

**A Pastoral Plan
for
The Parish of St. Catherine of Siena and St. Agnes
4 Riverside Avenue, Riverside, CT 06878
Diocese of Bridgeport**



Mission

The Parish of St. Catherine of Siena and St. Agnes is a welcoming Roman Catholic community that puts faith in God into action, affirms each person is precious and valued, strengthens the sense of family, nourishes the spirit, and enables its members throughout their journey through life to live as best as possible in God's sight. We are disciples of Jesus Christ, striving to be increasingly open to the presence of the Holy Spirit in our midst.

"Be who God meant you to be and you will set the world on fire."

--St. Catherine of Siena 1347-1380

"I place my trust in You, O adorable Blood, our Redemption, our regeneration. Fall, drop by drop, into the hearts that have wandered from You and soften their hardness."

--St. Agnes of Rome 291-304

"To be evangelizers of souls, we need to develop a spiritual taste for being close to people's lives and to discover that this is itself a source of greater joy. Mission is at once a passion for Jesus and a passion for his people." (*Evangelii Gaudium*, 268)

Introduction

Building Our Spiritual Home Together

It was a defining moment in my preparation for the priesthood. I was seated in my first class of “Basic Supervised Ministry” at The Washington Hospital Center in Washington DC. The year was 1985. The class was being taught by a Presbyterian minister and it was on the practice of the pastoral visit. I had been assigned to visit on an oncology unit 8 hours a week. It was also the unit which treated patients living with a “new disease,” not widely understood, being called AIDS. We were told that when we visited in the hospital as seminarians, we were not to wear clerical attire, nor bring with us a bible, a prayer book, holy cards or Holy Communion. We were not to have a clip board with a hospital census attached. Our hands were to be free, and our eyes and hearts were to be open. There was to be no “agenda” to our visit with the patient, none whatsoever. Rev. Byrd spoke of how our pastoral visits were to be encounters with the divine in each patient and we were to accompany them where they lead, period. We were to visit patients of all faiths or of no faith. We were to hear “the scripture” of their lives and help them find God within it. It was a bit terrifying, and wonderful at the same time.

Pope Francis reminds us that the church is in many respects called to be a “field hospital,” for the broken. Isn’t that the truth. We come together as a people of faith to be healed and restored. Church then, isn’t a building or a campus, it is a “divine moment” when we encounter each other in the Lord and choose to accompany each other on the journey of our lives.

Our parish of St. Catherine of Siena and St. Agnes has had quite a journey – whether we reference our merger, dealing with the pandemic, or now the planning for a potential parish consolidation. It hasn’t always been an easy journey, but I believe that in God’s grace, it has been a fruitful journey. “The Scripture of our lives” has contained a few challenging times as well as moments of resurrection. We are called to be people of the encounter and accompaniment. We are called to discipleship in the Lord.

Over the last few weeks, I have presented a plan which calls for the consolidation of all parish services and activities to the St. Catherine of Siena Campus. We have had four spirited conversation sessions to hear differing points of view on the plan – for a total of more than 7 hours. After the sessions, I continue to believe firmly that with the additional space that the purchase of 19 Riverside Avenue will afford us, and our subsequent ability to consolidate both our staff and parish activities, we will be in a stronger position to both encounter and accompany each other on the path of discipleship. We will be building a spiritual home together, partly because we will be together.

My hope, prayer and plan are that 19 Riverside Avenue will become a hub for our Faith Formation Programs, as well as a setting for other parish offices. I hope for it to be a place of hospitality, encounter and accompaniment, in which we can welcome both new and old pilgrims on this journey of discipleship.

My time visiting at the Washington Hospital Center all those years ago as a seminarian taught me many things about the importance of the pastoral encounter, and the gift of being invited to accompany someone else on their journey of faith. It taught me that to be “truly present,” was the goal, and if I made “presence” my intention, God would make himself known in the most unlikely of places and in the most challenging of circumstances. God is with the Parish of St. Catherine of Siena and St. Agnes. We pray for the grace to be truly present with each other as we begin a new chapter on our road of discipleship.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Father Bill Platt
Pastor

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A Pastoral Plan

The Pastoral Plan is considered in the context of Bishop Caggiano’s ratification of my recommendation to close and sell of the St. Agnes Campus. The recommendation of the sale of the St. Agnes Campus is based on two interrelated reasons. First, the 6.3-acre campus is simply unsustainable. The two weekend Masses attract, on average, fewer than 45 people per Mass. The church building is tired and needs substantial, costly renovations. Such expenditures are unjustifiable. There is no reasonable basis to keep the campus open any longer. Further, Greenwich Country Day School, which surrounds the St. Agnes campus on three sides, seeks to acquire the campus.

Additionally, and perhaps more importantly for the future of the Parish, the separate St. Agnes Campus disperses and impedes our ability to engage our Parish community, since our Parish offices, ministries, and Faith Formation programs are based at the St. Catherine of Siena Campus in Riverside rather than the mid-country St. Agnes Campus. The vast majority of parishioners (in excess of 90%) were St Catherine’s parishioners before the merger, and it is thus understandable that the life of the Parish is based at St. Catherine’s Campus. In fact, as one example, when the Hispanic community’s Sunday Mass was moved to the St. Agnes Campus, fewer people attended and participated. We fully expect that when the Hispanic community’s Mass is moved back to St. Catherine of Siena Campus, attendance will pick-up and expand.

The proceeds from the sale of the St. Agnes Campus will do two vital things: The proceeds will endow the mission of the Parish for generations to come and will generate annual investment income to fund the varied Pastoral Plan initiatives, including the hiring of key personnel.

“The One” - Ecclesial Renewal through a culture of “evangelizing catechesis”- A Vision for Renewal in the Diocese of Bridgeport

The parish adopts and embraces Bishop Caggiano’s “The One” - Ecclesial Renewal through a culture of “evangelizing catechesis”- A Vision for Renewal in the Diocese of Bridgeport, which we incorporate by reference into this plan. Bishop Caggiano writes:

“A culture of “evangelizing catechesis” seeks to provide (1) effective opportunities for each baptized member of the Church to encounter the presence of Christ daily, thereby fostering an ever-deeper relationship with Him, while at the same time (2) being accompanied in their personal journey of faith towards becoming active, missionary disciples in the world.

Such a culture will facilitate the effective proclamation of the kerygma of salvation in Jesus Christ and assist every baptized member of the Church to seek radical personal holiness.”

The One in full can be found [here](#).

Encounter Jesus Christ

The Lord seeks to reveal His presence to each person made in the divine image and likeness through a variety of means that reflect the very nature of the human person. More specifically, since the human person is a graced union of body, soul and spirit, the Lord seeks an encounter with every person through these very elements that form us.

The human transcendentals of truth, beauty and goodness are often identified as the principal means through which the Lord makes His presence known. This is true because humanity seeks perfection through attaining truth, beauty, and goodness. Thus, our search to encounter God, imprinted upon individual souls, finds pathways to Him precisely through these three transcendentals in both ordinary and extraordinary ways. (The One, pp. 1-2)

We encounter Jesus when we grow our knowledge of the Faith, which expands and deepens our understanding of Jesus. We encounter Jesus in the beauty of our Faith through prayer, the Sacraments, Adoration, the Rosary. And we encounter Jesus when we experience the goodness of our Faith, which touches our souls, especially through intergenerational service initiatives.

Encounter for Children

“Jesus realized the intention of their hearts and took a child and placed it by his side and said to them, “Whoever receives this child in my name receives me, and whoever receives me receives the one who sent me. For the one who is least among all of you is the one who is the greatest.” Luke 9:47-48

The St. Catherine’s-St. Agnes Parish is very committed to our children and youth ministries. The parish has programs appropriate for every age. The Faith Formation Program is full of

opportunities for faith development. Celebrations include Blessing of the Animals, Advent Wreath Making and more.

The Parish Faith Formation Program for Youth is for kindergarten through 8th grade and offers a diverse set of options for children and families, as followings:

Children Liturgy of the Word (CLW) at Sunday Family Mass

- Attend Family Mass 9:00 a.m. St. Catherine Church. After the Introductory Rites, children go to parish hall with leaders and return to pew after the Prayer of the Faithful.
- Attend at least 3 Sundays per month with a goal of attending weekly.
- Leaflets including activities to complete at home with your child will be handed out

Option 2: Family Program – Grades K – 6

- 1 time per month; Sunday 9:00 a.m. to 11:30 a.m.
- Attend 9:00 a.m. Family Mass w/parent; followed by family session in Lucey Parish Hall
- Weekly lesson to be completed at home between sessions with parent, grandparent, godparent.

Option 3: Parish Program – Kindergarten 1, 2*, 3, 4, & 5

(*Only for 2nd graders who did not complete a 1st year program)

- Tuesday or Wednesday Afternoon (choose one day)
- Weekly lesson to be completed at home between Sessions with parent, grandparent, godparent.

Option 4: Home Program with parent, grandparent, godparent.

Option 5: Spanish Grade 1 Program - Wednesday

GRADE 6

Option 1: Parish Program

- Tuesday or Wednesday Evening (Choose one)
- Weekly lesson to be completed at home between sessions with parent, grandparent, godparent.

Option 2: Family Program – K – 6

- 1 time per month; Sunday 9:00 a.m. to 11:30 a.m.
- Attend 9:00 a.m. Family Mass with parent followed by family session in Lucey Parish Hall
- Weekly lesson to be completed at home between sessions with parent, grandparent, godparent.

Option 3: Home Program with parent, grandparent, godparent.

First Reconciliation & First Eucharist

Completion of 1st year Faith Formation is required.

Option 1: Family Program – K - 6

- 1 time per month; Sunday 9:00 a.m. to 11:30 a.m.
- Attend 9:00 a.m. Family Mass w/parent; followed by family session in Lucey Parish Hall
- Weekly lesson to be completed at home between sessions with parent, grandparent, godparent.

Option 2: Parish Program

- Tuesday or Wednesday Afternoon (choose one day)
Note: Different week than Parish Program K – 5
- Weekly lesson to be completed between sessions at home with parent, grandparent, godparent.

Option 3: Parish Sunday Program

- Sunday – 9:00 a.m. – 11:30 a.m.; 1 time per month.
- Attend Mass with Parents/Session directly after Mass.
- Weekly lesson to be completed at home between sessions with parent, grandparent, godparent.

Option 4: Home Program with parent, grandparent, godparent.

Options 5: Spanish Program - Wednesday**Pre-Confirmation - Grades 7th Thru 11th****Option 1: Parish Program Pre-Confirmation**

- Tuesday or Wednesday evening (choose one day)
- Lesson to be completed at home between sessions with parent, grandparent, godparent.

Option 2: Home Program Pre-Confirmation with parent, grandparent, godparent.

Option 3: Spanish Program Pre-Confirmation**CONFIRMATION PREPARATION – YEAR 2****Grades 8 thru 12**

Completion of Pre-Confirmation is required

Option 1: Confirmation Prep – Year 2**Sunday Evening Program**

Attend 5 p.m. Mass with parent and attend session directly after Mass.

Option 2: Confirmation Prep – Year 2

Home Program with parent, grandparent, godparent, sponsor.

Accompanying Youth and Young Adults on Their Journey as Missionary Disciples

“In virtue of their baptism, all the members of the People of God have become missionary disciples...” (Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*, 120)

There is a deep hunger in youth and young adults—a hunger for love, for truth, for meaning, for belonging, and for purpose that the culture cannot satisfy. This hunger is satisfied in friendship with Jesus Christ—a friendship that leads to community in his Church and to fruitful sharing of love and care with those in need. Another way to describe this friendship is the invitation to become a missionary disciple of and for Jesus Christ. Youth and young adults begin their discipleship journey in baptism and continue on that journey when they come to love Christ and follow His ways. They become missionary disciples when they seek to witness and serve those most in need, beginning with those closest to them. Our engagement with youth and young adults should help young disciples encounter Christ. Accompany them, promote belonging in the parish community, and lead them to missionary witness. (USCCB website [Beliefs and Teaching](#))

Teen Pilgrimages and Retreats

Pilgrimages have long constituted a privileged manner of experience the sacred sites of our faith in a prayerful, reflective manner. Such “sacred journey,” whether it be on a diocesan, regional or global scale can provide unique opportunities for pilgrims to encounter the grace of the Lord and opening their hearts to His message of conversion and love. (The One, p. 3)

The proceeds from the sale of the St. Agnes Campus will help underwrite an annual Teen Pilgrimage in the U.S. and abroad, including but not limited to, Lourdes, France, Rome and Washington, DC. In addition, proceeds from the sale of the St. Agnes Campus will fund vocation retreats to seminaries and convents for our teens. Further, proceeds from the sale of the St. Agnes Campus will enable the parish to add 1-2 new staff members to the Faith Formation Program.

Adult Faith Formation

As a Parish, we have many of the fundamentals in place to find the Lord through truth, beauty and goodness. The proceeds from the sale of the St. Agnes campus will enable us to enhance our efforts. Hiring appropriate staff, first and foremost a Director of Discipleship, will allow us to prioritize and develop a multi-year plan which will “sow the seeds” of individual encounters with Christ for every baptized member of the Church.

Especially exciting is the prospect of providing opportunities for the establishment of a ministry for young adults. Our recently purchased building (19 Riverside Avenue) located directly across the street from our beautiful chapel would provide a hub for sacramental encounters and spiritual accompaniment through local mission related activities, as well as planning for pilgrimages for our parishioners of all ages.

Prayer services and other communal experiences of prayer could be added to our daily Masses and First Friday devotions to the Sacred Heart in the chapel.

Our Korean community would also benefit from a space for fellowship in the new building (19 Riverside Avenue) after their weekly Sunday Mass.

The building will house our faith formation offices, other Parish offices, and provide ample space for spiritual direction. The meeting spaces will also allow us to offer other opportunities for adult faith formation.

Annual Lecture Series

The proceeds from the sale of the St. Agnes Campus will allow the parish to host and pay for leading figures to come and speak on an important topic facing the church. Such a speaker series will benefit all of the parish communities in Greenwich and Stamford, as well as the broader community. Done well, the annual lecture series can benefit the entire diocese.

Sacred Music Ministry

To afford all the baptized sustained opportunities to experience the full patrimony of sacred music that constitutes the Church's patrimony. This includes the rich variety of music from the many cultures of our global church, from Gregorian chant, sacred polyphony to contemporary Christian music. (The One, p. 3)

We have a rich and extensive Sacred Music program led by our distinguished Director of Music, Dr. Liya Petrides. In addition to the beautiful music provided at our liturgical celebrations she also organizes concerts throughout the year, held in the church and the chapel. These programs can be enhanced and enlarged with funds from the sale of the St. Agnes Campus.

Use of Technology for Evangelization

A portion of the proceeds from the sale of the St. Agnes Campus will be used to transform the parish's use of technology in the advancement of evangelization. The parish website will be completely revamped and geared towards the use of video. Resources for ministry will be curated and available online. The parish will become a "digital first" organization.

Accompany Others

“The Church will have to initiate everyone—priests, religious and laity—into this 'art of accompaniment' which teaches us to remove our sandals before the sacred ground of the other” (cf. Ex 3:5). (*Evangelii Gaudium*, 169)

To nurture a life-long and deepening relationship with the Lord through His Mystical Body, the Church, it is imperative that effective means of accompaniment be provided for every person of every age in their personal journey of faith. Such accompaniment provides the context within which a person can confront their own sins and wounds towards healing, seek answers to the questions of faith and life that occupy their minds and hearts and receive encouragement, reassurance, support and love as they seek to engage the world as missionary disciples.

If the opportunities of encounter are not supported by active accompaniment, a person's relationship with Christ can easily devolve into a private one, divorced from the ecclesial community of the Church that is the universal sacrament of salvation. (*The One*, p. 6)

Parish Partners

One of the most successful and sought-after ministries at the Parish of St. Catherine of Siena and St. Agnes is Parish Partners. This is a group of women and a few men who are committed to accompany our elderly parishioners in their sacramental as well as other needs. Parishioners who participate in this ministry have said that in accompanying people, especially the elderly or disabled, they have come to a deeper understanding of acceptance of God's will and the need to “let go” and rely on God's infinite love and mercy.

Parish Partners has also developed a bereavement ministry, called New Day Bereavement Program, which is a faith-based program that has expanded to other parishes in the Diocese. Additional programs could be developed, with guidance from enhanced Parish staffing, such as ministries to accompany families of newly deceased individuals who are planning their funerals, or new parents planning baptisms.

A New Hire - Director of Discipleship

The proceeds from the sale of the St. Agnes Campus will allow the parish to hire a Director of Discipleship. A Director of Discipleship would be responsible for choosing and developing a team of dedicated people who will develop, organize, empower, train, and support discipleship teams. A director oversees, develops, organizes, and maintains a well-structured discipleship process for the ultimate purpose. The Director is to take care of the transformation from a common person to the believer, a follower, and ultimately the disciple of Christ.

A Director of Discipleship would have some or all of the following duties:

- Identify, choose, and select a team of dedicated followers to lead discipleship teams (children, youth, and adults) and lead, monitor, empower, train, and support these discipleship teams.

- Develop, organize, monitor, and oversee the discipleship process.
- Building a relationship with Christ through the bible, prayer, and community service.
- Develop a practical discipleship model, moving away from the academic model where the goal is to serve the community, faith, and its transformation.
- Organize and supervise missions, missionaries, events based on biblical studies and conferences.
- Arrange meetings at regular intervals to discuss the assigned missions' progress and success and record feedback for future purposes.
- Organize and develop small groups and assisting and training them for engaging people in a deeper relationship with Jesus. Maintaining up-to-date data of these groups and also involve more groups, when required.
- Organize and develop large group ministries involving men, women, seniors, their training, specified areas, leadership, and coordination.
- Build and oversee the RCIA, marriage prep, and baptism prep teams.
- Take the guidance and leads from lead pastor and set up goals (long term and short term) after discussing with them for effective results.
- Assistance, support, and participation in the sacramental retreats and ceremonies.
- Express and share his/her experiences with Christ.
- Communication with the other church staff, community, and building healthy relationships so that visitors become members and members are disciple-makers.
- Adapt to the changing scenario of the community and growing needs of the inclusion of more ministries.

The Parish Spiritual Center for Renewal – 19 Riverside Avenue

As noted above, the acquisition of 19 Riverside Avenue (a former dental office and apartment and zoned that way) will serve at least three functions. The ground floor will house the offices for the Faith Formation Program, the largest program at the parish. And there is room for 15-20 children to gather on the ground floor.

The middle or main floor will serve as a place for prayer, meditation and spiritual gatherings, where one can come and spend time with the Lord and with their brothers and sisters in Christ in a quiet atmosphere. It is akin to the Missionaries of Charity Prayer House located at 851 Clinton Street in Bridgeport.

The third floor will house parish staff and have space for spiritual direction.

As part of the re-zoning of 19 Riverside Avenue, and based on the advice of Tom Heagney, the parish real estate legal counsel and the agreement and permission of Anne McCrory, the Chief Legal and Real Estate Officer, Diocese of Bridgeport, 19 Riverside Avenue and the entire parking lot will be re-zoned "local business LB zone," which gives the parish the most flexibility in the use of 19 Riverside Avenue and the parking lot in the years ahead.

A portion of the proceeds from the sale of the St. Agnes Campus will be used to study potential, optimal uses for the large parking lot across the street from the parish. One day it may have a newly built parish center where all offices, ministries and events will be held.



Renovation of the O'Malley Center – 13 Riverside Avenue

The O'Malley Center has long needed the main floor and third floor updated. Currently, only the ground floor is being used by the Transportation Association of Greenwich or TAG, a nonprofit organization. A portion of the proceeds from the sale of the St. Agnes Campus will allow the parish to make the O'Malley Center habitable for offices and meeting space.

Pastoral Sensitivity Around Selling St. Agnes Campus

The parish leadership is sensitive to the feelings of the legacy members of the St. Agnes Parish concerning the closing and sale of the St. Agnes Campus. In response, the parish proposes to name the exquisite and modern chapel located on the St. Catherine of Siena Campus as the new "St. Agnes Chapel" thereby creating continuity of their connection to the St. Agnes Campus.

An Outward-Bound Church

The proceeds from the sale of the St. Agnes Campus can annually support and expand parish outreach programs such as the **Parish Partners Ministry of Hope (PPMH)** which offers:

Communion

PPHM assists Father Platt and deacons in bringing the Eucharist and connects with those in our parish family who cannot be present at Mass.

Accompaniment

PPHM volunteers sit, listen and pray with those who are homebound and anyone who needs a companion.

Prayer Requests

PPHM welcomes prayer requests from parishioners, their families and friends. Together our volunteers pray for the needs of parishioners.

NEW DAY BEREAVEMENT GROUP

One of the most effective and impactful parish programs is the New Day Bereavement Group, which invites families of parishioners who have died, to participate in a bereavement group, and offers prayers and support.



The *New Day Bereavement Program* is a nine-week faith-based program that uses journaling, group discussion and scriptural reflection to help in the commencement of the healing process. It provides members with an opportunity to understand grief in a way that rebuilds our identity and strengthens our faith in ourselves and in our Lord.

Now in its 5th year, the *New Day Bereavement Program* helps members to understand that grief is experienced in each person differently, and that it often takes a very long time for the pain to heal. Participants learn strategies for dealing with grief and receive (and give) valuable group support and fellowship throughout the healing process. Meetings take place in a small-group, confidential setting and are led by trained bereavement facilitators. PPHM facilitates the New Day Bereavement Group twice a year. The *Fairfield County Catholic* profiled the New Day Bereavement Program [here](#).

EDUCATION

PPHM conduct symposia on topics that relate to health, well-being, and our Catholic faith.

Live the Joy of the Gospel

Our faith is always personal, but it should never be merely private. The love and joy we experience in our relationship with Jesus should radiate out to all those we meet. We should always be prepared to give witness to our faith, both by sharing the story of how Jesus has changed our lives and in acts of loving service to others.

Summary

The Parish of St. Catherine of Siena and St. Agnes is a vibrant and active parish that is on the move. The closure and sale of the St. Agnes Campus creates a transformational moment in the life of the parish. While most of the proceeds from the sale of the St. Agnes Campus will serve as an endowment for the parish in furtherance of the mission, a portion of the proceeds and annual investment income will be able to fund the pastoral plan for years to come.

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November 2023