardship

*The grateful response of a Christian disciple who recognizes and receives God's gifts and shares these gifts in love of God and neighbor*

To inspire parishioners to have a greater appreciation for the stewardship way of life through formation, communication and invitation.

## Discipleship

*"Responding to Jesus' call to follow Him and shape one's life in imitations of Him."*

To invite people to become disciples of Jesus Christ through proclamation of the Gospel and inclusion\* within the parish family.

## Parish Operations

*"The resources, policies and procedures, and leadership required to manage the parish"*

To insure parish facilities, finances, communication and leadership are in place and funded to support the parish's mission.

St. Francis of Assisi is blessed. Beloved priests, an expansive campus, a quality school, vibrant ministries, and well attended Masses are all indicators of a thriving parish. One of the greatest blessings is the parish's reputation of being the pioneer of stewardship in the Diocese of Wichita and beyond. St. Francis has fostered a culture that forms people committed to responding to God's call to discipleship. Further, it has formed Catholics all over the country in the mechanics of stewardship and the blessings that flow from living a stewardship way of life.

It would be easy for the parish to maintain the status quo. Parishioners would be fed spiritually, and new souls would come to the faith. However, falling into mediocrity has never been the St. Francis way. Parishioners recognize that as good as the life of the parish is, both parish leaders and parishioners aspire to go from maintenance to mission by: 1) Going deeper in their understanding of stewardship, 2) Becoming even more effective at sharing the Gospel, and 3) Providing the resources to achieve the parish's mission. The result – St. Francis will be fully embracing the New Evangelization by inviting more people to become disciples of Jesus Christ.

*\*Inclusion: the attitude whereby all people are accepted for who they are as they are and invited into our community.*

# Goal One

## 1 Evangelization

“The proclamation of Christ and His Gospel by word and the testimony of life, in fulfillment of Christ’s command.”



among adults. Developing new catechists to help provide more formation opportunities, improving the weekend welcoming environment, and offering more small prayer groups are just a few examples how proclaiming the Gospel can be more effective.

*\*Proclamation: the active sharing of the Gospel message by word and example.*

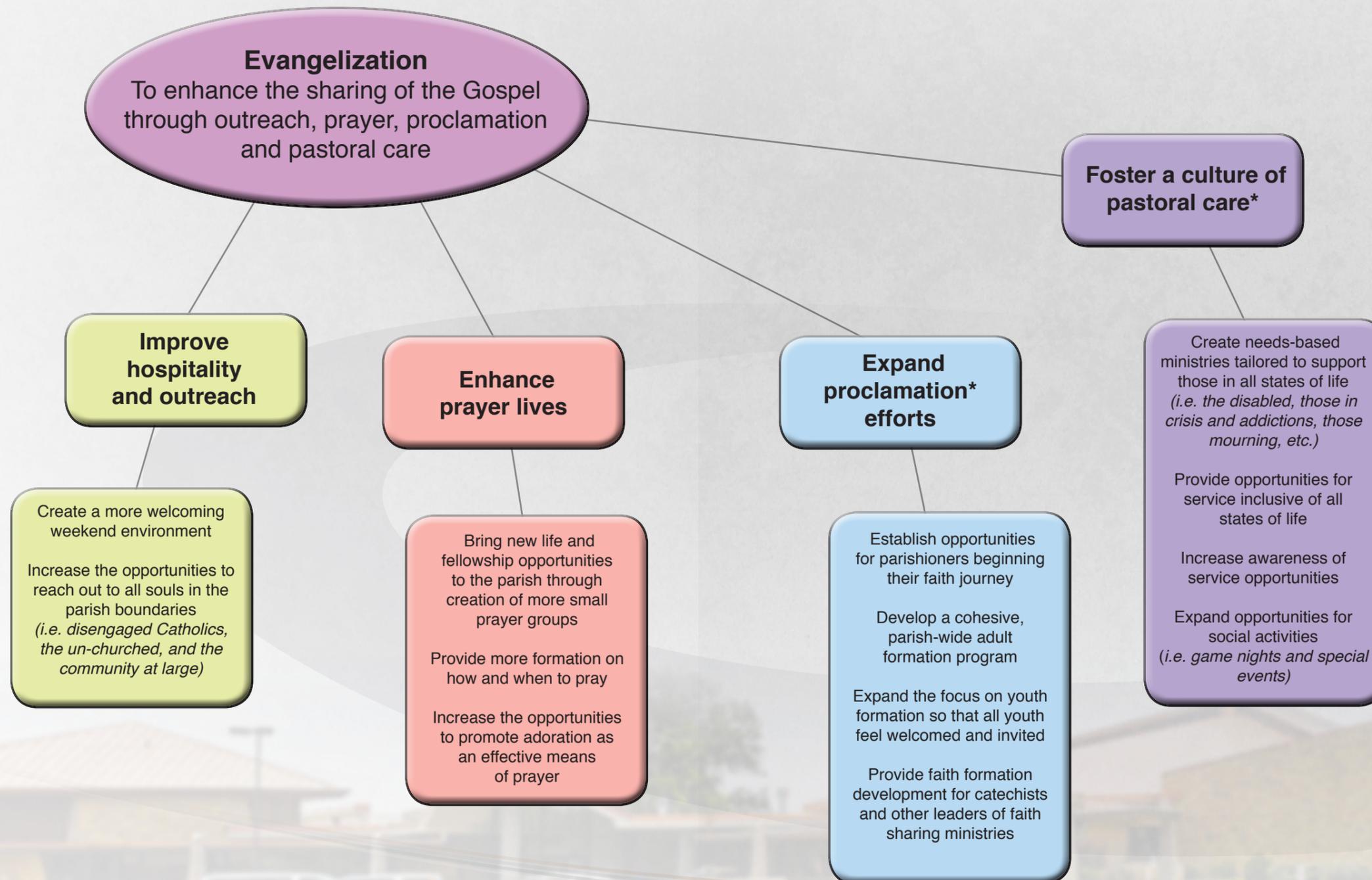
*\*Pastoral care: the provision of service and aid to a community of people so that they are protected from the pressures of the world and nourished in their unique needs.*

### Evangelization

*He who reads much and understands much, receives his fill. He who is full, refreshes others. St. Ambrose*

Fortunately, there are numerous opportunities for parishioners to be formed in the Gospel at St. Francis. Some take advantage of these opportunities to have a personal relationship with Christ. Others desire to go deeper in their faith, but need a gentle nudge or a comfortable place to start their journey. St. Francis is here to help all parishioners with their encounter with where they are.

Liturgy and prayer are the life-lines to God in our midst. The parish is blessed to have numerous opportunities to catechize the youth and it will continue to find creative ways to provide high quality Catholic education in the school, P.S.R. program and youth ministry. A significant opportunity for the parish is to expand formation



# Goal Two

## 2 Stewardship

“The grateful response of a Christian disciple who recognizes and receives God’s gifts and shares these gifts in love of God and neighbor.”



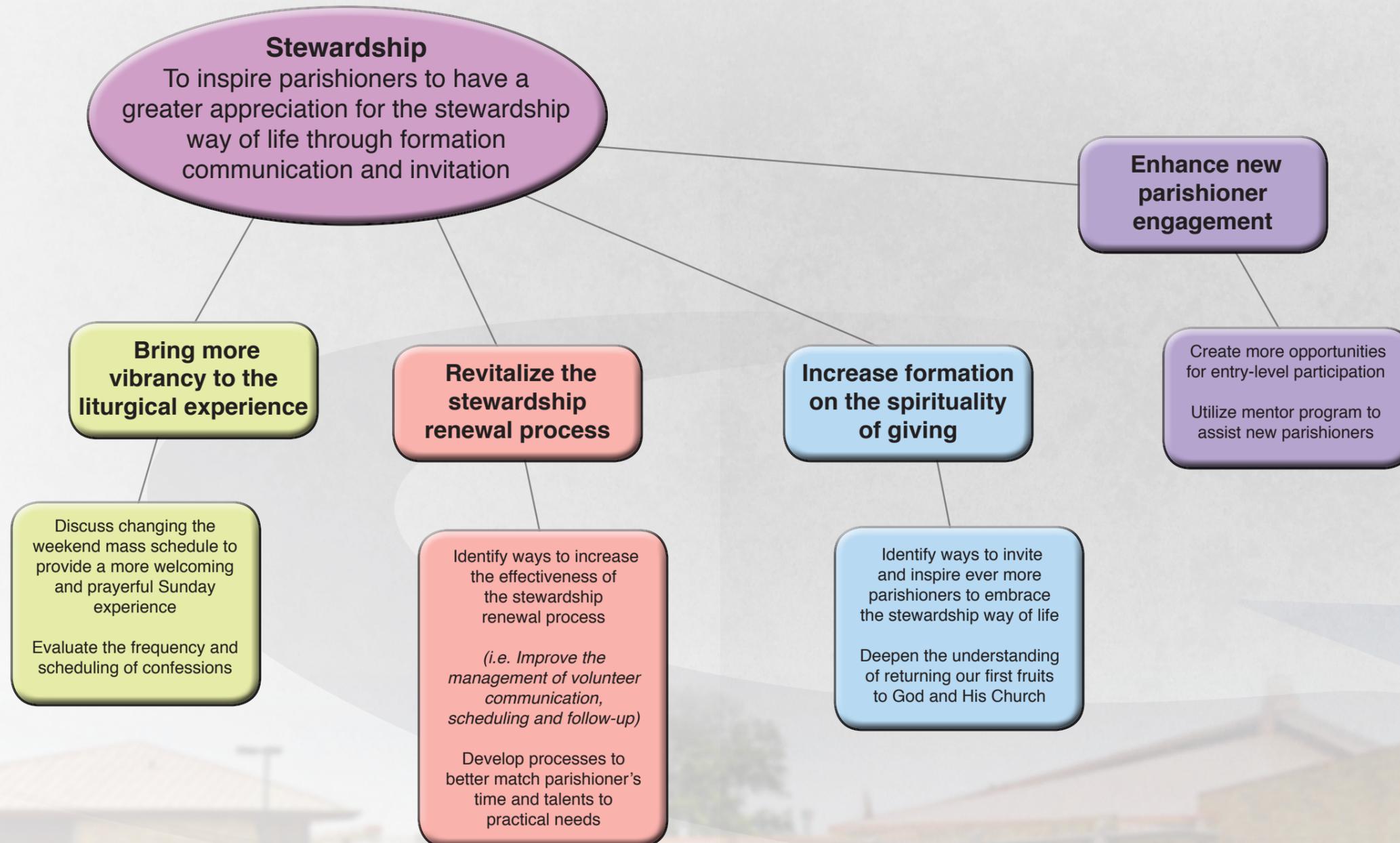
them feel welcome to go deeper in their faith. Examples include revamping the stewardship process, bringing more vibrancy to the liturgical experience, utilizing mentor programs, and increasing stewardship formation.

### Stewardship

“As each one has received a gift, use it to serve one another as good stewards of God’s varied grace.” (1 Peter 4:10)

For years, St. Francis has effectively invited parishioners into the stewardship way of life. Many feel comfortable and at home at the parish, and lives have been positively affected by those who have responded to God’s call to discipleship. The parish’s size provides for numerous opportunities for service and formation that bring parishioners closer to God. However, the size of the parish is both a strength and a weakness. Many feel the parish’s size makes it challenging to foster the personal relationships that people seek in getting started and/or sustaining their spiritual journeys.

There is a significant opportunity to become more effective at touching the hearts of new parishioners, the marginalized and those with unique needs and making



# Goal Three

## 3 Parish Operations

“The resources, policies and procedures, and leadership required to manage the parish.”

ish ensures all parishioners know what the parish aspires to be and why. Parish leaders who possess the necessary leadership skills are then able to help all parishioners live out the parish’s mission. Lastly, having a strategic communication plan ensures everything comes together and that parishioners are fully engaged in the life of the parish.

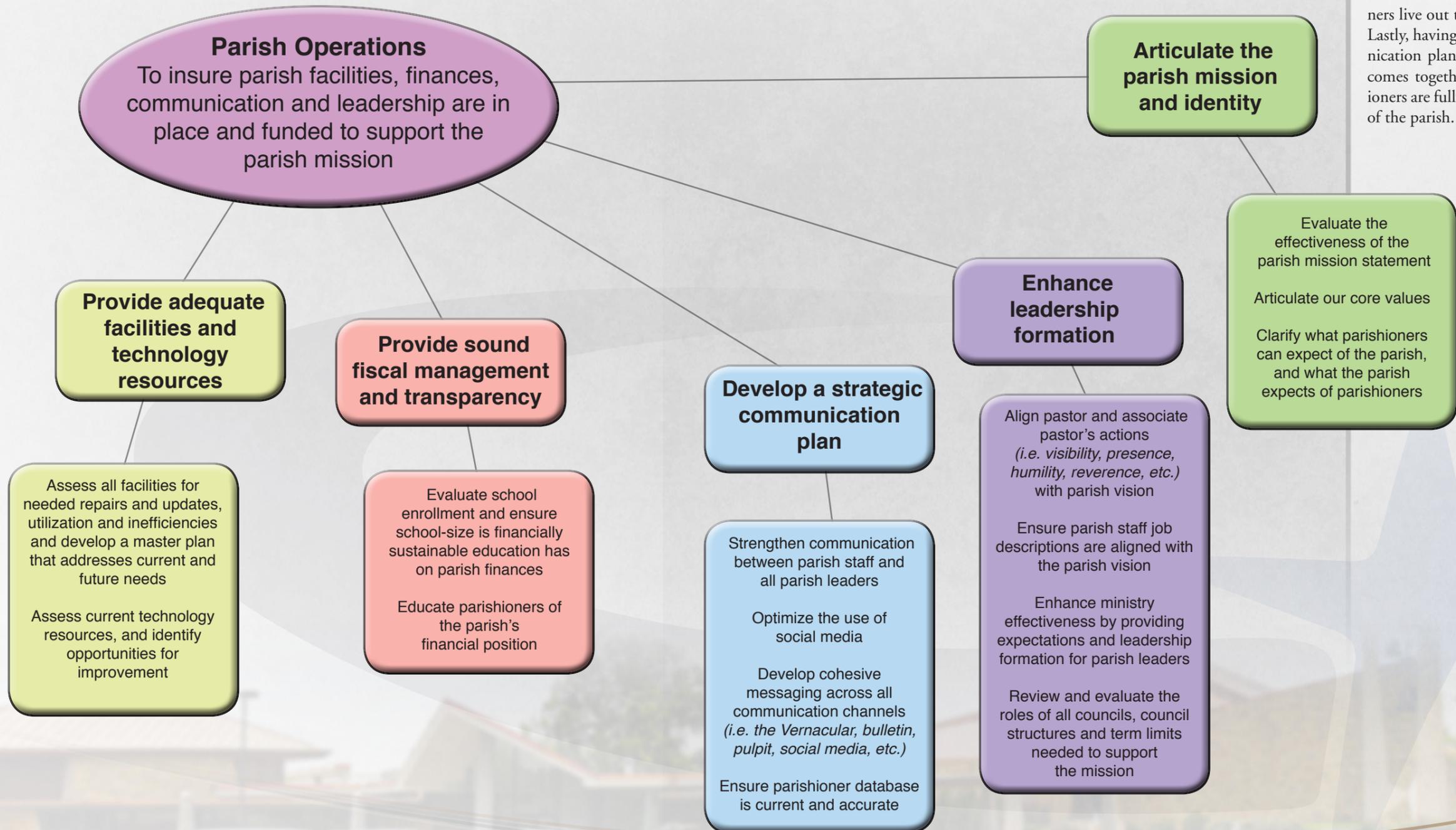
### Parish Operations

*In the end, everything has been entrusted to our protection, and all of us are responsible for it. Be protectors of God’s gifts!*  
Pope Francis

St. Francis is blessed with facilities and a trained support staff to maintain the administration of the parish. However, maintaining what the parish already has and adding new initiatives will require leaders to study the current operating structure and determine what resources are needed to sustain the parish’s mission.

The facilities at St. Francis serve the parish well. To ensure the parish is a good steward of these gifts, the parish will continually assess all facilities for utilization, repairs, upgrades and inefficiencies.

In addition to the pragmatic resources, there are many soft resources that contribute to a healthy parish. Adequately articulating the mission, vision and values of the par-



# How We Got Here

## The Planning Process

The  DELLASEGA GROUP was asked to lead an extensive pastoral planning process called Faith Forward. Faith Forward is designed to include all parishioners in the development of the pastoral plan. Through prayer, contemplation and discussion, parishioners were fully engaged in an 8-month process to discern the will of the Holy Spirit for the parish.

Parishioner input was secured via:

- 2,162 in-pew surveys
- 331 online surveys
- A three-hour listening session attended by over 240 parishioners (Faith Forward Sunday)
- Faculty and staff listening sessions
- One-on-one conversations with pastoral leadership

The data from the parish has been reviewed in detail by six teams, made up of two team captains and a cross section of fifteen parishioners per team. The six teams completed an analysis of the parish's strengths and weaknesses as well as the opportunities and threats to the parish way of life. This information was consolidated into recommendations for the Strategic Planning Team. It should be noted that many great ideas were presented during Faith Forward and in the parish survey. The benefit of the Faith Forward process is that many new ideas were communicated and parishioners are aware of the specific opportunities to improve which means that some ideas, while not included in the pastoral plan can, still be implemented by various groups within the parish.

The Strategic Planning Team, with the help of the Dellasega Group, crafted the Faith Forward 5-year pastoral plan and presented it to the parish's leadership councils (Finance, Pastoral, Stewardship Council, and School Advisory) who provided initial feedback. After a series of revisions to the plan, the councils gave final approval for the recommendations.

# Next Steps

## Where we are going

The enthusiasm and energy by parishioners during the process were inspirational. The parish has a beautiful spirituality and love for the faith. As well as the parish is doing, the parish family overwhelmingly communicated a desire for substantive change that would transform St. Francis into an even more welcoming parish that is sensitive to the needs of all. Additionally, parishioners expressed a deep hunger for increased faith formation, insights into how to improve their prayer lives, and the desire to have the administrative resources in place to accomplish the mission.

In summary, parishioners are eager to know more and to spread the Gospel values...to truly go out and make disciples. Momentum, desire, commitment, hope and faith provide a positive environment for envisioning a new springtime for the parishioners (current and future) of St. Francis of Assisi.



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# So What's Next?

Action! We cannot allow this vision to be a dead letter. Let us work to make this a living document inspired by the Holy Spirit. And this inspiration begins with prayer: for our leaders, our staff, our parishioners and for yourself. Ask St. Francis himself to inspire you with his spirit of service, love, and sharing of the Gospel. Continually return to this plan and ask, "How can I be involved?" Participate in upcoming opportunities to understand the meaning of this document. And invite other parishioners to accompany you when you step forward in stewardship to the parish.

Please be patient. After all this is a five-year plan. And also remember that this strategic plan is concerned with future growth... it is in no way a denial of the many great things our parish is already doing. We are inheritors of a wonderful parish but we are also pioneers of new growth. And this takes serious effort. In the words of Pope Francis,

*Managing a parish takes effort nowadays. The Lord has asked us to get a little tired, to work and not to rest. A parish is exhausting if it is well organized. The renewal of the parish has to be a constant concern. It has to remain a place of creativity, a reference point, a mother, where inventiveness finds expression. When a parish does all this, it becomes a missionary disciple, a parish that goes forth.*

So let us then achieve this vision! As St. Francis beheld the vision of the Lord and received his mission to repair God's house (see picture on side) so too let us roll up our sleeves, take up our tasks, and work alongside one another to implement this strategic plan. Let us become "a parish that goes forth" and accomplishes what the Holy Spirit is inspiring us to do. St. Francis of Assisi... pray for us!

In Christ,  
Rev. C. Jarrod Lies

