

# Church of the Ascension Pastoral Plan

“Parish Revitalization/Renewal/Reigniting Version”

*“Kuyumba Halumo!”*

(“We walk together”)

May 1, 2021

## INTRODUCTION

Over the past several months the Church of Ascension has experienced significant change on two major fronts. First our community has experienced a worldwide pandemic caused by the COVID virus. Due to its dangerous public health implications, our parishioners have had to dramatically change our worship, prayer, and meeting techniques to incorporate distance technologies and avoid face-to-face interactions. In the months ahead we hope to slowly regain our traditional forms of parish worship, prayer, and community-building activities.

Yet at the same time the Holy Spirit has inspired our parish, our diocese, and our entire Catholic Church to use this challenge as an opportunity to look for new ways to re-vitalize our spiritual development and personal relationship with God, and innovate new ways to pray, worship, and learn together. In addition, the Holy Father has sent out a clarion call to accelerate our efforts to revitalize, renew, and reignite our Church’s response to the original call of Our Lord’s bidding:

**“Go and Make Disciples of all Nations.”**

Accordingly, Ascension has adopted a parish action plan for this time of parish renewal. This plan identifies essential near-term actions, responsible parish committees/staffs, and approximate timelines required for Ascension Parish to recover from the Pandemic and thrive as a parish during this transition to “*more normal*” times. We have great faith that God the Father, Jesus Christ his Son, and the Holy Spirit will provide us the wisdom and the grace to carry out God’s mission on earth.

## **Five Major Initiatives to Revitalize, Renew, and Re-ignite the Ascension Parish**

The Church of the Ascension is committed to **concurrently** launch five major parish wide initiatives over the next several months to revitalize, renew, and reignite our parish faith, worship, and community life activities. These include:

- Initiative # 1: Create a vision for the future of our parish.
- Initiative # 2: Integrate missionary discipleship principles throughout our parish life.

- Initiative # 3: Conduct a “welcome back” campaign to help the parish family recover from the pandemic and to draw all parishioners back to our worship, prayer, spiritual development, and community life activities.
- Initiative # 4: Celebrate the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of our parish by conducting a series of liturgies, dinners, picnics, and special events that remember our past and look to the future; and
- Initiative # 5: Carry out a \$1.5 million fundraising campaign to support both additional parish programming and the construction of a new parish administrative building.

These initiatives are further described in the following paragraphs:

### **Initiative #1: Create Parish Vision**

Initiative #1: Creation of a Vision for the Future of Ascension: A parish vision provides meaning and guidance for all that we do as a Parish Community. It evolves out of what defines us today and then describes where we desire to be in the future. When completed, the Vision will guide planning and decision-making as the Community moves into the future.

Through listening to scripture, the Holy Spirit, and other members of the congregation we have begun to hear visions for the future of Ascension. There are three strategies required to complete this initiative: creation of the Vision and the development of communication and integration plans.

#### Strategy # 1: Creation of the Parish Vision Statement

- a. Pastoral Council, Clergy and Department Heads will develop a shared understanding of Community input about Ascension Today and the Community’s Vision of the Ascension of the Future.
- b. Through a discernment and visioning process, Pastoral Council, Clergy and Department Heads will participate in a Vision Retreat to collaboratively create the elements for the Vision statement from which a draft Vision statement will be created.
- c. Final Vision statement approval

**Responsible:** Vision Team to develop and facilitate the visioning process.

Pastoral Council, Clergy and Department Heads develop the Vision.

**Target Date:** September 2021

Strategy 2: Create a communication plan to build internal awareness of the Vision, build understanding and appreciation of the Vision and identify tools and resources needed to communicate the Vision. Determine how the Vision will be integrated into intentional communication. Identify strategies for individual engagement with the Vision.

**Responsible:** Pastoral Council, Vision Team Representative, Communications Specialist, in coordination with 50th Anniversary Celebration Committee.

**Target Date:** January 2022

**Strategy 3:** Develop plans and tools for integration of the Vision into planning and decision-making. This includes things as: Defining responsibility for aligning and advancing the vision; determining how the Vision will be integrated into developing parish leaders; recommendations on how the Vision will be integrated into other processes; and development of tools for facilitating the alignment of ministries with the Vision.

**Responsible:** Pastoral Council Representative, Vision Team Representative, Department Heads

**Target Date:** September 2022 - Implementation ongoing.

### **Initiative #2: Integrate Missionary Discipleship Principles and Initiatives**

**Initiative #2: Integration of Missionary Discipleship Principles:** Jesus has given us the tools to attract people to our Ascension parish by giving us the opportunity to launch a parish renewal effort, built around a recent idea proposed by our Holy Father Pope Francis. The initiative is entitled Missionary Discipleship, and its component New Evangelization.

We will work to educate and instill in all parishioners that by baptism each parishioner is called to share the love of Jesus through their words and actions as a Missionary Disciple. We are all aspiring to a deeper relationship with Jesus Christ, no matter where we start that journey. The Holy Spirit must play an intimate role in all that we do. This concept is not new but is seeking to refresh and renew our community to truly live out our Baptismal promises.

**Strategy:** Over the next three years our parish will carry out a strategy aligned with the parish vision to integrate the principles of Missionary Discipleship across all parish ministries. It will be coordinated by the Missionary Discipleship Ministry Committee, which consists of all ministry heads. The parish will work to ensure that our parish staff, Pastoral Council, special committees, ministries, education staff and parishioners all receive orientation on the definition and four tenets of Missionary Discipleship listed below:

**Definition:** As a Missionary Disciple, each of us is called to share the love of Jesus through our words and actions.

**Encounter:** A personal encounter with Jesus that changes or transforms my life, giving me new understanding or direction.

**Accompany:** To meet a person where they are on their faith journey and walk with them as led by the Holy Spirit.

**Community:** We are a faith community brought together by the Holy Spirit to share proclaim, celebrate, and serve the love of Christ through word and action.

**Send:** Strengthened by our faith family we go into the world to share our encounters with Jesus Christ through our words and actions

This process will also broaden the understanding of our current parish tenet of “proclaiming” the Gospel to “proclaiming and witnessing” the Gospel as Missionary Disciples.

**Responsible:** Missionary Discipleship Ministry Committee, (Supported by: New Evangelization Team (NET), Adult Faith Formation Committee

**Target Date:** Starting Immediately and Ongoing

### **Initiative # 3: Conduct “Welcome Back” Campaign**

**Initiative # 3: Conduct the “Welcome Back” Campaign:** Conduct a Welcome Back Campaign to help the Parish Family recover from the Pandemic and to draw both old and new parishioners physically back to our Ascension parish worship, prayer, spiritual development, and community life activities.

**Strategy:** Our strategy will consist of the following three essential steps to carry out this campaign:

- a. Welcome Back Committee Formation: This will be created at the Parish Pastoral Council level. It will assist facilitate and coordinate a yearlong, focused set of liturgies, events, projects and messages to draw families back to the church.
- b. Information Campaign: Using all our communication tools, starting in May 2021, inform our parishioners what these events are, invite them to come and participate, and describe in detail what COVID SAFE procedures, as prescribed by the CDC and Diocese, are in place to ensure the safety of all.
- c. Include the ten month, 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary program events that run from September 2021- June 2022 into the Welcome Back Campaign.

**Responsible:** Parish Council Welcome Back Committee

**Target Date:** Committee Formation and Planning Commencement: February 2021 (Done)  
Welcome Back Campaign: May 2021- June 2022.

### **Initiative #4: Celebrate Ascension’s 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary**

**Initiative # 4: Conduct a Yearlong 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration:**

**Strategy:**

- a. Establish a 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Planning Committee

- b. Outline a series of liturgies, dinners, picnics, and special events that remember our past and look to the future.
- c. At a minimum Consider a Reunion Mass, (Fall 2021), a 50<sup>th</sup> Gala Dinner (Winter 2022), and a 50<sup>th</sup> Bishops Mass (June 2022).
- d. Produce a new parish directory,
- e. Produce a Parish History Pamphlet, a Historical Commons Display, a video to be shown on our website and in the commons and coordinate the calendar for 2022 to contain Parish historical photos.

**Responsible:** Parish Council 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Committee and Parish Administrator

**Target Date:** Establish Committee: January 2021 (Complete)

Commence Projects and events: September 19, 2021

### **Initiative # 5: Conduct a Capital Fundraising Campaign for Our Future Growth**

Initiative #5: Conduct a Capital Fundraising Campaign for Our Future Growth: As we prepare to enter our “Next 50 Years”, it is prudent as good stewards of Ascension Parish, to take stock of our current facilities, programs and resources to validate that each is sufficient for not just our current ministries, but stable and robust enough to support and sustain our evangelistic efforts well into the future. Having started in earnest nearly six years ago as we executed our portion of the Diocesan “Living Our Mission” campaign, we have identified several areas requiring attention.

- a. Construction of a new, fully-functioning, built-by-design Parish Office – with a goal to have the office built in time for Church of the Ascension’s 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary in June 2022.
- b. Establish a “living” Parish fund for the continued support of the ministry, maintenance and mission of Church of the Ascension – sustained through donations, legacy gifts, etc. – available to the Parish Leadership for the growth of our ministries, to address capital improvements throughout the Church of Ascension facilities, and to provide contingent funding to enable us to meet the fiscal impact of emergencies such as this year’s COVID-19 pandemic.

Strategy:

- a. Enlist the services of a professional fundraising group to assist with our campaign (Complete)
- b. Conduct a Feasibility Study to determine the future needs of the parish based on parishioners’ input (Completed)
- c. Determine the scope, target \$ amount, timing, and process for successfully executing the fundraising campaign (Completed)
- d. Develop the strategy and launch a five-year pledge fundraising campaign to support the construction of a new parish office and establishment of a parish fund which will support the Ministry, maintenance, and Mission of the Church of the Ascension now, and well into our “*Next 50 Years*” (On-Going)

To accomplish these tasks, a Capital Fundraising Campaign will be conducted between the general timeframe of March 2021 – September 2021, and construction of a new parish office to commence in the Fall of 2021.

**Responsible:** Capital Campaign Committee

**Target Date:** Establish Committee – March 2020 (Established and Growing)  
Conduct Capital Fundraising Campaign – est, March 2021 – September 2021  
Construction of New Parish Office – est, Fall 2021 – Summer 2022

The remainder of the Pastoral Plan is broken down into more traditional action areas based on the **Five Recognized Tenets of an Active Parish:**

1. Worship in Spirit and Truth
2. Proclaim and witness the Gospel
3. Grow in Spiritual Knowledge and Maturity
4. Find Ways to Bring God's Love to all
5. Live as a Community (Walk together as a family).

#### **Tenet 1.**

#### **Worship in Spirit and Truth.**

##### **Topic 1.1 Mass at Ascension.**

*"Let us rejoice and be Glad."*

- a. Ensure our celebration continues to be joyful and participatory.
- b. Sustain the very visible connection of Mass with Adoration, Baptisms, Anointing of the Sick, and Post-Mass Prayer Groups
- c. Celebrate Children's Masses on a periodic basis, perhaps keyed to special feast days in the Church,
- d. Assist the Youth of Ascension (YOA) in planning and conducting a Youth Mass on a periodic basis.

**Responsible:** Items a., b., c., Director of Liturgy, Liturgy Committee, Director of YOA

**Target Date:** Items a and b: Ongoing

Items c and d: As Occurring with Children and YOA Masses

##### **Topic 1.2 The Eucharist**

*"Do this in remembrance of me."*

- a. Establish an Adoration Plan for each First Friday, during the Triduum and on the Feast of Corpus Christi.

**Responsible:** Parish Deacon, Director of Liturgy, Ron Vessell

**Target Date:** Lent 2021

### **Topic 1.3 The Tabernacle.**

*“The house of the Lord.”*

- a. Determine where the Tabernacle will be located in the Post COVID era.

**Responsible:** Pastor

**Target Date:** Fall 2021

### **Topic 1.4. Eucharist for the Homebound.**

*“Where two or more are gathered in my name.”*

- a. In addition to offering Eucharist at the end of each Weekend Mass for friends and relatives to take home to homebound, consider a ministry where a rotating team of Eucharistic Ministers are identified and trained to bring Eucharist to the homebound who may not have family/friends support.

**Responsible:** Community Life Department, Liturgy.

**Target Date:** Advent, 2021

## **Tenet 2.**

### **Proclaim and Witness the Gospel**

#### **Topic 2.1: Evangelization**

- a. Broaden the understanding of our current parish tenet of “proclaiming” the Gospel to “proclaiming and witnessing” the Gospel. This will emphasize the importance of evangelization through witnessing the Gospel by living our lives in accordance with Christian love and Christian conscience and in union with the Church.

**Responsible:** NET

**Target Date:** Ongoing

See Missionary Discipleship on Pages 3 and 4 above for more details

## **Tenet 3.**

### **Grow in Spiritual Knowledge and Maturity.**

#### **Topic 3.1 Faith Formation**

*“Growing in our faith is a life-long gift that we must pursue with joy at every age.”*

- a. Continue to grow the “family faith formation” model.
- b. Explore expanding the “family faith formation” model to all generations.

**Responsible:** Faith Formation Department.

**Target Date:** Ongoing.

#### **Topic 3.2 Faith Formation Programs.**

- a. Sustain Road to Emmaus and VBS.
- b. Sustain AFF Classes and Programs.

- c. Actively recruit (target) teachers for programs.

**Responsible:** Faith Formation Department

**Target Date:** Ongoing.

#### **Tenet 4.**

#### **Find Ways to Bring God's Love to All.**

##### **Topic 4.1 Volunteers of Ascension.**

As part of our zero-based study and as part of our effort to lay the foundation for the next 50 years, identify the “backbone” volunteer base needed at our Parish to accomplish all our goals. Advise Pastor and initiate a program to engage more parishioners as volunteers in our parish ministries and departments.

**Responsible:** Parish Council

**Target Date:** Fall 2021; coincide w/ Ministry Fair

##### **Topic 4.2 Conduct a Review of all Ministries.**

Immediately following our next Ministry Fair and signup Sunday, the Parish Council should establish a sub-committee to conduct a review of all ministries. Confirm their mission and effectiveness and alignment with parish vision. Determine if their work is conducted or duplicated by other ministries. Determine if ministries can be combined for a more streamlined parish effort. Add wording about ministry being fruitful and in line with parish mission and the call to be missionary disciples. (just a thought)

**Responsible:** Parish Council

**Target Date:** Begin in Fall 2021.

##### **Topic 4.3**

##### **Social Outreach**

*“Blessed are the merciful,  
for they shall receive mercy”.*

Sustain our current extensive Social Outreach programs that support the community. This is a major and priority focus of the Parish. Ensure all ministries reflect the Gospel message.

**Responsible:** Social Justice Department Head

**Target Date:** Ongoing. Has a list of all ministries under their responsibility. Due to COVID several of the ministries have been shelved this year or have been modified and have no volunteers active. They are programmed to reactivate when COVID is over.

##### **Topic 4.4**

##### **Post Confirmation Transition and Affirmation Plan for “Young Adults”**

*“We believe growing in our faith is  
a lifelong gift.”*



- a. Establish a formal process for the *Post Confirmation Role* of our Parish Youth as they transition to Young Adulthood.
- b. Investigate methods for our departing youth to stay connected to our Parish Family, especially for post high school young adults who are geographically distant from Ascension.

**Responsible:** Director of YOA

**Target Date:** Spring 2022

### **Tenet 5**

#### **Community: Walk together as a Family**

*Note: Many of the topics in this section relate directly to setting the foundation for the Parish's next 50 years.*

#### **Topic 5.1. Family: Welcome, Blessings, Mentor**

*"We are family. Every parishioner brings value to our Parish family life."*

- a. Establish a Family Welcoming Program.
  - (1) Consider establishing a "Military Families Unit" as a special component of this program in view of the extraordinary number of military families that are parishioners.
- b. Formally Welcome and Introduce New Families at Mass.
- c. Consider establishing a "tradition" at any weekend mass of blessing any expectant parents.

**Responsible:** Community Life Department (Supported by Social Ministry, Parish Secretary and Religious Ed Department)

**Target Date:** Sep 2021

#### **Topic 5.2 Seniors**

- a. Publish demographics and alert parish to the growing number of centenarians, 90 and 80-year old. Celebrate Birthdays.

**Responsible:** Community Life

**Target Date:** Spring 2021

#### **Topic 5.3 Celebrate our Parish Youth**

- a. Establish a parish process to recognize and celebrate our parish youth through our Parish Information System.

**Responsible:** Director of YOA (Supported by Deacons, Liturgy Committee, Communications Specialist.).

**Target Date:** Fall 2021 and Ongoing

**Topic 5.4: Community Life Department Head**

**Special Note:** The topics and actions above require more than volunteer or part time attention. The Parish Council should assemble an advisory panel to investigate the feasibility of creating a paid Community Life Department Head position to direct these programs and ministries.

**Responsible:** Parish Council

**Target Date:** April 2022; Report findings in enough time for Pastor's consideration and approval and for incorporation into the FY 23 Budget process.