

Beyond 50 – A Plan for Nativity’s Future

Five Year Strategic Plan

Connect + Engage + Grow



August 2019



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GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH

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Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

It is with great joy that I introduce to you the Nativity of Christ Strategic Plan. This has been a work in progress over a number of months. Many of you have poured your time and energy into this work, with the aim that through God's Grace it will make Nativity of Christ a stronger parish for years to come.

Where will Nativity be in five or ten years? What will our ministries, our facilities, and our community look like? These are the questions we hope to address with the Strategic Plan. Through the process of creating this Plan, our Parish has identified some specific areas of potential growth. Six goals were created to address these areas. In this document you will be reintroduced to the six goals and find out about the background work that led to their development, as well as the necessary steps ahead to achieve them.

Your prayers are especially needed as we begin a new chapter in the life of our Parish. This work must be grounded in the spiritual life of our community, done in a spirit of love, of joy, of peace, of kindness. (Galatians 5:22-23)

Thank you to all who have contributed: directly or indirectly, on current or former strategic planning teams, through surveys and retreats, by suggestion or by critique. Each of your contributions have positively affected the result.

May we have the discernment, patience, and humility to seek God's will in all things.

In His Love,

Father John



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Introduction

In January of 2019, with the blessing of His Eminence, Metropolitan Gerasimos, and under the leadership of Parish Priest, Fr. John Kocolas, The Nativity of Christ Parish Council initiated the process for a new Parish Strategic Plan. The Plan, when fulfilled, will, by the grace of God, set the Parish on a preferred path of growth and renewal.

In the pages that follow, you will learn the primary purpose of Parish Strategic Planning, the process that was employed, and the resulting Parish goals and action plans to fulfill them. Much work has been done to create the Plan, but there is more work in the months and years ahead to further shape and focus our goals and vision.

As Nativity of Christ celebrates its 50th anniversary, it is an ideal time to be in the strategic planning process. This is an exciting opportunity for the community to set its priorities and establish a foundation for the next fifty years!



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1. Our Vision and Mission

Vision Statement

To create a welcoming spiritual and physical environment to live the Orthodox Christian faith.

Mission Statement

To keep, practice and proclaim the Orthodox Christian faith.



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2. What is Parish Strategic Planning?

Strategic planning is an activity of parish leadership that is employed to set priorities, focus energy and resources, strengthen operations, and ensure that all members and organizations of the parish are working toward common goals. It establishes agreement around intended outcomes and assesses and adjusts the parish's direction in response to a changing environment.

Strategic planning is an open and systematic effort that produces fundamental decisions and actions that shape and guide who we serve, what we do, and why we do it, all with a focus on fidelity to the Orthodox faith and the preferred future of the parish. Effective strategic planning articulates not only where the parish is going and the actions needed to make progress, but also how the parish will know if it is on the correct path, achieving the desired results.



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3. Why Now?

The last Strategic Plan was completed in 2014. Even the most successful of strategic plans rarely has a useful life beyond a five-year time period. Thankfully, many, if not all, of the goals established in that 2014 plan have been realized. In 2019, not only do we find ourselves at the end of that five-year period, but also with a different Parish priest, different lay leadership, and a feeling of great energy in the community. It seemed like a natural time to re-establish our most important goals and set the direction for the future of the Parish.

It is also important to acknowledge and understand some of the most significant challenges facing Nativity and the Greek Orthodox Church today:

- The Greek Orthodox Church in America has experienced a multi-decade decline of approximately 40% in both the number of marriages and baptisms; Simultaneously, it has experienced a similar number of funerals
- More churches are closing than opening
- Most converts to Orthodoxy are non-Greek spouses of Greek-Americans and an estimated 80% of all marriages in the church are to non-Greeks
- The present operating budget has little financial capacity to undertake the roll out of new ministries, to enhance existing ministries or programs, or to hire the necessary staff to run them
- Similarly, the operating budget has little extra financial capacity to underwrite desired facilities renovations, upgrades, expansions, additions and proposed new construction

A thoughtful, thorough, and well-funded strategic plan can help to address all of these issues and more.



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4. The Process

- January 2019: Strategic Planning (SP) Steering Committee is formed
- January/February 2019: Process, Goals, and Timeline are established and Parish presentation materials are developed
- March 1, 2019: Dissemination of Question and Response (Q&R) document
- March 3, 2019: PowerPoint presentation on SP process at Fellowship Hour
- March 10, 2019: Strategic planning updates presented at Parish Assembly
- March 25- April 7, 2019: All parishioner internet survey
- April 13, 2019: Strategic planning workshop
- April 16, 2019: Survey report disseminated with goals and objectives
- April 18, 2019: Summary of SP Workshop distributed to the community
- June 9, 2019: Parish Assembly vote on SP goals and recommendations
- August 25, 2019: Final Strategic Plan presented with detailed action plans, including proposed costs
- September/October 2019: Fund raising feasibility study conducted
- October 2019: “Quite Phase” of Capital Campaign initiated
- February 2020: “Public Phase” of Capital Campaign initiated
- 2020-2024: Implementation



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5. The Goals & Summary Actions

a. Initiate New Church Membership Growth Strategies

On a continuing basis, we will increase participation of both existing, past, and new stewards as well as promote Orthodoxy and community involvement through: (i) a more welcoming, appropriate and functional entry to “God’s House” (\$1,040,132), (ii) a more accessible campus (\$120,861), (iii) more robust “Hospitality” programs - communication and outreach (\$81,500), (iv) a more organized Narthex greeter and welcome/visitor program (\$8,800), and (v) a more consistent approach to Stewardship (\$0).

Anticipated total cost: \$1,251,293.00 (See Appendix for details)

b. Develop and Increase Financial Resources

In the month of September, we will determine the community’s willingness to fund all or some of the Strategic Plan through a fundraising feasibility study (\$0), with the ultimate intent of conducting a capital campaign (\$10,000). On an on-going basis, we will expand outreach and educational opportunities to promote alternative ways of supporting the Church, such as planned giving (\$500). We will also embark on a more personal approach to the financial component of Stewardship through more intimate, individual and/or group meetings with the priest and other parishioners (\$7,500). And we will investigate the viability of a pre-school program to not only generate revenue, but to also develop interest in our Church and our community (\$0).

Anticipated total cost: \$18,000.00 (See Appendix for details)



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c. Enhance and Improve Internal Operations

Over the next 5 years, and on an on-going basis, we will train volunteer leaders and staff (\$60,000), streamline procedures (\$0), practice responsible governance (\$26,000), and develop strategies to improve engagement with parishioners (\$0). We will accomplish this through investing in both in-person and on-line volunteer training workshops, meetings, retreats and conferences, by providing volunteer management tools, such as tracking or directory software, and by implementing more robust volunteer appreciation and recognition programs (\$43,000).

Anticipated total cost: \$129,000.00 (See Appendix for details)

d. Enhance and Improve Facilities

Over the next 3-5 years, we will maintain and improve all Church facilities to better serve our parishioners and guests and to provide a safe and inviting campus for worship and celebration of the sacraments, ministries and programs, fellowship, and community outreach. We will do this by proactively and responsibly budgeting annual maintenance dollars (\$250,000), by installing an elevator and improving ADA access in the parking lot and campus (See Goal a), by renovating the classrooms and offices to improve the learning environment and encourage more frequent use (See Goal e), by constructing an additional hall adjacent to the existing fellowship hall for smaller activities, increased campus functionality, and energy savings (See Goal e), by renovating the kitchen (\$60,850), and by expanding and enhancing the church entry (Narthex) to include restrooms, a bride/cry room, adequate storage, and a more functional and architecturally stimulating space, not to mention for the conducting of processions and other ecclesiastical functions of the Church (See Goal a).

Anticipated total cost: \$310,850.00 (Kitchen & Maintenance only – See Appendix for details)



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e. Expand and Increase Support for Existing Parish Ministries

In order to engage and connect with more parishioners, guests, and community members, we will hire a full-time Parish Ministries Director as soon as reasonably practical (\$390,000). The Director will coordinate and manage all existing and future ministry programs that include, but are not limited to: Sunday School, GOYA, YAL, VIP's, Choir, Adult Education, charitable giving, Byblos Book Club, Mommy and Me, visitations, and Heritage programs (e.g. Greek school, Folk Dance, etc.) (\$371,612). Certain facilities, most notably the additional hall (\$856,654) and kitchen (See Goal d) will serve these and other future ministries.

Anticipated total cost: \$1,618,266.00 (See Appendix for details)

f. Expand and Continue Service to the Poor and Needy

We will increase our engagement with local and regional charities, schools, and other non-profit and charitable organizations, including, but not limited to, Gilead House, SF-Marin Food Bank, Sparkle Foundation, Vietnam Veterans of America, Bloom, and North Marin Community Services. We will actively promote membership in Philoptochos, with particular emphasis on our youth. And we will promote Nativity of Christ in a more meaningful way, most notably through easily identifiable and coordinated volunteer clothing. It is important to note that this is a volunteer-centric goal with countless hours of Time and Talent dedicated that are too difficult to quantify.

Anticipated total cost: \$28,450.00 (See Appendix for details) (Outside of regular Philoptochos and Church efforts/giving in this area)

Total Cost = \$3,355,859.00



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6. Conclusion

The challenges facing Nativity are not new, nor are they personal to our Parish. The Church is at a crossroads and only those parishes with the foresight and willingness to take these challenges on head first will overcome them and thrive. This Strategic Plan is an exciting and essential first step! It will allow us to address the most critical needs of Nativity and set us on a preferred future path. That being said, it won't be easy.

This effort will take the dedication of many individuals and groups. Thankfully, Nativity is blessed with a wonderful collection of faithful volunteers, but it will take the involvement of everyone to realize our goals to their fullest extent. The very creation of this Strategic Plan has already demonstrated our parishioners amazing capacity to give of their time and talents. We strongly encourage anyone who is interested in working on a specific goal or goals to volunteer. Our results will be far greater if we have a diverse representation of parishioners, bringing their various skills and experiences, all working together toward a shared vision for the future.

Although the Strategic Plan is comprehensive, you may notice that not all items discussed over the course of the past several months made the Plan. Some were either not important enough to the Parish at this time to include or were unable to be completed within the 5-year time horizon contemplated by the Plan. Also, please note that costs of facilities are embedded in and across multiple goals, as no one goal is achievable without reliance on one or more of the others, particularly as it relates to facilities. Additionally, some anticipated costs are on-going (i.e. annual), some are one-time expenditures, and some are for a specific period of time within the overall 5 years.

As we move into the fundraising feasibility and capital campaign phases of the Strategic Planning Process, we look forward to the continued support of the Parish. This is an exciting time for Nativity of Christ and we are thankful to be in a position to be considering these types of advancements for our community.

May God continue to bless us all.



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7. Appendix (Attached as separate document)



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