

St. Bernard Parish



Parish Pastoral Plan

August 2011

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I. An Introduction: Our Mission Statement

Jesus said, “I came that you might have life and have it more abundantly.” (John 10:10)

Through the sacramental life and mission of the Church, we all share in the abundance of Jesus’ promises. Inspired by the Holy Spirit, the Church continues the saving work of Jesus Christ. This work occurs in large part in parishes throughout the world, every day. For more than 90 years, our Saint Bernard Parish has served as a font of this sacramental life.

Founded in 1919, St. Bernard Parish enjoys an extraordinarily rich and faith-filled tradition. For decades, we have been blessed with a thriving community and inspired leadership from priests, religious and staff alike. However, to make our Parish truly “The Church Alive!” our Bishop encourages us – along with all parishes in our Diocese – to candidly assess our Parish life and craft a plan for a more vibrant future. Thus, with this document, the St. Bernard Parish Pastoral Council is pleased to share our new Parish Pastoral Plan that is rooted in our Mission Statement and focused on the current and future needs of our community.

Our large, diverse Parish is undoubtedly a very special place. However, we sometimes fall short of our full potential in many respects. As reflected below, we believe the unique, God-given gifts residing in each of us offer the opportunity for our Parish community to grow in profound and exciting ways. We are confident that as we embark together on the implementation of this Parish Pastoral Plan, we can lovingly create a future for our Parish that is even brighter than its glorious past!

Our first step in building our Parish Pastoral Plan was crafting a Mission Statement that reflects the values and aspirations of our Parish.¹ Thanks to thoughtful and inspired input from our community, a new St. Bernard Parish Mission Statement emerged, which was published in August 2010. Our Mission Statement, which now adorns the cover of the Bulletin and is framed in every building on our property, is shared once again below.

St. Bernard Parish – Our Mission Statement

(August 2010)

*Through the power of the Eucharist and grace-filled guidance of the Holy Spirit,
Saint Bernard Parish is dedicated to inspiring, educating, and serving all
through the teachings of the Gospel by being a living, loving presence of Jesus Christ.*

*United with the Shepherd of the Roman Catholic Church, our Holy Father,
our Parish seeks to foster a growing, supportive, and welcoming Community
that proclaims the Kingdom of God.*

¹ Please see the Appendix for a more complete description of the process we followed to craft our Parish Pastoral Plan, per the guidance of the Diocese of Pittsburgh’s publication entitled “One Body, One Mission.”

The following pages summarize the core values embedded in our Mission Statement and outline the principal Goals of our Parish Pastoral Plan. These Goals were developed based on our Parishioners' feedback to this basic question: "Given our needs and aspirations, what should be our Parish priorities for the next few years?" Attaining these Goals (through the execution of specific tasks) will require your prayer-filled participation, your passion, your patience – and, of course, your love for one another. We ask you to kindly reflect on these pages. More importantly, we hope you will prayerfully consider your role in helping us to achieve these Goals and making our Parish all that it can be. Thank you!

II. What We Value as a Parish

Our Mission Statement and the Goals of Parish Pastoral Plan (as outlined below) reveal what we hold dear as Catholics and what we aspire to be as a Parish.

The Holy Eucharist: As the opening words of our Mission Statement reveal, all we value necessarily flows from the power of the Eucharist and grace-filled guidance of the Holy Spirit. Through these gifts and the loving presence and sacrifice of Jesus Christ, we dedicate ourselves to inspiring one another, educating one another and serving one another – all in God's name.

Inspiration: Inspiration flows from the Holy Spirit and enables each of us to preach the Gospel – ideally without even using words. Being living, loving examples of God's presence in all things we do – both large and small – is vital to building a thriving Catholic community. Of course, communicating with one another inspires us, too, whether it is from the pulpit, in formal religious settings or simply in how we meet and greet one another.

Education: We believe that religious education and ministry to our youth are responsibilities we all share - and responsibilities that never end. Beginning with parents and extending to all members of our community, the call to make known the love of Christ and His Holy Church is one that challenges and invigorates us. With its long and rich tradition, St. Bernard's School remains fully committed not only to the academic achievement of students, but also to the spiritual and religious heritage that makes us uniquely Catholic. Our Religious Education program is also instrumental in shaping the spiritual lives of our young Catholics. Especially important today, as families struggle with changing and challenging cultural and moral contexts, Catholic schools and religious education programs such as ours, offer a clear path in developing the whole person – mind, body and soul.

Of course, education and religious formation does not end with childhood. With renewed dedication, we must promote and encourage continuous inspiration and religious education for parishioners of all ages in order to grow fully in God's plan – both as individuals and as a community.

Service: Serving one another takes many forms. As we know, everything we have, everything we are, and everything we will become is a gift from Almighty God. As stewards of those gifts, we are called by God to return a portion of our time, talents and treasures in gratitude for His great bounty. Our Parish belongs to all of us. Offering our time and talents – through large and small acts anchored in love – is part of our daily calling. These acts can range from participating in one of our many ministries to simply spending a moment to talk and share with a fellow parishioner in need.

Service also includes financial stewardship. Indeed, our Church and facilities not only support our efforts to carry out the Holy Sacraments, to evangelize, and to educate (catechesis); they also serve to inspire our daily pastoral efforts. While the beauty and functionality of our facilities are obvious, the cost of maintenance is a significant financial burden. Thus, to support our ministries, our facilities, and our school, we are grateful to all for sharing their treasure as best they can.

Further, service must extend well beyond our property – it must extend into our surrounding neighborhoods and beyond. It must also reach out to other religious groups, for God’s charge to us to love one another is without qualification or limits.

A welcoming community: As the second sentence of the Mission Statement suggests, we aspire to nurture a sense of belonging in our Parish – a warm, supportive community of people who are growing together in God’s love. As a Parish with thousands of members, our size is one of our biggest assets but also one of our biggest challenges. With effort and determination, we believe we can dramatically enhance our sense of community through small events (such as how we interact before, during and after Mass) and large events (such as our Parish Picnic).

Our Shepherds: In all things, we must look to our Holy Father, the Pope, for pastoral leadership. As a parish, we are attentive to his direction and the voice of his representative for this local church, our Bishop. Together, the Pope and his brother Bishops are successors of the apostles. They provide not only leadership but unity as well. At every mass we pray for them, that God may continue to inspire them to be good shepherds. As a parish family, we at St. Bernard Church are committed to following their lead. In particular, we commit ourselves to the Bishop’s vision to develop a vibrant parish in the spirit of his Pastoral Letter “The Church Alive!”

III. Our Goals for the Next Five Years

Based on our efforts over the last year to gather community input and candidly assess Parish life, it is clear that many facets of our Parish are good and thriving! We enjoy a rich tradition; we are blessed with loving and generous parishioners; we are witnessing a renewed sense of enthusiasm, mission and connectedness with dedicated and inspired staff. All of this must be celebrated! However, we must look forward and seek opportunities to grow and make our Parish all that it can be.

For the next five years, the principal Goals of our Parish Pastoral Plan, as well as the spiritual foundation for such Goals, are as follows:

Goal 1: HOLY EUCHARIST - To enhance our spiritual life through prayer and worship, with special attention to the Eucharist.

“Mother Church earnestly desires that all the faithful should be led to that full, conscious and active participation in liturgical celebrations which is demanded by the very nature of the liturgy, and to which the Christian people, ‘a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a redeemed people’ (1 Pet. 2:9, 4-5) have a right and obligation by reason of their baptism.” Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, Sacrosanctum Concilium, 14

“The parish is a privileged place where the faithful experience the Church. The parish needs to be constantly renewed on the basis of the principle that the parish must continue to be above all a Eucharistic community.” *Ecclesia in America*, 41

Goal 2: OUR COMMUNITY - To nurture a more welcoming, safe environment and a sense of belonging throughout our community.

“May the God of endurance and encouragement grant you to think in harmony with one another, in keeping with Christ Jesus, that with one accord you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Welcome one another, then, as Christ welcomed you, for the glory of God.” *Romans 15:5-7*

Goal 3: GIFT-SHARING - To instill a sense of ownership among Parishioners that encourages all to share their gifts of time, talent, and treasure.

“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 we are God’s co-workers; you are God’s field, God’s building.” *1 Corinthians 3:9*

Goal 4: EDUCATION - To promote vibrant and sustainable religious formation, education and evangelization for all ages.

“The Church’s catechetical mission aims to help the faithful of all ages to grow in both human and Christian maturity, enriching the whole of life with the leaven of the Gospel.” *Our Hearts are Burning Within Us*, 64

Goal 5: SERVICE - To foster and encourage opportunities for our Parish, rooted in the dignity of the human person, to become more active and collaborative in the community we serve.

“For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, a stranger and you welcomed me, naked and you clothed me, ill and you cared for me, in prison and you visited me.” *Matthew 25:35*

The following section outlines the specific action items (called Objectives) that are practical, time-sensitive “building blocks” designed to help us achieve our Parish Goals.

IV. How We Plan to Achieve our Goals

Below we offer the specific action items (i.e., Objectives) that are designed to assist us in attaining our Goals. Objectives are provided for each of the next two years, as they are intended to map out a reasonable, step-by-step journey toward achieving the full potential of our Parish life. For the third, fourth and fifth years of the Pastoral Plan, we expect to develop Objectives at a later date, to allow for the consideration of changing circumstances and new information. It is important to note that our Goals will remain the same each year, while our Objectives are designed to build upon the previous years' accomplishments.

Each of the Objectives below will, in turn, require a detailed action plan led by a "champion" (or group of "champions") that will consist of Parish staff members and/or parishioners, as appropriate. Please read the following pages with prayer-filled consideration for guidance on how you can help!

Year 1: August 2011 – July 2012

Goal 1: To enhance our spiritual life through prayer and worship, with special attention to the Eucharist.

Objective 1: Under the guidance of the Pastor, regularly encourage and educate our Parish community concerning the appropriate use of silence, meditation, and reflection during Mass and Holy Hour, to begin by Thanksgiving 2011.

Objective 2: Under the guidance of the Pastor and the Coordinator of Liturgy, educate the Parish concerning the implementation of the New Roman Missal, which will be introduced at Advent in 2011.

Objective 3: Under the guidance of the Coordinator of Liturgy, increase the number of Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion so that the Blood of Christ can be made available at each Mass by July 2012.

Objective 4: Under the direction of the Director of Music, regularly educate the community concerning liturgical music (especially as it pertains to the New Roman Missal) and solicit ideas and talents for music that might inspire and appeal to all ages, to be initiated by the end of 2011.

Objective 5: Under the direction of the Director of Music, develop specific plans and establish a venue to attract musicians, vocalists, and songwriters to gather and meet to support their creative talents in order to inspire increased participation in liturgical celebrations by Easter 2012.

Goal 2: To nurture a more welcoming, safe environment and a sense of belonging throughout our community.

Objective 1: Form a Welcoming Ministry by Thanksgiving 2011 that will be responsible for developing a comprehensive plan to expand on current efforts to (i) nurture an environment of greater hospitality in our Parish toward our new and existing parishioners, as well as guests and (ii) establish an outreach program to re-engage parishioners who are not currently active in Parish life.

Objective 2: Under the guidance of Parish volunteers and Parish Staff and subject to appropriate security considerations, develop a voluntary "Parish Directory," to be available to Parishioners in hard copy or through the Parish website by August 2012.

Objective 3: Under the guidance of the Pastor and Parish Staff, schedule periodic social events for the Parish at large as well as for those involved in all of the Ministries, to be initiated by August 2012.

Objective 4: Under the guidance of the Safe Environment Coordinator, continue to ensure the Parish's full and audited compliance with the Diocesan guidelines for a safe environment.

Goal 3: To instill a sense of ownership among Parishioners that encourages all to share their gifts of time, talent, and treasure.

Objective 1: Under the direction of the Pastor, organize a "ministry summit" of the various Parish Ministries to be held by Thanksgiving 2011, at which specific action plans will be designed to encourage all Parish members to share more abundantly their gifts of time and talents. Such efforts might include:

- Educating the Parish about existing Ministries (e.g., a descriptive pamphlet with information about existing Ministries and relevant contact information; a "Ministries Month" that celebrates and highlights selected Ministries at Mass; an annual "Ministries Fair");
- Identifying actions to energize the Parish for greater participation in the current and new Ministries (e.g., personal phone calls to parishioners);
- Developing a questionnaire (available in paper form and on-line) for all parishioners to identify talents that they would be willing to share with the community; and/or
- Coordinating efforts with the Welcoming Ministry to educate new parishioners about the various Ministries.

Objective 2: Under the guidance of the Pastor, establish informal opportunities for Parishioners to engage with the Pastor, Parish Staff and other Parish leadership to build

fellowship and exchange ideas on how to encourage all Parishioners to share their gifts of time, talents, and treasure, to be initiated by Thanksgiving of 2011.

Objective 3: Under the guidance of the Finance Council, develop and begin to execute by Christmas 2011 on strategies designed to increase Parish Share participation to 50% of registered individuals/families, to be achieved by the end of 2012.

Goal 4: To promote vibrant and sustainable religious formation, education and evangelization for all ages.

Objective 1: Under the guidance of the Finance Council and with input from the Diocese, design a comprehensive road map by Easter 2012 that ensures a vibrant, excellent and financially sustainable school.

Objective 2: Under the guidance of the Director of Religious Education and St. Bernard School Principal, continue to pursue opportunities to enhance the current Religious Education program, including additional activities coordinated with students within the Parish school.

Objective 3: Through collaboration among the Diocese, the St. Bernard School Principal and Director of Religious Education, develop an internal and external marketing/public relations campaign for the Parish school and Religious Education program, to begin during the spring of 2012.

Objective 4: Under the direction of the Youth Minister, establish a working Evangelization Committee to plan events to include all youth within the Parish boundaries as well as other parishes by the fall of 2012.

Objective 5: Under the guidance of the Director of Young Adult Ministry, continue to enhance the current program for speakers to address topics relevant to young adults, with target of increasing participation by August 2012.

Objective 6: Under the guidance of the Director of Religious Education, continue to educate the Parish community and promote the various programs for adult faith formation, with the target of increasing participation by August 2012.

Goal 5: To foster and encourage opportunities for our Parish, rooted in the dignity of the human person, to become more active and collaborative in the community we serve.

Objective 1: Under the guidance of the Director of Social Service Outreach, identify a non-profit organization in the communities we serve and develop a service plan in which inter-generational groups within our Parish can support this non-profit organization on a regular basis, to be completed by Easter 2012.

Objective 2: Under the guidance of the Director of Social Service Outreach, continue networking endeavors with other neighboring churches to identify opportunities for working together on selected projects, to be completed by August 2012.

Objective 3: Under the guidance of the Pastor and Pastoral Associate, meet with the leaders of various religious communities within Dormont and Mt. Lebanon to identify opportunities for collaboration, to be completed by Easter 2012.

Objective 4: Under the direction of the Director of Social Service Outreach and Parish volunteers, establish a program to provide donated supplies and support for local military personnel and their families, to be completed by Advent 2012.

Year 2: August 2012 – July 2013

Goal 1: To enhance our spiritual life through prayer and worship, with special attention to the Eucharist.

Objective 1: Under the guidance of the Pastor and the Parish Pastoral Council, review the progress made toward the “Goal 1 Objectives” from the prior year.

Objective 2: Under the guidance of the Parish priests and deacon, regularly invite the Parish community to deeper reverence and adoration of the Holy Eucharist, especially through participation in Holy Hour.

Objective 3: Under the guidance of the Coordinator of Liturgy, provide ongoing training for those who are currently lectors, sacristans, extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion, altar servers and ministers of hospitality to be completed by August 2013.

Objective 4: Under the guidance of the Director of Music, provide ongoing training for cantors and choir members, to be completed by August 2013.

Objective 5: Under the direction of the Director of Music, identify and establish new opportunities for continued growth in music ministry.

Goal 2: To nurture a more welcoming, safe environment and a sense of belonging throughout our community.

Objective 1: Under the guidance of the Pastor and the Parish Pastoral Council, review the progress made toward the “Goal 2 Objectives” from the prior year.

Objective 2: Under the guidance of the Pastor, initiate planning for conducting periodic, weekday neighborhood Masses in our Parish community, with such planning to be completed by Thanksgiving 2012.

Objective 3: Under the direction of the Pastor, begin the planning process for the next Parish Mission to take place during Lent 2014, with such planning to be completed by Easter 2013.

Objective 4: Under the guidance of the Safe Environment Coordinator, continue to ensure the Parish's full and audited compliance with the Diocesan guidelines for a safe environment, as well as conduct a safety-related "in-service" day for Parish Staff by Easter 2013.

Goal 3: To instill a sense of ownership among Parishioners that encourages all to share their gifts of time, talent, and treasure.

Objective 1: Under the guidance of the Pastor and the Parish Pastoral Council, review the progress made toward the "Goal 3 Objectives" from the prior year.

Objective 2: Under the direction of the Pastor and the leaders from the prior year's "ministry summit," continue execution of the specific action plans designed to encourage all Parish members to share more abundantly their gifts of time, talents, and treasure, to be completed by August 2013.

Objective 3: Under the guidance of Parish volunteers and Parish Staff, explore the expansion of the "Parish Directory" to include a "Resource Directory" of contact information for Parishioners volunteering to share certain resources or talents, to be completed by August 2013.

Objective 4: Under the guidance of the Finance Council, develop and begin to execute on strategies designed to increase Parish Share participation to 75% of registered individuals/families, to be achieved by the end of 2013.

Goal 4: To promote vibrant and sustainable religious formation, education and evangelization for all ages.

Objective 1: Under the guidance of the Pastor and the Parish Pastoral Council, review the progress made toward the "Goal 4 Objectives" from the prior year.

Objective 2: Under the guidance of the Pastoral Associate, develop a three-year plan to expand adult faith formation for the Parish community, with such planning to be completed by Easter 2013.

Objective 3: Under the guidance of the Pastor, the Director of Religious Education, and the St. Bernard School Principal, develop more opportunities for Parish families to engage in Catholic-based activities within the home environment, to be launched by Thanksgiving 2012.

Objective 4: Under the guidance of the Parish Pastoral Council, develop a calling program designed to reach out to at least 100 “inactive” Parish members to encourage their re-engagement, to be completed by Easter 2013.

Objective 5: Under the direction of the Pastoral Associate, establish a Parish renewal program by January 2013 that systematically reviews and tailors continuing education programs and Ministries for the entire spectrum of our parish community.

Objective 6: Under the direction of the Pastoral Associate, develop a Parish outreach program designed to support those in the Parish community who may be facing hurtful or spiritually challenging life events, to be initiated by Easter 2013.

Goal 5: To foster and encourage opportunities for our Parish, rooted in the dignity of the human person, to become more active and collaborative in the community we serve.

Objective 1: Under the guidance of the Pastor and the Parish Pastoral Council, review the progress made toward the “Goal 5 Objectives” from the prior year.

Objective 2: Under the guidance of the Human Dignity Committee, promote more educational opportunities for the Parish community concerning ways to develop and maintain a culture of life, to be completed by August 2013.

Objective 3: Under the direction of the Director of Social Service Outreach, establish an outreach program for the elderly and disabled within the communities we serve, to be developed by the fall of 2012. By the spring of 2013, initiate the activities of such outreach program.

Objective 4: Under the direction of the Pastoral Associate, expand programs that serve the home bound, to be initiated by the spring of 2013.

Objective 5: Under the direction of Parish volunteers and the Director of Social Service Outreach, identify a community service project in which entire Parish families can participate, to be identified by Thanksgiving 2012.

Objective 6: Under the guidance of the Pastor and Parish Staff, collaborate with other local churches and/or the South Hills Interfaith Ministries on one community service project, with such project identification to be completed by November 2012.

Year 3: August 2013 – July 2014

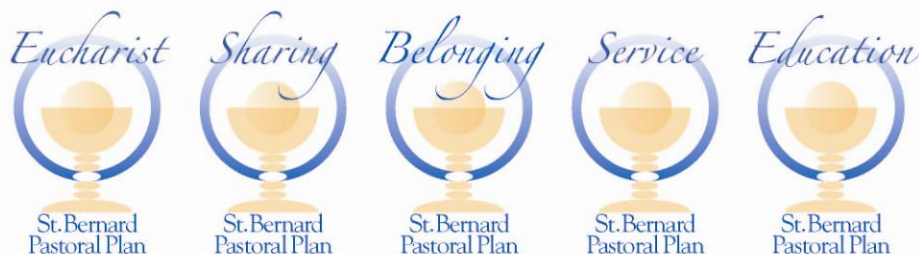
[While the Goals of the Parish Pastoral Plan shall remain unchanged, the specific Objectives for Year 3 will be developed and finalized by August 2012, to allow for appropriate consideration of new information and circumstances.]

Year 4: August 2014 – July 2015

[While the Goals of the Parish Pastoral Plan shall remain unchanged, the specific Objectives for Year 4 will be developed and finalized by August 2013, to allow for appropriate consideration of new information and circumstances.]

Year 5: August 2015 – July 2016

[While the Goals of the Parish Pastoral Plan shall remain unchanged, the specific Objectives for Year 5 will be developed and finalized by August 2014, to allow for appropriate consideration of new information and circumstances.]



V. A Prayer for Our Parish Community

God of Love, source of all goodness, be with us now and always.

Help us to reflect the heart of Christ, the mind of the Church and the spirit of Saint Bernard as we grow into a family of God.

Through the power of the Holy Spirit and the nourishment of the Holy Eucharist, may we grow in your grace and become a living, loving presence of Jesus Christ.

Along with our parish priests, staff, finance and pastoral councils and the support of every member, may we work together to build a unified and welcoming community that reflects God's Kingdom on earth.

We ask this through Christ our Lord.

Amen.



Appendix

An Overview: Process for Developing our Parish Pastoral Plan

In early 2010, St. Bernard Parish embarked upon the process of creating a Parish Pastoral Council (Parish Council), under the direction and guidance of the Diocese of Pittsburgh. A lengthy process of discernment resulted in a Parish Council consisting of 12 parishioners – coincidentally, six women and six men. One of the Pastoral Council's primary responsibilities is to work with Father David Bonnar, our Pastor, to develop a thoughtful, forward-looking Parish Pastoral Plan that is rooted in our Mission Statement, focused on the current and future needs of our Parish, and inspired by the Holy Spirit.

Our first mandate was to develop a Mission Statement reflective of the values and aspirations of St. Bernard Parish. Following much input from the St. Bernard community, a new St. Bernard Mission Statement emerged, which was shared with our community in August 2010. Our Mission Statement now adorns the cover of the bulletin and is framed in every building on our property. This achievement was truly an important and exciting first step toward the Parish Pastoral Plan.

However, like a builder who carefully chooses a cornerstone, the Mission Statement was only the beginning of our process of constructing a Parish Pastoral Plan. Following the guidance provided by the Diocese and with much prayer, we proceeded next to gather important information to allow the Parish Council to assess parish life. Working with the benefit of feedback previously collected in various neighborhood meetings led by Father Bonnar in 2010, the Parish Council coordinated various focus groups in early 2011 that included the following groups: Parish leadership (including the Finance Council, school leaders and parents, parish staff/employees); ministers involved in the various Parish ministries; selected focus groups based on diversity of length of membership in the Parish; and an open session for the broader Parish community.

The next stage involved the development of broad Goals for the Parish that were rooted in the Mission Statement, followed by specific, supporting, concrete steps (i.e., Objectives) designed to enable us to achieve our Goals within a reasonable period of time.

Finally, before sharing the Parish Pastoral Plan with our community, we reviewed a draft with key constituencies to ensure that the document addresses key areas of the liturgy, service/ stewardship, catechesis and outreach.

May God bless our Parish and all we serve!

Sincerely,
Fr. David Bonnar, Pastor
and
St. Bernard Parish Pastoral Council



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