



Sacred Heart Catholic Church

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Dear Members of Sacred Heart Parish:

Consistent with “Planning Tomorrow’s Parishes,”¹ Bishop Cistone in 2013 directed all parishes in the Diocese of Saginaw to develop a strategic plan. One aspect of the plan was to include an evaluation of all buildings and grounds to determine their current condition, and anticipate future usage and maintenance needs to ensure an inviting campus and to help achieve our mission of evangelization.

The initial phase of our planning process included interviews with members of all parish organizations, councils and ministries in late 2014. Community and Facilities surveys were mailed to all registered households in April 2015, and a series of town hall meetings were held to provide updates and seek additional input from parishioners in July 2015.

To be an effective plan, the Strategic Planning Committee felt the need to address several issues and concerns that parishioners had expressed in the surveys and town hall meetings. These included:

- making renovations to the interior and exterior of the church to give it a distinctive “Catholic presence” in the community;
- providing a gathering area (narthex) attached to the church to enjoy fellowship and support liturgical functions such as weddings and funerals, as well as other practical needs;
- finally, providing a safe, easily accessible entrance (car port) for parishioner drop off and pickup.

As the plan developed, a new, dignified confessional and a cry room for families, as well as ADA-compliant restrooms at the back of the church were added to the space requirements. Consideration was given to several options, including adding on to the east or north side of the church. Given these requirements for additional space, we could not come up with any viable long-term alternative functions to keep the old rectory at the current location.

In August 2017, a Feasibility Study was conducted to gauge the acceptance of the proposed plan. The Breton Group consultants were used to develop surveys and conduct personal interviews with parishioners. The study revealed that the church did not have the financial support for a \$1.4 million project, but would support a project of approximately \$800,000. Parishioners had positive feelings

¹ “Planning Tomorrow’s Parishes” The strategic planning process designed to engage parishioners to assess the state of churches across the 11-county Diocese of Saginaw and develop recommendations to enhance the vibrancy of parish life led to Bishop Cistone’s decisions in January 2013 to restructure parish communities and designate use of churches to better serve the faithful.

about the parish, generally agreed with church renovations and upgrades, and were supportive of a drop-off canopy. However, they were not in favor of the large narthex that had been proposed. Parking lot repairs, additional seating and renovations to the Parish Center were valued as a higher priority. The Strategic Planning Committee took into account these parishioner comments by reducing the size and cost of the narthex. Nevertheless, even the smaller proposed addition is hindered by the old rectory.

In December 2017, with unanimous Finance and Pastoral Council support, the proposed drawings and recommendations were posted in the bulletin, the parish website, and forwarded to the Bishop for approval. The recommendations included that the parish spend up to \$90,000 to repair the Parish Center roof, offer the old rectory to the community or civic group for purchase and removal by July 1, 2018, and implement a capital improvement campaign. If no buyers were found for the rectory, the recommendations included the spending of funds up to \$50,000 to raze it. In January 2018, Bishop Cistone's approval to move forward was posted in the bulletin and parish website.

Throughout this four-year process, there have been numerous opportunities for parishioners to provide input (town hall meetings, surveys, interviews, etc.) and the attached informational inserts were in the bulletin to ensure that parishioners were fully informed as the plan moved forward. This letter is a continuation of that information sharing process.

Concerns regarding the old rectory have been considered, reviewed and discussed. The Committee has solicited and received zero viable, feasible ideas for alternative uses for the structure. The building's limited usage and current \$6,000 annual upkeep cost to basically sit vacant warrants action. It has minimal insulation, inadequate wiring and plumbing, needs new windows and heating and cooling, is not ADA compliant for anything other than residential use, and the roof will need to be replaced in a few years at a cost of \$15,000. As a result, extensive and expensive renovations are needed if the building were to be repurposed.

Alternatively, the estimated cost to move the rectory across the parking lot to State Street is \$80,000, not including the cost of setting it on a new foundation and doing any required renovations. The estimated cost to tear it down is \$35,000, which we would consider providing to a qualified party to supplement their moving costs if they are willing to restore the structure intact at another location in the Gladwin area.

The old rectory is not an issue for most of the parishioners; however, the Strategic Planning Committee recognizes that it is an emotionally charged issue for some. From a sentimental standpoint, the building may be worth saving, but saving it somewhere else. Acting as good stewards, the Committee does not support using additional parish resources to continue ongoing maintenance and incurring renovation costs to the old rectory.

Even if we implement a scaled-down plan, the old rectory is in the wrong location for the future growth of the parish. The time between now and July 2018 is an opportunity to see what can be done with the structure. A final decision will need to be made once the results of our search for a new owner is completed. Unfortunately, doing nothing is no longer an option.

Respectfully;

Strategic Planning Committee Members: Tom Winarski, Dan Smith, Dave Poxon and Tom Fruchey