



## **St. Thomas the Apostle Parish**

### **Feasibility Study Executive Summary**

#### **Followed by**

#### **Parish Leadership Response**

### **Introduction & Methodology**

*Greater Mission, LLC* conducted a Feasibility Study for a proposed combined capital campaign as part of the Witness to Hope Campaign. A Gift Analysis/Constituent Study was conducted in conjunction with *DonorSearch*. A case statement, study questionnaire and interview list was produced with the assistance of parish clergy and lay leaders. The study consisted of input from parishioners through individual interviews, two (2) Town Hall meeting and an In-Pew survey. A total of 16 individual interviews of 22 parishioners were conducted. Parishioners were selected for the interviews to represent various constituencies of the parish. Seventy-five (75) parishioners attended two Town Hall meetings on May 15<sup>th</sup> and May 17<sup>th</sup> and one hundred and twenty-nine parishioners (129) responded to the In-Pew and online survey. *The case tested agreement with and ability to raise \$3.65 million to address the following: replacement of the school and parish offices roof, replacement of the roof for rectory and St. Catherine House, remaining repairs to parking lot, tuck pointing the church, stained glass window repairs, creating an endowment for future capital needs, church beautification efforts and the wider church needs of the Diocese.*

### **Key Findings:**

**Appreciation of Parish:** Friendly and welcoming parish community, beautiful and historic church, strong Catholic values, many young families, great parish liturgies and ministries, strong leadership in Fr. Bill and Fr. Todd, a suburb school.

**Challenges facing Parish:** Aging parish facilities, poor parking, need for more young family involvement, need for greater generosity and more volunteers, expense of operating the school, need for more youth activities, many older parishioners on fixed incomes.

### **Case for Support:**

Over 89% of parishioners who responded were in favor of the case and moving forward with the campaign. This is a combined total from all study sources (personal interviews, Town Hall responses, in-pew and online surveys). While support for the overall case is strong, some parishioners commented on specific aspects of the case like: repairs to the outside of the church and school are needed, the parking lot needs to be fixed, the diocesan case is forward thinking, and a number of comments questioning the cost of the church beautification.

### **Can the Parish Raise \$3.65 Million or More?**

The combined responses of all participants indicated that 37% felt the parish could raise 3.65 million. As is typical in most parish feasibility studies, most parishioners were *unsure* if this amount could be raised. It's worth noting that only 14% felt that goal could *not* be reached.

### **Would you support the campaign financially?**

Over 86% of those responded indicated that they would make a gift. Only 4 parishioners (out of 176 responses) said they would not financially support this campaign. Some were unsure for a variety of reasons.

## **Level of Giving**

160 parishioners indicated they would make a gift to the campaign, ranging from as high \$100,000 to below \$1500. The total gifts that were indicated were over \$1,149,000 from 10% of the total parish community. This is an average gift of \$7,200 and indicates very strong financial support.

## **Would you be willing to volunteer to assist with a campaign?**

The combined responses of participating parishioners indicated that 29% (53) would be willing to volunteer during the campaign. Many were willing to open their homes for receptions and serve in other volunteer roles. These figures indicate very strong volunteer support.

## **Do you have any advice to give to parish leaders to assist with their decision making process?**

Parishioners had many comments and a great deal of advice to share. They expressed that Fr. Bill must take the lead in making the case and that there must be a clear communication effort to explain the campaign. In general, there was strong support for the diocesan case. Components like Catholic Charities, priest retirement, seminary support and evangelization received the most support. The parish case generally received very strong support. The church beautification brought some mixed reaction – many advocates, but also some questioning mostly in relation to cost. The following were the most frequently cited responses:

- Father must take the lead and explain why this is needed.
- This must be well communicated.
- Bishop must be seen in the parish.
- Everyone must participate, not just the regulars.
- We should consider using \$700,000 for things other than painting, like the poor or our school.
- It is great to be part of an historic effort.
- This will be a stretch, but it can be done through prayer and hard work.
- “Seek the kingdom of God and all else will be given to you”.

## **Conclusions**

The following is a synopsis of more detailed findings addressed in the full study report.

- St. Thomas the Apostle parish is a warm and deeply spiritual community.
- Fr. Bill and Fr. Todd are widely respected and have strong parishioner support.
- The level of indicated campaign volunteering is extremely high, which is a key factor for a successful campaign.
- A significant number of parishioners are willing to contribute financially to the campaign.
- The gift levels indicated by parishioners are broad, with evidence of significant lead gifts.
- There is broad general support for both the parish and diocesan case.
- There is strong support for the vast majority of the parish case.
- There is concern about the amount of money needed for church beautification.

## **Recommendations**

1. The findings of the study show there is strong support for both the parish and diocesan case. A sufficient number of people are willing to volunteer for the campaign and there is a large enough pool of potential donors to raise significant funds. Counsel recommends scaling back the campaign goal to \$3 million and to consider removing the church beautification as a case component in the campaign.
2. Counsel recommends building an aggressive gift table for the campaign that will stimulate broad sacrificial support. The gift chart must challenge the entire parish community to support the campaign and stimulate large, leading gifts that provide momentum and ultimately bring campaign success.
3. We recommend that the parish begin communicating to parishioners the results of the feasibility study, assuring them that their concerns and input have been heard and will shape how the parish moves forward.
4. Counsel recommends that the parish work closely with counsel to begin an education and communication process that will provide everyone with information about the parish project and the importance of the Witness to Hope campaign.
5. Counsel believes that there are many parishioners who would consider a legacy gift to the campaign and to the parish. Planned giving should be promoted vigorously during the campaign.



## ST THOMAS THE APOSTLE CATHOLIC CHURCH

ANN ARBOR, MICHIGAN

ENCOUNTERING CHRIST. ENCOURAGING FAITH. ENLIVENING HEARTS.

### Response of Your Parish Leadership

First and foremost, we want to sincerely thank all parishioners who took the time to be involved in the Feasibility Study process for the *Witness to Hope* Capital Campaign. We heard from a good sampling of our parish families which really does help us decide how best to move forward with our campaign plans to address especially the needs of St. Thomas the Apostle Parish and School. The responses from participating parishioners show they largely understand and agree with the needs and components communicated through the case statement – both at the parish/school level and diocesan level. It is gratifying to know that parishioners recognize the important and, in some cases, immediate facility needs of our aging parish and school campus. We all agree they are needs that simply must be addressed. While parishioners have an awareness and understanding of our campus needs, there was some questioning of the cost of the church beautification component. There was mixed reaction – many in favor, but a significant number of others questioning the cost. Be assured that we have heard you – we do understand your concerns – and we are now responding to the findings and recommendations provided in the Feasibility Study report.

After carefully reviewing and considering the Feasibility Study report, your parish leadership has decided to responsibly restructure the parish piece/component of the *Witness to Hope* Capital Campaign in the following three ways:

- Reduce the campaign goal for our parish from \$3.65 million to \$3 million. This would reduce the total dollar amount of campaign dollars raised for the parish (parish share) from \$2.56 million to \$1.89 million.
- Reduce the proposed allocation for creation of a parish endowment (seed money) from \$700,000 to \$400,000.
- Reduce the proposed allocation for church beautification from \$700,000 to \$330,000 (or possibly less). We will include the church beautification component as part of our parish plan, but it will now become the *least or lowest* priority in the campaign. In other words, funding for church beautification will take place *only after all other campaign components (needs) of our parish and school have been totally funded.*

This is indeed a very exciting time for our parish and Diocese as together we move forward with the first-ever diocesan-wide capital campaign to advance the sacred mission of the Church at the parish and diocesan level. We have always been a strong, spiritually united family here at St. Thomas the Apostle. Our continued strength and commitment to parish mission and each other will, once again, help us to achieve great things together for the greater glory of God. St. Thomas the Apostle, pray for us!

*“We might not immediately associate fixing a roof or parking lot with hope. Yet, in fixing them, we are saying loudly that corrosion and decay do not have the last say! We believe that in Jesus Christ, decay has met its end. Jesus is the great Witness to Hope. For the next 3-5 years, St. Thomas and other parishes are going to partner with our Diocese in a large campaign to provide a future full of hope for those in need in Flint and other places, for our youth, our senior priests, for those who have yet to hear the Gospel, and yes – even for us at St. Thomas in the practical needs we have. The Witness to Hope campaign gives us all an opportunity to join in personally through prayer and sacrifice in Christ's Work of restoring humanity to its full stature in God.”*

– Fr. Bill Ashbaugh